COURSE CODE: MASOD 202

COURSE NAME: MODERN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES AND PERSPECTIVES

CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION TEZPUR UNIVERSITY

MASTER OF ARTS

SOCIOLOGY
BLOCK I

Vision

To grow to be a leading centre for human resource development through distance, open and universal learning system.

Mission

To provide quality higher education at door step through barrierless, flexible and open learning mode in conformity with national priority and societal need.

Objective

- To offer degree, diploma, certificate level programme of study through distance learning in various emerging subjects across the disciplines.

- To offer job oriented and vocational programmes in flexible terms in the line of the national and regional level demand of manpower.

- To offer various programmes under lifelong learning contributing to the local and regional level requirements and as per the need of the society at large.

- To undertake various research and academic activities for furtherance of distance education in the region.

- To contribute to conserve and promote cultural heritage, literature, traditional knowledge and environment conducting short programmes, workshops, seminars and research in interdisciplinary field.

MSO-201: MODERN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES AND PERSPECTIVES

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BLOCK I

TABLE OF CONTENT

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course will introduce the learners to the topical issues in sociological theories that follow them from the classical thinkers. The learners are expected to be acquainted with the contemporary theoretical trends in sociology which have been divided into various analytical heads. The course is divided in to four Modules, each consisting of multiple units. This has been done to discuss the major concepts more elaborately and, in a learner, friendly way.

Module I discusses Structure, System and Structuration. This module has four units. **Unit 1** deals with Social Structure and it discusses the contribution of Claude Levi-Strauss. **Unit 2** discusses Social System and it focuses on the works of Talcott Parsons. **Unit 3**, on the other hand, deals with Anthony Giddens and his contribution to Structuration. The last unit of the module, **Unit 4**, discusses Structuration and Discourse Analysis.

Module II is about the subjective understanding of society and it is divided into three units. **Unit 5** gives an overview of Berger and Luckman's Social Construction of Reality. **Unit 6** deals with the Dramaturgical Approach, focusing on Goffman's perceptions of everyday life. **Unit 7** will help the learners to understand another important concept, that is Ethnomethodology. The learners will get introduced to Harold Garfinkel who is regarded as the founding father of ethnomethodology .

Module III deals with the Frankfurt School. The module is divided into three units. **Unit 8** will introduce the learners to Critical Theory. The unit will discuss the various themes and the subject matter of Critical Theory. The establishment of the Frankfurt School of thought is further elaborated in **Unit 9** which focuses on the mass culture. **Unit 10** deals with an important critical theorist, Jurgen Habermas and his concept of the Public Sphere.

Module IV is about contemporary social theories. This module will cover thinkers like Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and Ulrich Beck. **Unit 11** explores the sociology of Bourdieu, focusing on his ideas and

concepts of structure and agency, habitus and capital. **Unit 12**, on the other hand, will familiarise the learners with Foucault's perspective on society, focusing on the theoretical basis of his works and his concepts of discourse and knowledge/power. **Unit 13** deals with the major contributions of Ulrich Beck on Modernity, focusing on his concept of 'risk society'. **Unit 14** discusses public sociology.

The complete course is divided into two Blocks. **Block I** contains Module I and II. **Block II** will have Module III and IV.

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MODULE I: STRUCTURE/ SYSTEM/ STRUCTURATION

UNIT 1: SOCIAL SRUCTURE: LEVI STRAUSS

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Introduction

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1.3 Linguistic Structuralism
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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Structuralism is one of the premier sociological perspectives in contemporary sociology. Structuralism focuses on structure but not the same as structural functionalism dealt with. Structural functionalism is mainly concerned with the functions of various parts or social institutions of society for maintaining the stability and integration in the society. It considers society as a system consists of various interdependent organs or parts, which is determined by a set of common norms and values. But structuralism means linguistic structuralism, which was propounded by Ferdinand de Saussure. This changing of focus from social structure to the linguistic structure has been considered by Ferdinand de Saussure as the linguistic turn. Linguistic structuralism has given a new direction to a researcher who focuses on social structure to understand society (Ritzer, 2011). It is an idea that one can understand language as a system in which each of the elements can only be defined by its relations of equivalency or opposition with the others. It is this set of relations of the elements that form the structure (Nielsen, 2007). Levi-Straus was one of the celebrated

structuralists throughout Europe during the post-war period. He applied the methods of structural linguistics to the anthropological analysis of kinship, primitive classification systems, myth, music, totemism and art. He adopted Saussure's structural linguistics to examine cultural production and kinship system (Elliott, 2009).

1.2 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with Social Structure of Levi-Strauss. After studying it you will be able to

- Discuss the concept of linguistic structuralism;
- Describe how Levi-Strauss shifted from linguistic to Anthropological structuralism;
- Explain the structure of human mind;
- Compare the linguistic system with kinship system.

Stop and Read

Levi-Straus: Biographical Sketch

Claude Levi-Strauss was born in Belgium in 1908. His father was an artist. His father groomed him in the artistic environment. Levi-Strauss studied in Faculty of Law, the University of Paris in the years 1927 and 1932. He did his graduation in Philosophy. Levi-Strauss joined in a French lycée after his graduation and remained there in the position for two years. He first published an anthropological paper titled 'social organization of the Bororo Indians' in 1936. In between his works, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* and *Tristes Tropiques* Levi-Strauss carried out research on some other aspects of culture to give a general analysis of structure. After the research, he wrote some articles, which published in 1958 in the form of Structural Anthropology, a collection of essays. These works provided an

introduction to the structural analysis of Levi Strauss in detail (Voss, 1977).

1.3 LINGUISTIC STRUCTURALISM

Structuralism has its roots in linguistics, which is emerged from diverse development in various fields It emphasized the idea that human behaviour could be explained as resulting from forces or drives that are 'unconscious' forces. Karl Marx emphasized how social forces with the help of ideology regulate and control human behaviour. On the other hand, Sigmund Freud also focused on how the unconscious state of individual mind becomes a source of psychological energy for enhancing and boosting actions consciously. In addition to sociological and psychological contributions to the idea of unconscious forces, we can add the contribution from linguistics, particularly the work of Ferdinand de Saussure. He established linguistics as the science of the sign, which was used to formulate structuralism. In many respects, structuralism reflected the 'turn to language' and became prominent perspective across the whole of Western thought after the 1950s, and taken, perhaps, to its extreme extent in the 'post-structuralist' period of the present. The aim of structuralism was to study the unconscious structure of language that is, the relations between the units of language rather than the units themselves (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

It was Durkheim's social fact that Ferdinand de Saussure applied in structural linguistics. He divided language into two different parts, **la parole**, consists of individual speech acts, and **la langue** means the rules of language. Language consists of individual speech acts and the rules of language. Like Durkheim's consideration of social phenomena as a social fact, Saussure considered la langue as a social fact. According to Saussure langue constrain speech acts of individuals. He stated that la langue is a standard set of relations among linguistic rules or grammatical mechanism,

which is distinct from speech. The la langue is an entity that is operated by human mind unconsciously in the act of speech. Individual apply the rules of the language system unconsciously (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

1.3.1 Langue and Parole

The most important part of a language is Langue, which means standard rules or grammar. For Saussure and his followers, langue constitutes of phonic elements and the relationships between these elements are regulated by certain standard laws. It is langue, which proves the existence of parole or actual speech. It is a system constitutes of signs and structure. Each sign has meaning and meanings are originated from the relationship among various signs because no sign is isolated in language. This relationship is not based on similarity but difference which is the binary oppositions among signs and meanings. To understand the meaning of the word hot we have to relate it to the opposite word cold. The word hot does not have any innate characteristics to refer state of condition of water or weather. The structure of language shaped the meanings, the mind and the social world. Therefore the structure of language determines the individual's acts and interaction in society (Ritzer, 2011).

The second element of language is Parole, which means actual speech or the way individual express verbally. For Saussure linguist must concern about the langue, formal system of language. But he also considered that peoples' use of language or actual speech is significant (Ritzer, 2011).

Thus meanings, the mind, and ultimately the social world is shaped by the structure of language. Thus, instead of an existential world of people shaping their surroundings, we have here a world in which people, as well as other aspects of the social world, are being shaped by the structure of language.

1.3.2 Structure of Sign System: Semiotics

Semiotic means the study of signs and symbols. The idea of structuralism further included the study of all sign systems beyond language. The study of the structure of sign systems has been called "semiotics". "Semiotics" has been used in a more extensive system than structural linguistic due to its extensiveness because it encompassed other sign and that is non-verbal communication. The idea of words rests on 'signs', which signifies things, so it is viewed that language is essentially a system of names for things in the world. Thus semiotics is broader than structural linguistics because it encompasses not only language but also other sign and symbol systems, such as facial expressions, body language, literary texts, indeed all forms of communications. Saussure stated that many words do function as names. He argued that words which refer things have only an arbitrary manifestation of word-thing relationship. For instance, the word 'Dog' may refer to a certain kind of animal, but it is not necessarily connected with that kind of animal. But any other word can equally signify what kind of animal (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

Activity 1

For Saussure, words are used arbitrarily for any idea and concept. The word 'Dog' might be the name of a certain kind of animal, but there is no necessary connection between that particular word and that kind of animal.

Try to find out some more examples to understand how words are used arbitrarily. How people perceive the concept or idea with the help of words associated with these?

So for the structure of language the connection between words and the things is inessential. 'Word' is to be understood internally to the language system, not in relation to anything outside itself, that is, not by virtue of its relation to thing it stands for. Saussure mentioned that sign constitutes of parts such as signifier and signified. The signifier refers tangible aspects

like sound waves and writing, which manifests word. Signified refers abstract thing that is idea and concept, and is expressed by this sound and writing. In Saussure's scheme, it is the 'concept' (or thought) that the sign really stands for, and associated with some object. The signified is the idea of dogs, not dogs themselves. These two composite elements of sign—the sound and the thought are amalgamated. He famously says that two elements are the two sides of a sheet of paper, distinct but inseparable. A different idea could be associated with the sound 'dog' than the one which we associate with it. However, a word becomes compulsory for the individual as a speaker once these two elements are fused within the language system. The combination has developed the language as social fact from the point of speakers (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

Therefore most significant and substantial thing in structuralism is that the relationships among the elements determine the identity of elements in a system. The element is important not because of some characteristic it holds in its own right, but the way in which its characteristics are different from those of other elements. Specifically, an element maintains identity only on the basis of relation to other elements because the element is not isolated in the system. Its identity is not intrinsic but relative. On this view, the system is not a composite of elements but of relationships between these elements (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

Like Freud, Levi Strauss seeks to discover principles of thought-formation which are universally valid for all human minds. These universal principles are operative in our brains just as much as in the brains of primitive people. If we are to get at the primitive universal logic in its uncontaminated form, we need to examine the thought processes of the very primitive, technologically unsophisticated peoples, and the study of myth is one way of achieving this end.

Myth has become without doubt Levi-Strauss's overriding interest: not, of course, in and for itself, but as a means of reaching the basic structures of thought and behaviour throughout mankind. His distinction between "historical" and "mythic" peoples has been frequently criticized. According to Levi-Strauss those people in whom the historical past is preserved, they use the past as the means of illuminating the present, whereas people without such historical consciousness, people in whom myth plays a major role, employ myths in the present as the instruments for the creation of the past. Clearly "historical" peoples have their mythic structures also, structures indeed around which history writing tends to be done, and there must be few if any people utterly devoid of a historical sense, however, permeated or overladen it may be by myths.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What does binary opposition mean in linguistic structuralism?

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2. Why is semiotics significant according to Saussure?

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3. What is the role of myth in creating structure?

1.4 ANTHROPOLOGICAL STRUCTURALISM: LEVI STRAUSS' IDEA OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Levi-Strauss took linguistic structuralism of Saussure in another level by adopting the issues of anthropology other than language (Ritzer, 2011). His interests were distinctive although they did not emerge all at once but developed as his work progressed. Nevertheless, he does speak of the strong unity in his work, namely, that of formulating the basic structural laws of human consciousness. For him, this was an examination of the mental structures. Levi-Strauss's interest was to work out the possible links between anthropology and linguistics. Eventually, he came to define anthropology itself as a semiotic (linguistic) discipline that is, relating to the study of patterns of communication as signs and symbols (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

According to Levi-Strauss, anthropology should be absorbed by semiology and direct its attention to language, economics and kinship, the three most fundamental sign systems. These sign systems can be shown as the products of the same basic nature and laws if these social phenomena could be reduced to unconscious laws (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

Levi-Strauss argues that that man, by the very nature of his mind, views the world with binary concepts, for example, odd and even numbers. Through a development of algebraic matrices of these thought patterns, anthropologists can construct models of the possible formations of linguistic tendencies. According to Levi-Strauss, man's capacity to symbolize with his fellows requires that in the course of evolution, the brain acquired the ability to make "plus/minus distinctions for treating the binary pairs thus formed as related couples, and for manipulating these relations as in a matrix algebra."

It indicates that verbal categories provide the mechanism through which universal structural characteristics of human brains are transformed into universal structural characteristics of human culture." (Ritzer,2008)

1.4.1 The Structure of the Human Mind

In his study of the tribes of the American continent, Levi-Strauss took the view that the human mind was everywhere basically the same. He gave an opposite view on racism and much of his work is a systematic effort to show that primitive men and women had the same mental power as the mental power of the people living in modern societies. He justified the claim that universally mind has structured in the same way because the human mind is based on the brain, which operates in the same way in all human beings (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

The operating process of the brain is similar to computers that are both operate according to a binary logic. In the case of the computer, information processing operations are encoded as binary sequences of 0 and 1 though this can often be misleading. For Levi-Strauss, the mechanics of the brain are much the same as the computer. This means that the basic structure of human thought must also be basically binary (to be processed through the brain). Levi-Strauss's ideas contradicted Durkheim over the direction of causality between 'the mind', on the one hand, and 'society' on the other. For Durkheim, even the basic categories of thought, those of space and time, were derived from socially given models, such as the layout of a residential community or the annual cycle of group activities. In other words, the categories of thought are socially derived rather than innate. Levi-Strauss argued that the underlying forms of human thought are same in everywhere. In his study of religion, Durkheim maintained that explanation of religion must be social and explanation of the categories of thought and of religion must reflect 'social facts. The religion is one form of mechanism for maintaining collective life, which is recommended by social structures and consequently leads to the reinforcement of social

solidarity rather than intellectual constructions intended to assuage the puzzlement of the members of society. By contrast, Levi-Strauss was of the view that efforts at intellectual explanations had some point in the explanation of cultural categories but not in any simple way. Durkheim and Levi-Strauss agreed that there is cultural variety and that this is socially regulated. But Levi-Strauss didn't accept that the basic organization of the mind originates from this socially regulated cultural variation. Cultural variation can be seen to result from the application, in different contexts, of the general principles of the mind's operations to recurrent problems in understanding human existence, including social life but also the relationship of human beings to nature and the universe (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

Thus according to Levi Strauss social structure has nothing to do with empirical reality but with the models which are built up after it. Therefore social structure cannot claim a field of its own among others in the social studies. It is rather a method to be applied to any kind of social studies, similar to the structural analysis current in other disciplines. Keeping this in mind we can say that a structure consists of a model meeting with several requirements. These are:

First, the structure exhibits the characteristics of a system. It is made up of several elements, none of which can undergo a change without effecting changes in all the other elements.

Second, For any given model there should be a possibility of ordering a series of transformations resulting in a group of models of the same type.

Third, the above properties make it possible to predict how the model will react if one or more of its elements are submitted to certain modifications.

Finally, the model should be constituted so as to make immediately intelligible all the observed facts.

Thus this model can be applied to social and cultural life in general. He constructed theories concerning the underlying structure of kinship systems, myths, and customs of cooking and eating. The structural method, in short, purports to detect the common structure of widely different social and cultural forms. This structure does not determine concrete expressions, however, the variety of expressions it generates is potentially unlimited. Moreover, the structures that generate varieties of social and cultural forms ultimately reflect, according to Levi Strauss, basic characteristics of the human mind. (Levi Strauss,1963)

Activity 2

Find out the difference between Durkheim's idea of the structure of mind and Saussure's idea of the structure of the mind.

1.4.2 Similarities Between Linguistic Systems and Kinship Systems

The Elementary Structures of Kinship was the first major published work of Levi-Strauss', which was an obvious allusion to the writings of Durkheim, his great predecessor (Sharrock, et.al, 2003). This work involves an attempt to provide an understanding of various complex systems of marriage rules, mainly found among Australian aboriginal groupings. Through the system of marriage rules found among Australian aboriginal groupings, Levi-Strauss tried to understand the cultural ubiquity of the incest taboo, which is the restriction upon sexual relations with one's closest kin. Based on the view that culture is a set of communication processes, Levi-Strauss treats marriage rules as a means of communication that is, as a means of sending 'messages' between social groups of men, the means of communication

being the exchange of women. In other words, these Aboriginal groups were composed essentially of their male members, and the relations between them were defined in terms of who marries whose women. This is the relationship of groups like 'wife-givers' and 'wife-takers': a relationship which is often key to understand the organization of myth in Levi-Strauss' subsequent work. So for maintaining the stability of social groups the circulation of women could not all be one way but must involve reciprocity. Thus, the incest taboo, rather than having a biological character, has a social role as a means of ensuring that social groups 'marry out' so that women cannot be retained as sexual partners within the group which contains their family (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

The balanced circulation of women amongst all the groups determined by a set of marriage rules, which is ensured rules regarding prohibitions on marriage within the group and prescriptions on marriage to women from other groups. As a result marriage systems can begin to seem logical structure rather than disorderly and confusing. For example, one possible, and prominent actual form, is that in which 'wife-givers' and 'wife-takers' do not stand in reciprocal relation to each other; instead, members of group A are `wife-givers' to members of group B who, in their turn, give wives to group C, who give wives to group D, who give wives to group A, which is an arrangement Levi-Strauss terms 'generalized exchange'. The system ensures that all groups receive as well as give wives, so weaving the respective groups into a network of dependence based on the women they `gift' to each other (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

The study of kinship exhibited his disdain for 'the empiricism' and consequent superficiality of so much of anthropology and social thought more generally. He argued that because of this empiricism, social scientists had failed to recognize that the real structures producing phenomena were never directly manifested in observable occurrences. The real structures were at a level much deeper than the surface facts, and can only be properly

identified at the much higher level of abstract generality than those at which social scientists are accustomed to operating (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

Thus, Levi-Strauss had reconstructed the problem of incest by relating it to the general problem of social solidarity between distinct social groups rather than relating it just to a kinship connection between males and females. It was no longer about attempting to understand why men should be denied sexual connection with their close kin, but about seeing the necessity of making women available to other social groups by entering them into a process of circulation. And the consequence of this is a denial of sexual relations with their own kin (Sharrock, et.al, 2003).

However, Levi Strauss also applied structuralism more broadly to all forms of communication. His major innovation was to reconceptualize a wide array of Social phenomena (for instance, kinship systems) as systems of communication, thereby making them amenable to structural analyses. The exchange of spouses, for example, can be analysed in the same way as the exchange of words; both are social exchanges that can be studied through the use of structural anthropology. We can again illustrate Levi Strauss's thinking with the example of the similarities between linguistic systems and kinship systems. First, terms used to describe kinship, like phonemes in language, are basic units of analysis to the structural anthropologist. Second, neither the kinship terms nor the phonemes have meaning in themselves. Instead, both acquire meaning only when they are integral parts of the larger system. Levi Strauss even used a system of binary oppositions in his anthropology (for example the raw and cooked) much like those employed by Saussure in linguistics. Third, Levi Strauss admitted that there is empirical variation from setting to setting in both phonemic and kinship systems, but even these variations can be traced to the operation of general, although implicit, laws.

1. What is incest taboo?

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2. Where did Levi-Strauss carry out his field work?

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3. How does Levi-Strauss treat marriage rules as a means of communication ?

1.5 SUMMIMG UP

In this unit, we first discussed that sociological and psychological contributions to the idea of unconscious forces can be added as the contribution from linguistics, especially from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, who gave the structuralism as perspective and theoretical approach by adopting the ideas of language and science of sign in linguistics. Here we have elaborated the parts of the language that is langue and parole.

We have elaborated Levi-Strauss's shift from linguistic structuralism to anthropological structuralism where he discussed the structure of the human mind and argued that both phonemic systems and kinship systems are the products of the structures of the mind. However, they are not the products of a conscious process. Instead, they are the products of the unconscious, logical structure of the mind. These systems, as well as the logical structure of the mind from which they are derived, operate on the basis of general laws. He again studied the similarities between linguistic

systems and kinship systems. His major innovation was considered as the reconceptualization of a wide array of social phenomena (Such as kinship system) as a system of communication, thereby making them amenable to structural analyses.

1.6 QUESTIONS

1. Write a short note on linguistic turn.
2. What is the difference between structuralism and structural functionalism?
3. Discuss Ferdinand Saussure's idea of linguistic structuralism.
4. Discuss how Levi-Strauss extended structuralism to anthropology.
5. How does Levi-Strauss use the concept of 'binary opposition' in his analysis of structure of human mind?
6. What is kinship structure according to Levi-Strauss?

1.7 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

Elliott, A. (2009). *Contemporary Social Theory: An Introduction*. Routledge, London

Sharrock W.W., Hughes, J.A. and Martin, P.J. (2003). *Understanding Modern Sociology*. Sage   Publications, New Delhi.

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UNIT 2: SOCIAL SYSTEM: TALCOTT PARSONS

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Functionalism was one of the dominant theoretical perspectives in Sociology during the 1940s and 1950s. The key points of the functionalist perspective may be summarized by bringing a comparison from Biology. A Biologist studies how a human body or organism works by examining the functions of various parts of the human body such as the brain, lungs, heart etc. And to do this he would examine the parts in relation to each other since they work together to maintain the organism. Thus, he would analyse the relationships between these parts, try to understand how they have been operated and appreciate their importance. Functionalism adopts this same perspective, where various parts of the society are seen to be interrelated and taken together to analyse their functions, and assumed that they form a complete system. Thus a functionalist will examine a part of society, such as the family, in terms of its contribution to the maintenance of the social system and how it is interrelated to other parts (institutions) of society.

Talcott Parsons was one of the prominent functionalists, who published numerous books and articles during the period of 1940 and 1950. Like Durkheim, Talcott Parsons' focus was on social order and to know how it is maintained. He observed that society manifests mutual cooperation and integration rather than disintegration and conflict. Parsons was mainly concerned with how society maintains the social order. The consensus is based on common values, which is an important and determining principle to maintain integration in society. Shared values develop common goals, which lead to cooperation among members of society. Various roles in society make the individuals responsible to find the means to perform and on the other hand values and goals lead the individuals to perform or act in society. There are numbers of roles and the combination of these roles forms social institutions. Parsons emphasized on value consensus and argued for taking the task to analyse how values become institutionalized in the social system by sociologists. Parsons believes that only a commitment to common values provides a basis for order in society. According to him, value consensus forms the fundamental integrating principle in society. If members of society are committed to the same values, they will tend to share a common identity which provides a basis for unity and cooperation. From shared values, people derive common goals. Values provide a general conception of what is desirable and worthwhile for the betterment of society.

This Unit begins with the Talcott Parsons' functionalism along with a brief description of AGIL theory. In section 1.2 we will focus on Parsons' functionalism to understand structure and system. In the following sections, Parsons' action approach and social system will be discussed in detail.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- Explain the functionalism of Talcott Parsons;

- Describe the action approach of Parsons in the study of the social system;
- Discuss the basic unit of organization of the social system;
- Outline the concept of pattern variables given by Parsons.

Stop and Read:

Talcott Parsons: A Bibliographical sketch

Talcott Parsons was born in 1902 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He received his undergraduate degree from Amherst College in 1924 and completed his graduation from the London School of Economics. Then he went to Heidelberg in Germany, the place where Max Weber left his legacy of sociological works. Weber had died five years before Parsons arrived. Weber's works had a deep impact on Parsons. Parsons did his work for a doctoral thesis based on the works of Max Weber. In 1927 Parsons became an instructor at Harvard and remained there until his death in 1979. His great work was published in the form of a book *The Structure of Social Action*. In1949 he was elected as the president of the American Sociological Association. Parsons became the dominant figure in American Sociology after publishing his book *The Social System* in the 1960s (Ritzer, 2011).

2.3 TALCOTT PARSONS' FUNCTIONALISM: FOUR FUNCTIONAL PREREQUISITES

According to Talcott Parsons, society is a system. Parsons mentioned four basic functional pre-requisites, which are essential for the social system. These are the adaptation, goal attainment, integration and pattern maintenance. He regarded that these four pre-requisites are problems to be solved. According to him, these problems must be solved for the survival of society. Social system constitutes of various parts and each part is functional for society. Each part of the system functions for the maintenance of the whole system that is contributing to the system. So to understand the function of any part of the social system, we have to see the contribution of this part for fulfilling social needs (functional pre-requisites). For Talcott Parsons, solutions to these four problems or

meeting the functional needs of society must be institutionalized to maintain order in society. That is social institutions must work for the solution of the problem of fulfilling the needs and make the society stable and orderly (Haralambos, 2013).

Adaptation is the first functional pre-requisite, which refers to the relationship between the system and the environment. It shows how social system adjusts and maintains its relationship with the environment. Social systems must have some degree of control over their environment so that they can adjust somehow to provide the basic minimum needs to its members required for survival. As for example, Economy is such an institution which adjusts with the environment to provide the minimum needs such as food, shelter and clothes to society. Thus, Parsons said that a system must cope with external situational exigencies. It must adapt itself to its environment and adapt the environment to its needs.

Second functional pre-requisite is goal attainment, which refers to the need of all societies to set goals towards which all social activities are directed. Thus a system must define and achieve its primary goals. Which means a system must define and achieve its primary goals. The procedures for establishing goals and deciding to prioritise each goal is institutionalized in the form of the political system.. Political system fulfils or meets this need by developing various procedures for setting goals. The political system through formulating Governments fulfils the need of the people. Government laws and rules regulated the goal of society. In free economy too, government laws direct and regulate the economy in greater extent. Integration refers to adjustment, coordination and mutual understanding of the parts of society to maintain social system functionally. Which means a system must regulate the interrelationship of its component parts. It also must manage the relationship among the other three functional imperatives. (A,G,L). The institution of Law establishes integration in the social system. Laws define and regulate the relations between individuals and social

institutions, which prevent the situation of conflict and malfunction. Judicial system works for maintaining balance and equilibrium in society and prevents the disintegrative mechanism in society. Fourth functional pre-requisite is pattern maintenance, also known as Latency, which refers to the maintenance of the basic pattern of values and follows the institutionalized values in society. Institutions like family, educational system and religion socialize individuals in society to follow and abide by the social norms and values to maintain a pattern of social relationships. Parsons argued that a system must furnish, maintain and renew both the motivation of individuals and the cultural patterns that create and sustain the motivation. He says that any social system can be analysed in terms of these above mentioned functional prerequisites. Parts of the social system can't be understood in isolation but in relation to other parts. All parts of the social system are interdependent to perform in the process of fulfilling the needs that are the adaptation, goal attainment, integration and pattern maintenance (Ritzer, 2011).

2.3.1 Action Theory

Parson began the study of society in the micro level of social reality that is individuals and their action in his first book *Structure of Social Action*. He defined an individual action by distinguishing it from behaviour. For him, a behaviour is an automatic response to a stimulus. Natural sciences focus on the study of the behaviour of objects and animals as they respond to external stimulation. Individual action in social sciences is different from behaviour in natural sciences because the individual is active and creative as they have mind and consciousness. Therefore individual action is not an automatic response to external stimuli but results it is the result of the consciousness of individual mind, the capacity of the mind to think, imagine and anticipate and how he creates a subjective interpretation of the situation as an actor. Thus, an individual creates their actions according to their goals and situations. Individual action is regarded by Parsons as the unit act, which is the basic unit of society. From unit act there emerge the

pattern of interaction, social structure and social system at the macro level of reality (Ritzer, 2011).

Parsons thus said that the behavioural organism (human behaviour) is the action system that handles the adaptation function by adjusting themselves to the external environment and transforming the external world in accordance to their own convenience. The personality system performs the goal attainment function by defining system goals and mobilizing resources to attain them. The social system copes with the integration function by controlling its component parts. Finally, the cultural system performs the latency function by providing actors with the norms and values that motivate them for action. Parsons made this hierarchical arrangement and integrated it into the system in two ways. First, each of the lower levels provides the conditions, the energy, needed for the higher levels. Second, the higher levels control those below them in the hierarchy.

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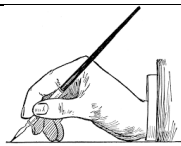
1. What according to Parsons are the basic functional pre-requisites which are essential for the social system?

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2. Name two books written by Talcott Parsons.

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3. How does Parsons distinguish individual action from behaviour?

Stop and Read:

Personality system:
The personality system is controlled and regulated by the cultural as well as the social system. The personality is defined as the organized system of orientation and motivation of action of the individual actor. The basic and most significant component of the personality is the "need disposition" according to Parsons. Need-disposition is different from drives because drives are innate tendencies and need-dispositions are not innate but tendencies, acquired through the process of action. In other words, need-disposition is defined as drives that are shaped by social setting. Parsons differentiated among three basic types of need-dispositions. Firstly tendency of actors to seek love, approval and so forth from their social relationships, secondly internalized values, determine actors to follow various cultural standards and finally role expectations lead actors to give and get appropriate responses. This gives a very passive image of actors. Though it is claimed that person can do creative modifications in his action, the dominant impression that emerges from Parson's work is passive personality system. He lined personality system with the social system in various ways: Firstly, actors must learn to see themselves in a way that fits with the place they occupy in society, secondly, role expectations are attached to each of the roles occupied by individual actors (Ritzer, 2011).

2.3.2 Aspects of Action System

The interaction of individual actors under various social conditions develops a process of interaction. In term of action, object world is classified into three classes such as social, physical, and cultural objects. Actor or ego is the social object, physical objects are empirical entities and cultural objects are symbolic elements such as ideas, beliefs, symbols and values. There are three systems in society for three objects of the world, which gives concrete evidence of individual action in society. These three concrete systems of social action are the social system, the personality system and the cultural system. According to Parsons each of the three

systems must be considered independent in the organization of the action system. It means that three systems maintain interdependence and interrelationship but they cannot be regarded as one system. They are integrative whole and they work in integration. Each system is essential to the survival of the other, which means they are interdependent and not social system is complete without having a mutual interdependence between cultural and personality system (Ritzer, 2011).

Stop and Read:

Cultural System

Cultural system is one element of the action system. Culture mediates interaction among actors and integrates the personality and social systems. In the social system, culture is embodied in norms and values and in the personality system, it is internalized by the actor. But the cultural system has its own separate existence besides the parts of the personality system and social system. The cultural system exists in the form of the social stock of knowledge, symbols and ideas.

Talcott Persons defined the cultural system in terms of its relationship to the other action systems. Thus culture is seen as a patterned, ordered system of symbols that are objects of orientation to actors, internalized aspects of the personality system and institutionalized patterns in the social system (Ritzer, 2011).

2.4 SOCIAL SYSTEM

Talcott Parsons moves from social action to the analysis of social structure and social system. In this way he moved from the analysis of micro-level of reality consisting of the individual action or the unit act and a succession of unit acts called social action to the analysis of the macro level of social reality called the social system consisting of a series of social actions between many actors or patterns of interaction. Parsons defined a social system as-

"A social system consists in a plurality of individual actors interacting with each other in a situation which has at least a physical or environmental aspect, actors who are motivated in terms of a tendency to the 'optimization of gratification' and whose relation to their situations, including each other, is defined and mediated in terms of a system of culturally structured and shared symbols" (Ritzer, 2011).

Social system constitutes of actors, who maintain interaction in a certain situation under social and physical environment to optimize the gratification and culture. He used the concepts like status-role to analyse the social system. Status-role is a structural component of the social system, not an individual aspect (Ritzer, 2011). Talcott Parsons's social system is based on the following assumptions:

1. Systems have the property of order and interdependence of parts.

2. Systems tend toward self-maintaining order or equilibrium.

3. The system may be static or involved in an ordered process of change

4. The nature of one part of the system has an impact on the form that the other parts can take.

5. Systems maintain boundaries with their environments.

6. Allocation and integration are two fundamental processes necessary for a given state of equilibrium of a system.

7. Systems tend toward self-maintenance involving the maintenance of boundaries and of the relationships of parts to the whole, control of environmental variations, and control of tendencies to change the system from within.

Thus, he seeks to define the social system in terms of the following key concepts:

1. Actors

2. Interaction

3. Environment

4. Optimization of gratification

5. Culture.

He tends to concentrate on the structures of society and their relationship to each other. These structures were seen as mutually supportive and tending toward a dynamic equilibrium. The emphasis was on how the order was maintained among the various elements of society. (Wrong,1994). The change was seen as an orderly process, and Parsons ultimately came to adopt a neo-evolutionary view of social change. Parsons was concerned not only with the social system but he also tries to establish a relationship with the other action systems. Thus, his functionalism begins with the observation that:

1. The behaviour in the society is structured.

2. This means that relationships between members of society are organised in terms of rules.

3. Social relationships are therefore patterned and recurrent.

4. Values provide the general guidelines for behaviour and they are translated into more specific directives in terms of roles and norms.

5.The structure of society can be seen as the sum total of normative behaviour and the sum total of social relationships are governed by norms.

2.4.1 Status-Role and Pattern of Interaction in the Social System

Despite Parsons commitment to viewing the social system as a system of interaction, Parsons did not take interaction as his fundamental unit in the study of the social system. Rather he used the 'status-role' complex as the basic unit of the system. This is neither an aspect of actors nor an aspect of interaction, but rather a structural component of the social system. Thus, status refers to the structural position within the social system and role is what the actor does in such a position. Social system has numbers of positions and individuals are associated with these positions, enjoy different statuses based on their roles. A particular individual actor is associated with various statuses and performs his roles accordingly. The

actor is a blending of statuses and roles rather than mere actions based on thinking of mind (Ritzer, 2011). Status-role makes the pattern of interaction in the social system. Status-roles are the units of the social system just as individual actors or it is a unit of social action. The actor may change but the pattern of interaction remains stable in the social system because the interaction is according to the status-role. In addition to status-role Parsons was interested in other components of social systems such as norms and values because norms and values determine the performance of the role in the different positions in the social system. That is the process of institutionalization that organizes the status-role in the social system by regulating them through norms and values.

In addition to a concern with the status role, Parsons was interested in studying the large-scale components of social systems such as collectivities, norms, and values. That is why we do not call him simply structuralist, but also a functionalist. He thus delineated a number of the functional prerequisites of a social system. These are:

1. Social systems must be structured so that they operate compatibly with other systems.
2. To survive, the social system must have the requisite support from the other systems.
3. The system must meet a significant proportion of the needs of the actors.
4. The system must elicit adequate participation from its members.
5. It must have at least a minimum of control over potentially disruptive behaviour.
6. If conflict becomes sufficiently disruptive it must be controlled.
7. A social system requires a language in order to survive.

Here, one thing that we need to remember is that Parsons' focus was on large-scale systems and their relationship to one another. Even when he talked about social actors, it was from the point of view of the system.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. How does Parsons define a social system?

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2. What does Parsons use as his fundamental unit in the study of social system?

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3. Write two functional prerequisites of a social system as given by Parsons.

Parsons again focused on broader systems and relationships among systems. The social system along with personality system and the cultural system institutionalised the norms within the social system and so Parsons concluded by saying that these are the three sub-systems or what may be called an overall system of action. This means that social action must be

understood by relating the social system to the personality system and cultural system (Ritzer, 2011).

2.5 SOCIAL SYSTEM AND ACTORS

Talcott Parson viewed that norms and values of a system transfer to the actors within the system. These norms and values are internalized by actors in course of their action through socialization, which becomes part of an actor's consciences. For Parsons, socialization is a lifelong process because norms and values related to various stages of an individual's life are inculcated in due course of time. So the socialization process ensures conformity in the social system, but a variety of individual action also exists. He argued that variation and changes are the common aspects of society, so the system should accept some degree of variation and deviance. At the same time, a social control mechanism is also essential to ensure conformity. For him, if a social system is flexible, individual enjoy liberty and freedom. But rigid society does not accept deviation and ultimately society becomes conservative. So there are two important mechanisms of social equilibrium such as socialization and social control. Individualism is accepted in society but only in a certain limit, whereas over individualism and deviance are usually met by re-equilibrating the mechanism. Therefore it is argued that social order is maintained by the social system. The process of socialization is considered conservative because according to Parsons need-dispositions make the actors loyal to the social system. Individuals have less opportunity to show their creativity as society binds their behaviour (Ritzer, 2011).

Activity

To maintain order in society, social control mechanism is inevitable. Try to find out some social control mechanisms and see how they work and maintain order in society

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2.5.1 Variable Pattern of Action

For Parsons, there are dichotomous choices between two categories of action in the role performance. This dichotomous choice of the action takes place between two situations and between two roles. These are:

a) Affective or Affective neutrality: It uses for evaluation of the amount of emotion or affect, which is attached to role performance in a given situation. For example, the role performance of a doctor in a situation must be affectively neutral that is without emotion in order to ensure proper care and effective treatment of patients. The role performance of a mother in a situation must be affective that is it must be emotional in order to ensure proper care and efficient socialization of children.

b) Diffusion or Specific: It refers to the scope of obligation in role performance so that the obligation may be extensive considering many aspects of the relationship or it may be narrow considering only one aspect of the relationship (specific). For example, role performance of a doctor is determined by a narrow scope of obligation because the doctor considers only one aspect of his relationship with the patient. On the other hand, the role performance of mother is extensive and it considers many aspects of the relationship.

c) Particularism and Universalism: It refers to the evaluation of the role performance of others, which may be according to common impersonal standards in some situations (universalism) or according to personal standards (Particularism). For example, the evaluation of law is universal whereas, evaluation of personal standards in particular.

d) Ascription and Achievement: Ascription refers to the performance of the role based on ascribed qualities which one can get by birth, or fixed qualities, which are mostly inherited by individuals. And achievement refers to the performance of a role based on qualification and skill that he or she acquired. For example,

officer's role performance is achieved role, based on qualities like skills, efficiency and qualification in contrast to role performance of Brahmin, which is ascribed.

e) Self-orientation and Collective orientation: It refers to role performance based on self-interest and personal goals in contrast to collective interest and collective goals (Ritzer, 2011).

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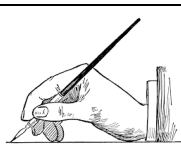
1. What is affective neutrality?

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2. What is the difference between ascription and achievement?

2.6 SUMMING UP

Talcott Parsons is one of the prominent functionalists who focused on the social system and its order and how the equilibrium is maintained in society. He argued that there are four functional pre-requisites of a social system such as adaptation, goal attainment, integration and pattern maintenance. He argued that if society is to survive these need should be fulfilled.

Parson began the study of society in the micro levels of social reality that is from the study of individuals and their action in his first book 'Structure of

Social Action', which was published in 1937. He focused on how individual acts and argued that an individual creates their actions according to their goals and situations. Individual action, which Parsons calls the unit act, is the basic unit of society from which, there emerges the pattern of interaction, social structure and social system at the macro level of reality.

Talcott Parsons moved his focus from social action to the social system. He focused on how the pattern of individual action based on norms and values leads to the process of institutionalization of social action. Status-role makes a pattern of interaction possible to take place in the social system. Status-roles are the units of the social system just as individual actors. Talcott Parsons also focused on how the norms and values of a system are inculcated by actors.

There also exists a pattern variable of actions. The dichotomous choice of the action takes place between two situations and between two roles. These are affective or affective neutrality, diffusion or specific, particularism and universalism, ascription and achievement, self-orientation and collective orientation.

Parsons views all the four components of an organisation, such as the cultural, social, psychological and biological as being analytically separable and mutually reducible. Each of them possesses unique and emergent properties which make them uniquely distinct from one another. At the same time, there is a high level of inter-relatedness, inter-penetration among these components of a system, a circumstance which is basic to a fundamental working assumption for the smooth survival of a society.

2.7 QUESTIONS

1. What is action system? What are the different elements of action system?

2. How does Parsons move from micro to macro aspects of society?
3. What are the four institutions required for meeting functional needs of the society?
4. How does Parsons link social system with cultural system and personality system?
5. How does society maintain order according to Parsons?
6. Critically write why we call Talcott Parsons a structural functionalist?

2.8 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. (2013). *Sociology Themes and Perspectives*. Collins, India

Ritzer, G. (2011). *Sociological Theory*. McGraw Hill Education (India) Private Ltd, New Delhi.

Wrong, D. (1994). *The Problem of Order: What Unites and Divides Society*. Free Press, New York.

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UNIT 3: STRUCTURATION: ANTHONY GIDDENS

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Sociologists throughout the ages have debated over the fundamental issue that is the relationship between the individual and society. There are debates on questions such as whether individuals are the products of the society or individuals collectively or individually create the social world around them, is the individual free and in control of his or her own life or are we all merely the subjects of the society that we were born into? The two parties were mainly prominent in this debate, on the one hand, functionalism and Marxism, who consider society as the determinant of individual action and behaviour and on the other hand phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism believed that individuals create and construct the social world. The British sociologist Anthony Giddens like Max Weber rejected the dogmatism of both structuralism and individualism and proposed the theory of structuration to present a balanced idea and understanding of the relationship between individual and society.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- Explain Giddens' view on structuralism, functionalism and action theories;

- Compare and contrast Giddens' structuration and other macro or micro theories;

- Describe Anthony Giddens' concept of duality of the structure;

- Describe the importance of structure and agents in the theory of Anthony Giddens;

- Explain how Giddens integrated both structure and agency under the theory of structuration.

Stop and Read

Biographical Sketch: Anthony Giddens

Anthony Giddens is one of the most influential contemporary sociologists from Great Britain. He was born on January 18, 1938 and studied at the University of Hull, the London School of Economics and the University of London. He joined as a lecturer of sociology first in the University of Leicester in 1961 and then in the Cambridge University in 1969. He carried numbers of works of international repute. *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies* was the most remarkable work of Giddens. He gradually formulated his own theoretical perspective, which has come to be known as structuration and ultimately produced the work *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. In 1990s Giddens produced his interesting research in the books such a *Modernity and Self-identity* (1991) and *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992) (Ritzer, 2011).

3.3 SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SYSTEM IN GIDDENS'THEORY OF STRUCTURATION

Anthony Giddens is critical of main frameworks of social theory such as interpretative theories, functionalism and structuralism. The interpretative

theories like the theory of action, phenomenology etc. emphasizes action and completely ignored the power of social institutions. This indicates that the individual is free from the influence and determination of norms and values. In contrast, functionalism fully focused on social institutions and social system and ignored the capacity of the individual mind to act consciously. In functionalism, the structure is considered as a descriptive term used for the more or less static pattern or organization of social relationships while the more active, explanatory part of the theory is carried by the notion of function. The structuralism focuses on understanding structure, which appears as an underlying determinant of surface appearances and very little importance given to action. Giddens makes the distinction between structure and system, which can serve as the starting point for the clarification of his conception of structure. His view of social system broadly corresponds to the widely accepted concept 'structure cum system' as an observable pattern or organization of relationships.

Giddens defined that systems are the "Reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organized as regular social practices" or, "Social systems involve regularized relations of interdependence between individuals or groups that typically can be best analysed as recurrent social practices" (Clark, 1984).

It is required to give a clear meaning of systems of relations and social practices. The systems are situated doings of concrete subjects and therefore exist in time and space. Giddens distinguished system from structures. Structures for him are temporally present only in their instantiation in the constituting moments of social systems. Giddens referred to the difference between language and speech as an example. Language as a set of signs and the rules of their use possessed by a community of speakers, and speech as concrete acts of communication performed by members of that community. In fact, speech acts do exist in time and space and they manifest and instantiate language. But language as

a set of rules and resources has existence only in the moments of its use to constitute speech acts. Similarly, structures become visible due to performances of actors to produce and reproduce social practices. Giddens clarified that society is not like a language but it is a practical activity and language is central to social life. Thus social structure and language, when differentiated in this way from speech and social acts, can be said to be subjectless" and therefore placed beyond any "subject/object" relationship which would tend to infringe on the measure of autonomy of actors essential to social agents. For Giddens, the structure does not refer, what means in structuralist and functionalist thought (Clark, 1984).

From the above discussion, we can understand that the actions of an actor are taken in the continuity with past. Which means in doing the fresh action, he actually reproduces his existing structure. Thus the continuity of the past and the reproduction of the present structure is what Giddens calls 'structuration'.

Therefore, according to Giddens, structure constitutes of rules and resources, which are used by actors in the production and reproduction of social practices to achieve the goal and interests. Structuration theory rests on the idea that social life is the reproduced practices of active agents or actors. The theory of structuration thus shifts the focus of social theory from the social order, social control, relationship between individuals and society and the internalization of values to the production and reproduction of social practices by agents or actors by their conscious performances within the limits set by nature and their own history. So in structuration theory, it has shown how both structure and agents mutually interdependent to each other (Clark, 1984).

Gidden's structuration suggests that every process of action is a production of something new, a fresh act, but at the same time, all action exits in continuity with the past, which supplies the means of its initiation. Thus he

argues that we must begin with " recurrent social practices" (1989: 252). Giving slightly more detail, he argues: " The basic domain of the study of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of social totality, but social practices ordered across time and space." (Gidddens,1984: 2)

Thus structuration actually describes an action: " to do or produce structure".

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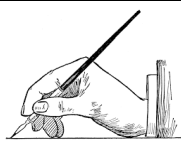
1. How does Anthony Giddens criticize the functionalism and action theories?

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2. What does structure mean in Giddens' theory of Structuration?

3.4 GIDDENS' IDEAS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRUCTURE AND HUMAN ACTION: DUALITY OF STRUCTURE

The theory of Structuration deals with the importance of both social structure and agency, which has been seen as interdependent to each other. Giddens believes that individual within the structures of a society has the power and freedom to express him or herself and social structures can be

changed by the change of the course of action. He viewed that neither society nor the individual is all powerful rather they are two sides of the same coin. The family, marriage, kinship, community works etc. are created by human action and again these institutions determine human behaviour in society. It is not valid to argue that social structure determines human action or vice-versa. For him social structure and human action do not exist independently of each other rather they are interdependent and intertwined. The relationship between structure and human action is indispensable that is social life is the product of individual action and subjective interpretation of the reality and society is not outside to human for controlling behaviour rather it is the product of skilled, knowledgeable and reflexive agents operating within specific contexts or structures (Slattery, 2003). According to Gidden's structuration analysis, social structure and agency or actor cannot be separated because they are connected to one another. Giddens considered this mutual interdependence of agency and structure as 'duality of structure'. Human actors create and construct social structure by means of new values, norms. The created values and norms are reinforced through social acceptance and regular performance. The social structure, which is created by actors in their action again constrain and determine their behaviour.

Giddens describes structure in terms of what he refers to as modalities, as a set of rules and resources that engages human action. He explains that rules restrict actions but the resources facilitate it (Lamsal, 2012).

He used the example of speech and language to explain his argument. All languages are governed by a set of rules regarding the way of speaking, writing and communication to present a common understanding and meaning. Therefore, in Giddens's structuration analysis, the duality of structure means the combination of social structure and human agency (actor) make the social structure of society. Structure and agency are the core elements of Giddens' theory (Slattery, 2003).

Giddens has placed great emphasis on individual actions. According to him, every social actor knows a great deal about the conditions of reproduction of the society of which he or she is a member. Thus, action has two things, the actor and the social structure. Classical theorists have argued all through their works that the social structure subordinates the activities of the actor. For them, actor or the individual is always given a secondary place. Giddens raised this question and said that agency and structure cannot be conceived of apart from one another; they are the two sides of the same coin. In Giddens' term, all social action involves structure and all structure involves social action. Agency and structure are inextricably interwoven in ongoing human activity or practice.

In describing agency structure dualism, Giddens raised questions against the classical theories which mostly are of the opinion that social structure subordinates the activities of the actor. Thus Gidden's theory is an attempt to overcome the dualism that he sees as plaguing other theories-a dualism that gives priority either to actors or to social structures. Structures are created by humans, but they, in turn, constrain and enable human action. Thus Giddens theory of Structuration emphasized the following points:

1. Human Agency
2. Social Practice
3. Reflexivity
4. Structure

Stop and Read

What is Duality of Structure?

For Giddens the duality of structure refers to the "*essential recursiveness of social life, as constituted in social practices: structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices*" (Jones & Karsten, 2003).

Therefore he emphasized on structuration as an ongoing process rather than structure as a static property of social systems. Giddens adopts specific and meanings for certain key terms:

STRUCTURE(S): Rules and resources organized as properties of social systems. Structure only exists as 'structural properties'.

SYSTEM(S): Reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organized as regular social practices.

STRUCTURATION: Conditions governing the continuity or transformation of structures, and therefore the reproduction of social systems (Jones & Karsten, 2003).

The strong emphasis on the individual and its actions in sociological theories leads to a neglect of adequate understanding of social institutions. Giddens is very much critical of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim on one hand, and George Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman, Harold Garfinkel, Alfred Schutz and the micro sociologists on the other hand. Giddens raises some important questions: to what degree can we as individuals create our own lives and frames our own lives, and to what degree are we already constrained by society and its structures when we are born?

3.5 ASPECTS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Rules and resources are the two aspects of the structure identified by Giddens. They are the basis of social order and organized human behaviour. In the social life, individual shows loyalty to rules of society. Rules may be informal or formal, required behaviour or expected behaviour. Rules expect conformity by obeying the law or behaving in a correct manner. Resources refer stock of materials, money, labour, skills and powers uses in producing goods and services. Men and women as actors and particularly as leaders and managers create social, economic and political structures as a means to mobilizing and organizing people. For Giddens, men are acting and reflexive human being but structuralists and

determinists ignored this aspect of the individual actor. But Giddens didn't argue that the individual is completely a free agent. He or she may create and reproduce social structures but the individual is also constrained by them because they have been collectively created and enforced particularly by those in power. Giddens recognizes this duality and argues that society may appear as a determinant and powerful but men have the capacity to bring change in society by changing its leadership and its structure if there is a collective will to do so. Giddens placed importance on both structure and individual actors or human agency for understanding social order (Slattery, 2003). According to Giddens analytically rules and resources should be separated into three kinds:

i.   the communication of meanings via interpretative schemes
ii.   the exercise of power as transformative capacity and
iii.   the evaluative judgment of conduct through norms and sanctions .

He argued that all the three kinds of rules and resources are intermixed in reality or actual social practices. Social rules are not static and fixed but can be altered by individual actions. Similarly, morality or social obligations are not arbitrary influence over actors rather they can be questioned, debated and redefined (Clarke, 1984).

Thus it can be understood in terms of structure-agency and macro-micro perspectives also. It means actors operate their roles within the context of rules produced by social structures. As a result, social structures do not have inherent stability outside human action because they are socially constructed. Rather through the exercise of reflexivity, agents modify social structures by acting outside the constraints that the structures place on them.

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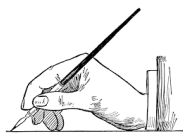
1. Why are structure and agency not independent entities?

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2. What are rules and resources?

3.6 HUMAN AGENCY: THE OTHER PART OF GIDDENS' STRUCTURATION

According to Anthony Giddens, the main essence of human behaviour is neither motivation nor self-interest. But human behaviour is the result of the capacity of an individual to understand the way of acting, interpret and understand the behaviour of other in any given situation. Men are conscious or self-conscious in their behaviour and Giddens identified a hierarchy of conscious thinking of men:

Discursive or reflexive consciousness: Men and women can realize and find the ways of tackling a problem or a situation, which may be a reflection of past action or determine the future action.

Practical consciousness: practical knowledge is the knowledge, regarding the way of acting in any given situation. It is the individual's capacity to relate abstract ideas and knowledge in the practical action. The individual tends to have practical knowledge about the situation, which they encounter every day and ultimately, determine their action in any situation even if it is strange depending on their own practical knowledge.

Unconsciousness consciousness: It refers to the underlying motivation and the needs of the individual for security and survival that drive their behaviour particularly in emergency situations that is when normal social structures collapse as in a fire or a disaster (natural or man-made disaster) (Slattery, 2003).

Therefore social structure and human agency are bound to work together in the process of structuration. Individuals' action creates and constructs social structures. Similarly, social structures determine and control human behaviour. But this control of individual behaviour by the social structure is not permanent because the structure can be changed by evolution or revolution or overturned by collective human action (Slattery, 2003).

3.7 INTEGRATION OF STRUCTURE (MACRO) AND AGENCY (MICRO)

Structuration is a theoretical approach proposed by Anthony Giddens to integrate the micro and macro perspectives in sociology. Macro perspectives such as functionalism, conflict and others consider social structure as a determinant of individual behaviour, while, micro perspectives such as symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and others consider social structure as the product of individual action and interaction in society. Structuration of Anthony Giddens tried the bridge the gap created by both macro and micro sociological perspectives. The relationships of individuals are created and controlled by the individuals themselves. On the other hand, it is not possible to maintain social order or equilibrium in society without having a social structure that has uniform rules and procedures. Individuals abide by the common rules of society for survival. On the other hand, actors produce and reproduce social structure through their action and interaction. Individuals can change society by using the mind and consciousness in their action and thereby influencing

the structure. In this way, Giddens theory of Structuration brings structure and agency together (Lamsal, 2012).

Stop and Read

What is Structuration theory?

Structuration theory is considered as an attempt to diminish the fundamental division within the social sciences between macro and micro school of though. That is those who consider social phenomena as determined by the social structures and others who consider social phenomena as the products of the action of human agents. Individual can create and construct the social structure but at the same time this social structure determines individual behaviour. Giddens argued that structure and agency should be viewed as mutually interacting duality not as independent and conflicting elements. Social structure is therefore constructed by human agents in their actions, while the actions of humans in social contexts produce and reproduce the social structure. Structure is thus not simply an exogenous restraining force, but is also a resource to be deployed by humans in their actions (Jones &Karsten, 2003).

3.8 SUMMING UP

Thus Giddens has not emphasized on structure and agency separately. He criticized functionalism, action theories and structuralism for giving a one-sided explanation of either society or action. Giddens has not joined any of the existing perspectives in sociology instead gave his own theoretical perspective, which is called structuration. So he ultimately formulated his idea of the duality of structure. He emphasized on the understanding of the integration of structure and agency or actor. He defined the structure as a combination of rules and resources. Agency and actor for him have the capacity to produce and reproduce social practices consciously as well

unconsciously and thus reproducing the structure also depending on their social situation.

3.9 QUESTIONS

1. What are structure and system?
2. Write the significance of Giddens' perspective of structuration in sociology.
3. Explain Giddens' idea of interdependence between structure and agency.

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UNIT 4: STRUCTURATION AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Sociological theories in classical period were mainly based on positivism, functionalism and conflict or Marxism which occupy a very important position in sociology even today. In other words, we can say that macro perspectives have been in the foundation of the sociological study. These perspectives suggest that society, social system and social structure as the mechanisms to determine and control the actions of the members of society. In Anthony Giddens view, macro perspectives merely focus on the structure and ignore the individual's capacity and potential. For him, sociologists who apply these perspectives have developed a block in sociology and in one term they are regarded as structuralists. On the other hand, micro perspectives were developed just to focus on the capability and potential of individuals such as interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, etc. The sociologists who apply these perspectives completely ignore the structure of society and merely emphasize on individuals. They believe that the individuals create and recreate the social

structure, rather than the social structure that determines the actions of individuals. In Giddens view, this block in sociology just focuses on agents. So there is a dualism in sociological theories. Anthony Giddens initiated to integrate the structure and agents in his perspective-'Structuration'. He considered both structure and agents are an indispensable part of the human society.

The first part of this unit deals with the structuration perspective in brief. We have also focused on discourse analysis in sociology, which is a very conducive method of understanding the change in modern contemporary society. Discourse became popular in sociology due to Michel Foucault. He tried to understand the social structure and agency in a different way than conventional perspectives. Thus, structuration perspective and discourse analysis can be seen as a changing trend in sociological theory in contemporary modern society.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss structuration as a new sociological perspective;
- Describe discourse analysis on sociological issues;
- Analyse the integration of structure and agency in structuration approach of Anthony Giddens;
- Discuss Michel Foucault's idea of discourse.

4.3 STRUCTURATION

Anthony Giddens developed the concept of structuration in order to find a way to solve the division in sociological perspectives. There emerged the contradiction between perspectives focused on mere structure and those perspectives like phenomenology, interactionism and others, who focused only on the individual. The approaches like phenomenology and interpretivism consider the individual as an agent and stress on the

intentionality and understanding as the central theme in explaining the construction of the social world, which sought to understand how social world is constructed. On the other hand, structuralists and functionalists regard that society shapes and controls the actions of agents. Giddens extensively criticized both the sides on the grounds that both agency and structure are indispensable for any adequate sociological explanation. Giddens attempted to integrate both structure and agency through his theory, structuration. The main aim of the structuration theory has been to highlight the problems of the social sciences by providing an account of the constitution of social life and of the nature of the social action and social systems.

Giddens argued that social scientists should begin with "recurrent social practices" which means by giving focus on social practices the social scientists could establish a relationship between agency and structure. Thus Giddens's theory of Structuration is intended to illuminate the duality and dialectical interplay of agency and structure where he stated that agency and structure cannot be conceived of apart from one another; they are the two sides of the same coin. In Giddens's terms, they are a duality, means all social action involves structure, and all structure involves social action. Agency and structure are inextricably interwoven in ongoing human activity or practice. Giddens further argued that the traditional distinction between dualism of agency and structure, individual and society, voluntarism and determinism, and subject and object is difficult to remove just by uniting both the approaches. Rather reconceptualization of the debate in terms of duality is required:

"In place of each of these dualisms as a single conceptual move, the theory of structuration substitutes the central notion of the duality of structure. By the duality of structure I mean ... structure is both the medium and the outcome of the reproduction of practices" (Loyal, 2003, p-28).

According to Giddens, it was interpretive perspectives, which were founded upon imperialism of the subject, while, functionalism and structuralism proposed the imperialism of the object. Thus, for Giddens, the theory of structuration achieves the aim of making a synthesis of agency and structure.

4.4 STRUCTURE AND AGENCY

Anthony Giddens contrasted both the approach that emphasizes on the structure as the determinant of the social life of individual and the approach emphasizing on the individual as the source of social structure and society. Giddens, instead, wanted to understand how individual action is determined and at the same time tried to focus on recognizing the reproduction of structure and organizational features of contemporary society through individual action. Giddens argued in favour of bringing a change in the theoretical discourse made on distinctive approaches to understand society and individual. According to Giddens, regarding individual and society in distinctive terms, which most often creates misunderstanding about the actual practices of social life. We must use different approaches to find out a solution of this difficulty. With this, Giddens developed the concept of structure in his book, *The Constitution of Society*. And by introducing the concept "Structuration" he meant, "the account for the production of habitual practices as simultaneously the force of systematic structures and the individual accomplishments of agents" (Elliott, 2009, p-125).

While going to define Structuration, Giddens cleared that society is not considered as fixed and static, rather it is the example of the active flow of social life. He was influenced by linguistic structuralism and argued that "we fashion ourselves as individuals and societies in and through language" (Elliott, 2009, p-126). However, he was a critique of structuralism and post-structuralism and rejected structuralism's argument which states that 'society is like a language'. Giddens dealt with structuralist by putting the idea of rule-following in analysing similarity

between social action and language. It means that just like how language is based on certain rules, a social action also follows social rules. The rules are sometimes formal in nature. The important point forwarded by Giddens is that social action is governed by rules but the action is not pre-determined by these rules. For him, social practices are governed by rules but at the same time, he emphasized the fact that individual action is creative and it is not predetermined. The creativity of human action refers to the capacity of actors to apply rules to transform the existing ways of action. According to Giddens, human action is a continuous flow of social practices, whereas, acts are distinct particles of individual action. Giddens highlighted a stratification model of the human subject comprising three levels of knowledge or motivation: discursive consciousness, practical consciousness and the unconsciousness.

Discursive consciousness refers to the ability of agents to express about their own action to themselves as well as others. Giddens argued that agents are knowledgeable about their actions and the awareness about this includes discursive component. Thus, it entails the ability to describe our actions in words.

Practical consciousness refers to the ability of actors to know about their own action, beliefs and motivation but the action cannot be expressed discursively. It is not possible for human beings to articulate their activities and the world despite their knowledge about these. It involves actions that the actors take for granted, without being able to express in words what they are doing. It is the latter type of consciousness that is particularly important to Structuration theory, reflecting a primary interest in what is done rather than what is said.

Thus, by giving focus on practical consciousness, we can make a smooth transition from agents to agency, where we can actually see the things that agents actually do. According to Giddens, agency concerns events of which

the individual is a perpetrator. That is why we most often say that 'whatever happened would not have happened if that individual had not intervened'. Thus Giddens gave great weight to the importance of agency, and most importantly he separated agency from intentions because he wanted to make the point that actions often end up being different from what was intended: in other words, intentional acts often have unintended consequences.

Unconsciousness, according to Giddens, is a crucial feature of human motivation and is differentiated from discursive and practical consciousness by the barrier of repression.

Giddens's argument- 'individuals as knowledgeable agents' refers to the ability of human beings to explain their own action to themselves and to others. Thus, his "Discursive consciousness is the ability of people to put things into words- articulation of the reasons for social action" (Elliott, 2009, p-126).

Activity

Find out the macro and micro sociological perspectives. Show how they hold position in two different poles in order to analyse the society?

4.5 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND AGENCY

Social structures are abstract entities, which may be defined as, a set of possibilities. The relationship between structure and the actual expression of the structure through events is very complex. Events are not simply the effects of abstract social structures. The relationship between structure and

agency is mediated by intermediate organizational entities, called 'social practices'. Social practices are the ways of controlling the selection of certain structural possibilities and the exclusion of others, and to put a regular control over these selections over time, in particular areas of social life. The language and particularly semiosis, which includes signification and communication through visual images is an element of the social at all levels. Language is considered as the abstract social structure. In language, texts work as elements of social events but it is not the simple effects of potentials defined by languages. There are intermediate organizational entities of linguistic nature. These are linguistic elements of networks of social practices. This is called orders of discourse, which is a network of social practices in its language aspect. Here the order of discourse is not linguistic structures but discourses, genres and styles. So orders of discourse can be seen as the social organization and control of linguistic variation (Norman, 2003).

Discourse as an element of social practices:

Discourse can appear in three main ways in social practice. Firstly, it appears as part of an action, that is a way of action and interaction through speaking or writing. For example, an interview is a discourse of social practice because it is a particular way of interacting. Secondly, discourse appears in the representations of the material world, of other social practices, reflexive self-representations of the practice in question. Here discourse carries two senses: one is abstract, which includes language and other types of semiosis as elements of social life and other is concrete in nature, which connotes particular ways of representing part of the world. The example of discourse in a concrete sense is a political discourse of New Labour, as opposed to the political discourse 'old' Labour. Thirdly, discourse appears in the body language in order to express particular social or personal identities, which can be considered as style. For instance, discourse appears in a particular way of behaviour, use of the language of a manager for self-identification or fulfilment of expected norms. The

concept of discourse was popularised in social science by Foucault (Norman, 2003).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is social structure?

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2. What do you mean by social practices?

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3. What are the three main ways in which discourse can appear in social practices?

4.6 DISCOURSE OF MICHEL FOUCAULT

Discourse is the basis of Foucault's theory of power and social structure. According to him, power and knowledge are not only closely linked but also indivisible. He argued that knowledge is power and at the same time knowledge is controlled by those who hold power. It is quoted:

Not only is knowledge power, but those holding power control knowledge-
'Those who have power in any area of human activity have the capacity to
define and control knowledge in their area of control and so subject other
to their rule, be they a professor; a doctor or a military general; there is no
power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge

nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power-relations' (Slattery, 2003).

In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault tried to analyse how society tends to define and exercise control over the poor, unemployed, sick and mad. He stated that before the 19th century, the state was not responsible for these groups but with changing and developing new responsibilities upon the state for its citizen, modern definition and control emerged. New discourse developed to define the poor, unemployed, sick and mad in the developed modern state. The new discourse considered the poor and unemployed as lazy and recommended and provided the system to teach self-discipline and work ethic; the sick got treated as a patient in the hospital and provided confinement in bed. The mad were regarded as deviant, sinful or sick and the system of treating them in the madhouse emerged by confining and isolating them from rest of the society (Slattery, 2003).

Thus, Foucault is concerned with how people govern themselves and others through the production of knowledge. Among other things, he sees knowledge as a powerful weapon of generating power by constituting people as subjects and then governing the subjects with that knowledge. He is critical of the hierarchisation of knowledge. Because the highest – ranking forms of knowledge (the sciences) have the greatest power, and they are singled out for the most severe critique. Foucault is interested in techniques, the technologies that are derived from knowledge (specially scientific knowledge) and how they are used by various institutions to exert power over people. Although he sees links between knowledge and power, he does not see a conspiracy done by the elite members of society to rule over the non-elite. Rather he found that such a conspiracy would imply conscious actors, whereas he is more inclined to see structural relationships, especially between knowledge and power.

Looking over the sweep of history, Foucault does not see progress from primitive brutishness to more modern humaneness based on more sophisticated knowledge systems. Instead, Foucault sees history lurching from one system of domination (based on knowledge) to another. Although this is a generally bleak image, on the positive side, Foucault believes that knowledge power is always contested; there is always ongoing resistance to it. Foucault looks at historical examples, but he is interested primarily in the modern world. As he puts it, he is "writing the history of the present" (Foucault,1979:31).

In this way, Foucault is doing archaeology of knowledge, specifically of psychiatry. He begins with the Renaissance, when madness and reason were not separated. However between 1650 and 1800 distance between them was established, and ultimately reason comes to subjugate madness. In other words Foucault is describing "a broken dialogue" between reason and madness. He describes the end result:

Here reason reigned in the pure state, in a triumph arranged for it in advance over a frenzied unreason. Madness was thus torn from that imaginary freedom which still allowed it to flourish on the Renaissance horizon. Not so long ago, it had floundered about in broad daylight: in King Lear, in Don Quixote. But in less than a half century, it had been sequestered and, in the fortress of confinement, bound to Reason, to the rules of morality and to their monotonous nights. (Foucault, 1965:64).

This has a clear resemblance with Weber's "iron cage", here Foucault mentioned about the 'monotonous nights" to be spent by the "mad" (the irrational) in the iron cage constructed by those with reason (rationality).

Again in his work, *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault revealed the discourses in the changing nature of punishment. According to him, society in and before the 18th century had the system of severe punishments like physical torture and the death penalty. But in contemporary time physical

punishment got replaced by psychological pain and restriction from liberty and freedom. Judgements are based on the motives of the criminal, who commits a crime. It is not based on the nature of the crime one commits. With the development of society and changing nature of punishments, new forms of knowledge fields or specialized experts such as psychologists, criminologists, judges and prison officers have emerged as dominant discourse (Slattery, 2003). Here Foucault is concerned with the period between 1757 and 1830s, a period during which the torture of prisoners was replaced by control over them by prison rules.(Characteristically, Foucault sees this change developing in an irregular way: it does not evolve rationally.) The general view is that this shift from torture to rules represented a humanization of the treatment of criminals: it had grown more kind, less painful and less cruel.. The reality from Foucault's point of view was that punishment had grown more rationalised and in many ways impinged more on prisoners. The early torture of prisoners may have made for good public displays, but it was a "bad economy of power" because it tended to incite unrest among the viewers of the spectacle (Foucault, 1979:80-81). The link between knowledge and power was clear in the case of torture, where we find that with the development of rules, the link became far less clear. The new system of rules was "more regular, more effective, more constant, and more detailed in its effects: in short, which increase its effects while diminishing its economic cost"(Foucault, 1979: 80-81).

According to Foucault, the new system was not designed to be more humane, but " to punish better and to insert the power to punish more deeply in to the social body.(Foucault,1979:82). In contrast to torture, this new technology of the power to punish occurred earlier in the deviance process, was more numerous, more bureaucratised, more efficient, more impersonal, more invariable and involved the surveillance not just of criminals but of the entire society.

Thus, according to Foucault, social structure has various fields of knowledge and discourse which exercises power of knowledge on people. Discourses recreate the existing knowledge and again new discourses will create new knowledge. Individuals are not just the subject of the discourses rather the creator of alternative discourses. Foucault also considered the capability of individuals to act even against the existing discourse and create a new discourse over time.

Activity

Foucault gave the example of change of discourse on the poor, unemployed, sick and mad. There are fields of knowledge, which carry discourses to dominate the people. These are medical science, law and market economics, etc. Try to find out some more examples of knowledge fields and their existing discourses.

4.7 SUMMING UP

Structuration and discourse analysis are the acclaimed approaches in the sociological analysis of human society. Structuration was initiated by Anthony Giddens to integrate the structure and agency in his understanding of the society. It was an opposition of dualism in sociological theories. Both structuralists and propagators of individual as the source of the emergence of social structure were rejected by Anthony Giddens and argued that both are indispensable. We cannot understand society by isolating structure from the agency and vice-versa.

Discourse analysis tried to focus on how modern contemporary society is changing social practices. Behind social events and practices, it is discourse, which ensures the appearance of changes. The discourse of Foucault focused on changing the existing knowledge and concepts of

various events and practices in the modern state. He argued that discourse of different fields of knowledge in society dominate the individuals and exercise the power over them. On the other hand, those who are powerful tend to impose the new discourse on the people to bring change in the state.

4.8 QUESTIONS

1. What is structuration approach?

2. Discuss how Anthony Giddens integrated the structure and agency in his understanding of society.

3. What is discourse?

4. How does Michael Foucault forward the discourse analysis in changing modern society?

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MODULE II: SUBJECTIVE UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY

UNIT 5: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY: BERGER AND LUCKMANN

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The book *The Social Construction of Reality* was written by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, which was published in 1957. It is concerned with the reality of everyday life. For them, it is necessary to understand how society is presented as a reality to the members in their everyday life. It is the task of the sociologist to clarify this reality as it appears in the common sense knowledge of the members of the society. In their common sense knowledge, members take for granted that the social reality is an ordered reality in their interpretation. This means that members of society have a natural attitude towards social reality in their common sense knowledge. Because of this natural attitude, members of society regard ordered reality as the external reality which exercises constraint. This external objective reality is seen as being there before birth and will be there after the death of the members of society. Berger and Luckmann say that this natural attitude of the members of society towards the social reality must be bracketed. Social reality is constructed by the members of

society. Berger and Luckmann tried to explain how this social reality is constructed by the members of society.

Thus, according to Berger and Luckmann, meaning is embedded in society and knowledge about what social reality is ,created and recreated in the institutions of society.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this Unit, you are expected to:

- Explain how social construction of reality is presented by Berger and Luckmann;
- Analyse the difference between objective world and subjective world;
- Describe how the individual lives with both subjective and objective realities.

5.3 REALITY OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Berger and Luckmann began their analysis with the understanding of social reality by focusing on how social reality appears in the common sense of the ordinary members of society instead of the intellectuals and their theoretical perspectives. The main focus here is to understand the reality of everyday life. To understand the reality of everyday life, its intrinsic character was taken into account before the sociological analysis. Everyday life of the members of society is interpreted by them and therefore they can attach subjective meanings. Berger and Luckmann write: "*Within the frame of reference of sociology as an empirical science it is possible to take this reality as given, to take as data particular phenomena arising within it, without further inquiring about the foundations of this reality, which is a philosophical task*". But in the phenomenological analysis we can't just ignore the philosophical aspect of everyday life. Because empirical

observation of everyday life as objective reality is insufficient for understanding how reality is constructed in society. Reality is not just what appears for the common members of society in their common sense knowledge. It is originated in the thoughts and actions of the members of society. We, therefore, must clarify the foundations of knowledge in everyday life, that is objectivation of subjective processes (and meanings) by which the inter-subjective common-sense world is constructed. There is no place of causal hypothesis or assertions about the ontological status of the phenomena in the phenomenological analysis of everyday life. The interpretation of common sense is important in the phenomenological analysis of everyday life.

Common sense contains innumerable pre- and quasi-scientific interpretations about everyday reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 33-34). For Berger and Luckmann, the reality of everyday life is an inter-subjective world, a world that the individual shares with others. The world of everyday life is shared with others as others also know about reality and its meaning. One cannot exist in everyday life without continually interacting and communicating with others. Individuals have a natural attitude towards reality as objectively ordered. In fact, natural attitude is not limited to some people, rather it is shared with all the members of society and because of this, objectification is possible to make this world orderly. The natural attitude is the attitude of common-sense consciousness precisely because it refers to a world that is common to many men. Common-sense knowledge is the knowledge which is shared with others in the normal, self-evident routines of everyday life (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 37).

The central concept is that people and groups interacting in a social situation over time, create and recreate concepts and mental representations of each other's actions. These interpretations in due course of time, will turn into habituated actions, which are involved in the reciprocal roles

played by the actors in relation to each other. With the passage of time, these roles have become available for the other members of society, who eventually accepted these roles and played it out as they became the institutionalised norms. In this way meaning is embedded in society. Thus knowledge is created through people's conceptions, beliefs of what reality is, which has been embedded in the institutional fabric of society. Thus reality is said to be socially constructed.

5.4 SOCIETY AS OBJECTIVE REALITY

There is a dialectical relationship between man and society. Men produce objective reality by the process of institutionalization and this social product of men is internalized by men of other generations through socialization. The analysis of the construction of society as an objective reality begins with the observation that men perform various activities, which are repeated. The repeated human activities become habitualized. The action which individual performs in a regular pattern usually turns into habitualized due to reproducing of similar activities in a similar pattern. It again indicates that habitualized action may be performed again in the future in the same manner, and people accepted it within their role. It means that there is no need of making decision every time on how to perform a particular activity. The action may be non-social or social. It is also possible that a solitary individual can habitualize his activities in an island. As men attach meanings to the activities they perform, habitualization makes it easy to remain free from defining activities every time in every situation because the meaning and purpose behind that activity is already set and accepted by society. Once activities become regular, a pattern develops, which can be easily anticipated.

Habitualization usually leads to the process of institutionalization. Berger and Luckmann said, *"Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors".* The typifications of habitualized actions constitute institutions, which are

always shared among actors involved in society. The social institutions are available to all the members of society. Typification of institutions also typifies actors and their actions who are already socialised within a pattern of behaviour and activity. The institutionalized pattern of activity is passed from one generation to another and finally develops objectivation. The historicity of social institutions ultimately controls and constraints individual behaviour by prescribing predefined patterns of conduct. Individuals perceive that social institutions were there before their birth and will be there after the death and therefore these become a constraining force over men's action in society. These objective realities constructed by men in one generation in the past become an objective reality and constraining mechanism for men in the present generation.

People apprehend the reality of everyday life as an ordered reality. Its phenomena are pre-arranged in patterns that seem to be independent of their apprehension. The reality of everyday life appears already objectified, that is constituted by an order of objects that have been designated as objects before their appearance on the scene. The language used in everyday life continuously provides them with the necessary objectifications and posits the order within which these make sense and within which everyday life has meaning for them. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 35-36).

Thus, in a certain point of time, the social world becomes objective and accepted as a given reality, which confronts the individual just like the reality of the natural world. Social formations as objective reality transform from one generation to another through internalization and socialization process. For a child as a new member of society, every reality appears as given and objective. All institutions appear in the same way, as given, unalterable and self-evident. The social institutions are external to the child, which cannot be resisted or altered. Since socialization is a never-ending process, individual experiences constraining force of the social

institutions as an objective world like the natural world. Berger and Luckmann write, *"Since institutions exist as external reality, the individual cannot understand them by introspections. He must "go out" and learn about them, just as he must learn about nature. This remains true even though the social world, as a humanly produced reality, is potentially understandable in a way not possible in the case of the natural world"* (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 65-70).

The reality of everyday life is shared with others in a face to face situation, where vivid presence of two persons and several modes of experiences are shared by both of them. As a result, there is a continuous interchange of expressivity from both sides. Every expression of person A is oriented towards person B, and vice versa and this continuous reciprocity of expressive acts is simultaneously available for of them. This means that, in a face to face situation, the other's subjectivity is available to a person through a maximum of symptoms. Thus in a face to face situation the other is fully real and this reality is a part of the overall reality of everyday life, and as such massive and compelling. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 42).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS
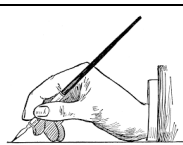
1. What is common-sense knowledge?

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2. What is habitualized action?

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3. According to Berger and Luckmann, how is objective reality

produced?

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5.5 SOCIETY AS SUBJECTIVE REALITY

The theoretical understanding of society must take into consideration both objective and subjective reality because society exists as an objective reality as well as subjective reality. There is a dialectical process composed of the three moments which are externalization, objectivation and internalization. These moments do not occur in isolation from each other in any particular phenomena. Society and its every part are simultaneously characterized by these three moments and we can analyse the society or any parts in terms of one or two moments. The individual member of society simultaneously externalizes her/his own being into the social world and internalizes it as an objective reality. The individual is not a born member of society rather socialization makes her/him social. An individual is born with a predisposition towards sociality and in course of socialization, s/he becomes a member of society. There is a temporal sequence in the life of every individual.

The process by which the externalized products of human activity attain the character of objectivity is objectivation. The beginning point of the process of socialization is internalization. Internalization means the immediate apprehension or interpretation of an objective event and understanding the meaning of the reality. Thus, in general sense internalization means the understanding of one's fellowmen and apprehension of the world as a meaningful and social reality.

This apprehension does not result from an autonomous creation of meaning by isolated individuals but begins with the individual 'taking over' the

world in which others already live. Individuals taking over the existing reality and social world and then recreate and even modify. In the process of internalization, individual not only understand the other's momentary subjective processes but also understand the world in which he lives. This is called the shared understanding of subjective actions and meaning of reality that is inter-subjectivity. Individuals start participating in the social world shared by them.

The ontogenetic process by which this is brought about is socialization, which may thus be defined as the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it. Primary socialization is the first stage of socialization through which a child becomes a member of society. Secondary socialization is the subsequent process which indicates that an already socialized man enters in the new sectors of the objective world of his society. There is the emergence of self in primary socialization as a reflection of the set of attitudes or roles of the particular others. Primary socialization involves learning sequences that are socially defined and accepted.

It is necessary to note that primary socialisation involves more than purely cognitive learning. In a highly charged emotional environment primary socialisation takes place. Without having such strong emotional attachment to the significant others, the learning process would be difficult if not impossible. The identification of the child with the significant others and with his own self takes place in a variety of emotional ways. It means internalisation of norms , values occurs only through identification. The child takes on the significant others' roles and attitudes, and in due course of time he internalised them, and makes them his own. And by this identification with significant others the child becomes capable of identifying himself, and thus acquire a subjectively coherent and plausible identity.

Again, the stages of learning and its definition vary in various societies. The stage of childhood, for instance, varies from society to society and there is a variation of social implications of childhood in terms of emotional qualities, moral accountability, or intellectual capacities. Individual's primary socialization ends at the point of emergence of consciousness in the mind about the generalized other. It means primary socialisation creates in the child's consciousness a progressive abstraction from the roles and attitude of specific others to roles and attitude in general. It means individual is now identifies not only with concrete others but with a generality of others, that is with a society. At this point s/he becomes an effective member of society by possessing a self and a world subjectively understandable to her/him.

But this internalization of society, identity and reality is not a one-time act rather happens in whole life as it is a never-finished process. This presents two further problems, first, how the reality is internalized in primary socialization and how it maintained to fit in consciousness, and second, how further internalizations or secondary socialization take place. A person's self-identification attain stability and continuity only through the identification with generalised others. Now he not only has an identity in connection with significant others, rather he has an identity in general which is subjectively apprehended, and it will remain the same no matter what others, significant or not are encountered. This is the phase of secondary socialisation where the individual internalizes the most complex social world composed of institutions, complex division of labour and stock of knowledge, which is distributed in society. All the various internalised roles and attitudes are incorporated within this new coherent identity. An individual acquires role-specific knowledge in secondary socialization, which means the internalization of semantic fields that results in the structuring routine interpretations and conduct within an institutional area. In primary socialization, the child identifies the significant others because of emotional attachment in the family while in secondary socialization,

identification occurs mutually as members of society under any social institution.

This formation of the generalised other becomes a part of consciousness, that plays a decisive role in socialisation. At this decisive phase of socialisation, the established objective reality of society along with the subjective establishment of a coherent and continuous identity becomes a part of individual's conscious mind as it is internalised by society. Thus society, identity and reality are subjectively crystallised in the same process of socialisation. And this crystallisation becomes concurrent with the internalisation of language as it constitutes both the most important content and the most important instrument of socialisation.

Thus, Berger and Luckmann have focused more on subjective rather than the objective reality, that is the reality as apprehended in individual consciousness rather than on reality as institutionally defined. In secondary socialization, the self becomes more conscious that what an individual acts in society is properly interpreted and it may be different from what internalized in primary socialization. In this way a symmetrical relationship is established between subjective and objective reality. What is real 'outside' corresponds what is real 'within'. And people can translate objective reality into subjective reality very easily. But at the same time, it should be remembered that the symmetry between objective and subjective reality cannot be considered as complete. The two realities correspond to each other, but they are not coextensive. There is always more objective reality 'available' than is actually internalised in any individual consciousness, simply because the contents of socialisation are determined by the social distribution of knowledge.

Yet the reality of everyday life maintains itself in a routine process, which is the essence of institutionalization. The individual also reproduces and

reaffirms the reality of everyday life during the course of social interaction. The reality which originally internalized by a social process is maintained in consciousness by social processes. Thus, subjective reality must coexist with objective reality. The objective reality which is defined and given is internalized by individuals consciously and it is not like the behaviour of matter found in the natural world (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 149-157).

5.6 SUMMING UP

Berger and Luckmann were concerned about the reality of everyday life. They argued that it is the task of the sociologist to clarify the reality as it appears in the common sense knowledge of the members of society. Members of society have a natural attitude towards social reality in their common sense knowledge. Men produce objective reality through their repeated action, habitualization and the subsequent process of institutionalization. In this sense, society is objective, outside of the individual. On the other hand, social reality is internalized by the individual in the process of socialization. The primary socialization internalizes the objective reality and secondary socialization makes the individual social being through establishing the institutionalized pattern of behaviour in society. Society rests on subjective reality because individuals' interpretations may not be uniform and there can be an alteration of given norms and regulations. Individual needs both objective and subjective reality in their everyday life.

5.7 QUESTIONS

1. What is objectivity and subjectivity in sociological research?
2. How is objective reality formed in society?
3. The social reality of everyday life is constructed not given and naturally formed. Discuss.
4. What according to Berger and Luckmann, should the sociologists do to understand the social construction of reality?

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UNIT 6: DRAMATURGICAL APPROACH: GOFFMAN'S PERCEPTION OF EVERYDAY LIFE

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Erving Goffman was a symbolic interactionist who became widely popular in the 1960s and 1970s because of his internationally acclaimed work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman was influenced by the Chicago tradition but Durkheim and Simmel also greatly influenced him. Durkheim's emphasis on the importance of ritual in social life and Simmel's interest in formal sociology, i.e. a sociology which seeks to analyse social relations in terms of their formal patterns rather than their content influenced him. But Goffman was much influenced by the interactionists and Chicago school. He was basically interested in interpersonal interaction. He developed a specialized field in sociology, which analyse the general form of relations in a situation of face-to-face interaction. Goffman was interested to highlight the fundamental importance of face-to-face interaction and how it occurs in natural settings (Sharrock, Hughes & Martin, 2003). Goffman's most famous works: *The Presentation of Everyday Life*, *Stigma*, *Asylums* and *Encounters* are focused on personal identity. He was very much influenced by Mead and

Blumer, which is reflected in his focus on the self in his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Like Mead, Goffman too considered human beings as active and knowledgeable, i.e. human beings act on the basis of their own interpretation of the situation. Human beings express their self in society according to the situation concerned. Goffman's works are filled with analyses of the self, which was given by Mead. Thus, Goffman argues that people interact with each other in the same manner as actors play on a stage. His dramaturgical analysis is based upon the investigation of social interaction in terms of theatrical performances, with the help of which he explains the status and role of an individual in a social setting. According to him a particular status is like a part of a play and a role serves as the script that supply actors playing a particular character the dialogues and actions. This performance of any individual is termed by Goffman as the presentation of the self. In this unit, a brief discussion is carried out on Goffman's work on the presentation of self in everyday life.

6.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this Unit, you are expected to:

- Explain the dramaturgical approach in sociology;
- Describe Goffman's idea of social life and the presentation of self in everyday life.

6.3 DRAMATURGICAL APPROACH

Dramaturgy is derived from the Greek word, *dramaturgia*, meaning composition of a play. G.E. Lessing was the first person, who established a modern understanding of dramaturgy as a theatrical concept and practice in his book, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. So, dramaturgy actually is a term used in theatre commonly, which was later brought in sociology by Erving Goffman in his works. He compared human life with the theatre. According to Goffman, just like a theatre, life has actors and audiences. Social reality including selves and the social world is created through the performance of actors in society. Every individual is an actor in social interaction, which is

a performance. People play various roles to carry out the performance of social interaction. Goffman advanced a dramaturgical perspective in his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. According to this perspective, actors participate in performances in various settings for particular audiences in order to shape their definition of the situation. The basic premise of dramaturgy is that "*the meaning of people's doing is to be found in the manner in which they express themselves in interaction with similarly expressive others*" (Gardner and Avolio, 1988).   Human interactions create the meaning as well as define the social activities in a particular situation. Dramaturgists also asserted that human behaviour can influence others. Dramaturgy focuses on how people express themselves in conjunction with others to create meaning (Gardner and Avolio, 1988).

To put it simply , Goffman saw much in common between theatrical performances and the kinds of "acts" we all put on in our day to day actions and interactions. Interaction is seen as very fragile, maintained by social performances. Poor performances or disruptions are seen as great threats to social interaction just as they are to theatrical performances. Goffman went quite far in establishing his analogy between the stage and social interaction. In all social interaction there is a front region, which is the parallel of the stage front in a theatrical performance. Actors in both the situations, whether in social life or in stage life are seen as being interested in appearances, wearing costumes, and using props. Furthermore in both the situations, there is a back region, where the actors retire to prepare themselves for the next performance. Backstage or offstage, in theatre terms, the actors can shed their roles and be themselves. Thus Dramaturgical analysis is clearly consistent with symbolic interactionist roots. It also has a focus on actors, action and interaction. Working in the same arena as traditional symbolic interactionism, Goffman found a brilliant metaphor in the theatre to shed new light on small scale social processes. (Manning,1991,1992)

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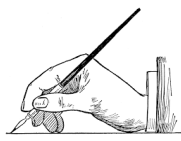
1. Name three books written by Erving Goffman.

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2. What do you mean by Dramaturgy?

6.4 THE PRESENTATION OF SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Goffman in his work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* focused on the ways an individual expresses herself/himself in front of others. It means individual through impression management tends to project the identity; the way s/he wants to be seen to others. Goffman took theatrical metaphor in his study of human society that is he compared the contrast between 'backstage' and 'front stage' (as we have mentioned) with the individual's expression of self in front of others and concealed self (Sharrock, Hughes & Martin, 2003). According to Goffman, it is possible for an individual to bring about the variation in the presentation of the self in their everyday life in order to get a favourite response from others in the interaction. He regards everyday social life as drama because individuals are able to bring about changes in their self in order to maintain smooth functioning of interaction. Goffman took the concept of drama in social life from Shakespeare's famous play *As You Like It*. In this play, Shakespeare says that the entire world is a stage and each man and woman at one time play many roles. Goffman says that social life is a drama in which each individual is an actor playing a part on the social stage who presents only the acceptable aspect of the self in front of others; it is the front stage of

social life. Individuals hide unacceptable aspects of self to maintain social life; it is backstage of social life.

Stop and Read:

There are two dramaturgical concepts—the front stage and backstage. The front is the part of the individual's self, which expresses and functions regularly in a generally fixed procedure to define the situation for those who observe it. The front stage of an individual's self includes setting and the items of expressive equipment such as insignia of office or rank, clothing, sex, age, racial characteristics, size, posture, speech patterns, facial expressions and body gestures. The performance in the front stage is an attempt to manipulate the audience. Backstage is the hidden part of the individual's self, which never comes in front of the people. It is because of impression management backstage always remains hidden from the audience.

In social life, individuals try to control the unaccepted behaviour in order to impress the audience or people. Back regions are places such as bathroom, bedrooms, studies and other areas of private affairs, where individuals practice to do impression management in public platforms (Wallace & Wolf, 1980).

An individual needs to get a favourable response from others in the course of interaction in society. So in everyday life, individuals do impression management that presents only that part of the self which is acceptable and gets an acceptable response from others. Individuals are always acting like actors in drama; so it is often difficult to understand the real selves of individuals because they are always what they pretend to be in the drama of social life. Individuals are always performing this drama and the sincerity and seriousness in acting actually mean the better performance of the role in the drama of social life. For Goffman, sincere students, dutiful teachers and diligent officers, etc. are all performing their role in the drama. Individuals performance depends on the response from others in social life;

thus the self of an individual changes with the change of the response from others in social life.

6.4.1 A Study on Social Protests by Applying Dramaturgy

In a social protest, two sides exist. One is the frontstage- the mobilized actuality of the protest event and the other is the backstage- the processes of mobilization. It is argued that backstage is equally important as without it, the dramatic performance is not possible. According to Goffman's dramaturgy, a backstage is a place where culture is more freely expressed, feelings are more openly shared and these expressions are more limited to trusted individuals only. In the social protest event, the backstage also includes garnering resources and political support, recruitment of volunteers who want to participate in the protests and other acts of mobilizing people to bring social change. To counter the social protests, backstage processes are undertaken by police departments, public officials and others. On the other hand, the dramaturgical approach is applied to understand the front stage of protest events. In protest events, the frontstage includes various expectations attached with particular actors, who are acting in the drama (social protest). For example, protesters and counter-protesters are supposed to fulfil the expectations, which include managing the impressions of other protesters, the public, family members, the police, politicians, etc. Police officers fulfil the expectations of their superiors, fellow officers and politicians as well as their family. Public also influence the performance of police officers. Individuals, whether protesters or counter-protesters or a member of law enforcement is controlled by expectations of the groups they belong to and besides these, the political and social dynamics also influence them. These expectations are part of an individual's consciousness and influence their actions in particular protest situations (Ratliff, 2011). Goffman also points out that there are modes of expression that occur on the front stage. Protesters and counter-protesters usually express their performance by carrying placards, through marching, singing songs, throwing of bricks or stones and sit-in-

demonstration over a public street or location. On the other hand, police officers present themselves as peacekeeper or controlling of unwanted incidence. They appear in regular uniform or riot gear, use non-lethal weapons or lethal ones and try to negotiate with protesters and counter-protesters (Ratliff, 2011).

Stop and Read:

Goffman's idea of social life:

The Theatre	Social life
Play	Flow of interaction
Character	Social Person
Actor	Individual
Role	Behaviour
Audience	People observing the individual
Front Stage	Where the individual's action is performed defined by particular status set
Back Stage	Where individual's action is oriented: a. toward a different set of others defined by status set b. toward what is going to happen in the front stage or toward what has happened

Source- Tashmin Nushrat (2016), Art of Impression Management on Social Media, World Scientific News, 30, 89-102

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Why does Goffman compare the social life with the theatre?

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2. What according to Goffman are "front stage" and "backstage" behaviour?

6.5 IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

The source of impressions is actually the expressive components, which an individual gives and takes in course of interaction. Impression can also be the source of information about unapparent facts. Expression refers to the communicative role that an individual plays during social interaction. In the interaction process, an individual tends to treat the others on the basis of the impression they give about the past and the future. Impressions are seen as claims and promises that individuals make or give to others and receive from others. In fact, claims and promises tend to have a moral character. The very important thing about impression is that individual tends to manage their expression even if they anticipate other's unconscious response on their behaviours and even though individuals expect to exploit the others on the basis of the information.

In other words, it is said that impression management is a goal-oriented process, which may be conscious or unconsciousness. In the process of impression management people attempt to influence the perceptions of other people about a person, object or event in the course of interaction. The interaction is considered as performance as the actors are shaped by the environment and target audience. The objective of the performance is to give the impression to the audience related to the desired goals of the actor. An individual can vary the response to environment and audience on the basis of the situation. These differences in response towards the environment and target audience are called self-monitoring. There is another important fact of impression management—self-verification, which means conformity of self-concept to the audience (Nushrat, 2016).

The individuals in the interaction process, or actors in the performance always try to minimize the occurrence of incidents of embarrassment. The impressions are usually managed by using the following techniques:

1. *Defensive Measures: used by the performer to save dramaturgical loyalty of own and team members.*

   Defensive attributes and practices:

   a) *Dramaturgical Loyalty*

   b) *Dramaturgical Discipline*

   c) *Dramaturgical Circumspection*

2. *Protective Measures: used by the audience and outsiders to assist the performer.*

3. *Measures the performer take to ensure that the audience is able to help and protect, regarding tact sensitive to hints from the audience*

The information is managed by individuals; so there is a chance of being right or wrong. Information is managed by:

1. *Over-communicating some information*

2. *Under communicating some information* (Nushrat, 2016).

Thus in the process of impression management people consciously or sub consciously put an attempt to influence the perceptions of other people about themselves, or about a person or object. Goffman thus used it synonymously with self-presentation, in which he said that performance of the actor, the surrounding cultural norms, the kind of audience present before the actor, as well as the relation with the audience , all these have a major role to play in determining the appropriateness of a particular verbal and nonverbal behaviour. Again, he said that, a person's goals are another actor that governs the ways and strategies of impression management. This refers to the content of an assertion, which also leads to distinct ways of presentation of aspects of the self. The degree of self-efficacy (self-confidence/image about himself) describes whether a person is convinced that it is possible to convey the intended impression or he is not capable of doing that.

6.6 SUMMING UP

Goffman's work shows a remarkable influence of Mead's interactionism. Like Mead, 'self' was the focal point of discussion of Goffman's social life. He highlighted the way individuals act in society. He compared the social life with the stage of drama. Just like different actors play different roles in the drama, individuals act in social life performing different roles. Thus Goffman in his analysis of self-tried to establish a relationship between performance and life. In social life the social actor also takes on an already established role , with pre-existing front and his dialogue and the costume is already set which he is going to use in front of a specific audience. His main aim is to keep coherent and adjust himself with the different setting offered to him.

He also brought the concept of front stage and backstage in the discussion of individual's performance of roles in the social settings. Front stage is what individuals act or perform for others. In others words, front stage is individual's aspiration of about how he wants to express in front of others.

Backstage is hidden from public but inevitable to manage front stage. Backstage preparation is required to carry out actions or performances in the front stage. Individuals always try to maintain an impression, what Goffman called 'impression management'. Impression is the act or performance that the individual carries out usually to get the favourable response from others. They try to hide unaccepted aspects of self to impress the others in the front stage.

6.7 QUESTIONS

1. What is dramaturgy?
2. How does the individual present the self in the front stage?
3. Why is backstage important?
4. According to Goffman how does impression management work in the presentation of self in social life?

6.8 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 7: ETHNOMETHODOLOGY: GARFINKEL

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The founding father of ethnomethodology was Harold Garfinkel, an American sociologist, who was greatly influenced by the phenomenological ideas of Alfred Schutz. Ethnomethodology is a theory given by Harold Garfinkel in his book *The Studies in Ethnomethodology*, which was published in 1967. Ethnomethodology was founded on the ides of Schutz, whose phenomenology was a criticism of positivism. Schutz regarded functionalism and conflict theory as being based on positivism, i.e. they followed the methods of natural science in the study of human society. Positivism believes that social structure determines the behaviour of individuals in society. The phenomenology of Schutz criticizes positivism on all the points. It argues that the structure of society doesn't determine individual behaviour, rather individual behaviour creates and constructs society through interaction and meaningful interpretation of every phenomenon. Ethnomethodology focused on the way individuals make sense of the world around them. Positivism wants to see the social

world as objective, which can be studied by the methods of natural science. It believes that the cause and effect relationship of human behaviour is possible to analyse because individuals act in a patterned and orderly way. On the other hand, ethnomethodology followed phenomenological ideas regarding the capacity of the individual's mind to think and perceive social action differently and it is also able to create the meanings of various objects or realities. We can say simply that ethnomethodology means the study of the methods used by people. It is thus concerned with examining the methods and procedures employed by members of society to construct for and give meaning to their social world.

7.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this Unit, you are expected to:

- Describe what ethnomethodology is;
- Explain the importance of phenomenology in understanding ethnomethodology;
- Explain indexicality and reflexivity and how these are used by people in everyday life.

7.3 ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

Ethnomethodology is the study of the stock of common sense knowledge. It refers to the study of methods and procedures by means of which individual members of society make sense of their world and act in various circumstances. Garfinkel like Durkheim considered social fact as important sociological phenomenon. But Garfinkel's social fact is different from Durkheim's social fact. For Durkheim, the social fact is external to the individual, exercises constraint over individual's behaviour. Those who follow this idea tend to see actors who are constrained or determined by social structures and institutions. According to ethnomethodologists, such sociologists tend to treat actors like 'judgemental dopes'. In contrast, ethnomethodology considers that the objective social world is an actual

product of the methodological activities of the members of society. Ritzer quoted Garfinkel:

For ethnomethodology the objective reality of social facts, in that, and just how, it is every society's locally, endogenously produced, naturally organized, reflexively accountable, ongoing, practical achievement, being everywhere, always, only, exactly and entirely, members' work, with no timeout, and with no possibility of evasion, hiding out, passing, postponement, or buy-outs, is thereby sociology's fundamental phenomenon (Ritzer, 2011).

Ethnomethodology is not a macro sociology but its followers do not consider it as a micro-sociology either. Ethnomethodologists do not treat actors as judgemental dopes but at the same time they are unwilling to decide fully that individuals are "almost endlessly reflexive, self-conscious and calculative". They follow Alfred Schutz and believe that individual action is routine and relatively unreflective. It is the interest of ethnomethodologists to study the artful practices that produce both macro and micro structures of society. They are not just focused on macro and micro structures in isolation, rather Garfinkel and the ethnomethodologists have focused on the way how social structure, both macro and micro, is constructed in society.

According to ethnomethodologists conventional sociologists are constructing a sense of social order in the same way as a layman constructed. They assume that meanings are regarded as substantive and unproblematic. Consequently they are taken for granted. By contrast ethnomethodologists argue that the proper task of sociology is to sort out the interpretive rules by means of which we establish our sense of order , rather than engage in reflexively establishing that sense. In this way conventional sociology becomes an object of study for ethnomethodology, in the same way as any other human social activity is an object of study. (Wallace,1980)

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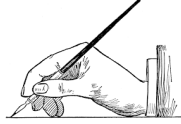
1. What is ethnomethodology?

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2. How does ethnomethodology differ from positivism?

7.4 GARFINKEL'S ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

Ethnomethodologists either suspend or abandon the belief that an actual or objective social order exists. Instead they proceed from the assumption that social life appears orderly to members of society. Thus in the eyes of members their everyday activities seem ordered and systematic but this order is not necessarily due to the intrinsic nature or inherent qualities of the social world. In other words it may not actually exist. Rather it may simply appear to exist because of the way members perceive and interpret social reality. Social order thus becomes a convenient fiction, an appearance of order constructed by members of society. And the study about the order of everyday life has been taken for granted by many sociologists as they do not go for detailed analysis. They usually take interest in and focus on the events and activities such as crime, terrorism, catastrophes and crashes but rarely examine the way millions of people around the world routinely carry out their daily lives. Most sociologists focused on the underlying forces of social change and disruption, economic system and political system, while ethnomethodologists took everyday life

as their focal point of investigation. Ethnomethodologists believe that without common agreements, the mutual expectations and shared meanings for a routine common sense of daily life are not possible, rather disruption will be the result (Slattery, 2003). Garfinkel focused on people's method and its uses for creating and constructing the appearance of social order. He agrees with Schutz that society is not orderly but appears to be ordered. He concentrates upon the methods and procedures used by the people and in this way, he is similar to Schutz in formulating micro theories. The methods and accounting procedures used by members for creating a sense of order form the subject matter of ethnomethodological enquiry. According to Garfinkel, it is by using these methods and procedures that people are able to perceive, describe, explain and account for the social reality, which they experience in their everyday life. The method which is used by people for constructing the appearance of order is the documentary method and there are two procedures called reflexivity and indexicality.

Garfinkel studied everyday life and how people make sense of the social world. He used natural experiments to understand the social order. In order to understand the importance of routine in daily life, Garfinkel asked his students to disrupt the usual routine actions like by singing in a crowded bus, asking pregnant and old ladies to give their seats for them, etc. This kind of disruption causes disorder in usual and routine activities of the people (Slattery, 2003). Garfinkel developed three concepts to understand and explain how members of society interpret the reality and as well as create and recreate it. The three methods are the documentary method, reflexivity and indexicality. Documentary method for Garfinkel means the way members of society identify certain underlying patterns out of the various phenomena of everyday life (Slattery, 2003). In other words, the documentary method consists of the effort to find the underlying pattern of any social reality, which create and construct the appearance of order in society. So, the underlying pattern of each and every phenomenon that individuals experience in everyday life was the primary concern of

Garfinkel. He argues that the members employ 'documentary method' to make sense and account for the social world and to give it an appearance of order. Thus, this method consists of selecting certain aspects of infinite number of features contained in any situation or context, of defining them in a particular way and seeing them as evidence of an underlying pattern. The process is then reversed and the particular instances of the underlying pattern are then used as evidence for the existence of the pattern.

In Garfinkel's word, the documentary method 'consist of treating an actual appearance as "the document of", as "pointing to", as "standing on behalf of" a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, in their turn interpreted on the basis of "what is known" about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the others (Haralambos &Heald,2001).

One of the procedures for discovering this underlying pattern is reflexivity. And the documentary method can be seen as 'reflexive'. The particular instance is seen as a reflection of the underlying pattern and vice versa. Garfinkel argues that social life is 'essentially reflexive'. Members of society are constantly referring aspects of activities and situations to presumed underlying patterns and confirming the existence of those patterns by reference to particular instances of their expression. In this way members produce accounts of the social world which not only make sense of and explain but actually constitute that world.

The social world is therefore constituted by the methods and accounting procedures in terms of which it is identified, described and explained. Thus the social world is constructed by its members by the use of the documentary method. This is what Garfinkel means when he describes social reality as 'essentially reflexive'. In the same way, the incidences of social action are the reflexion of the underlying pattern and vice-versa.

Now the underlying pattern discovered by many instances of phenomena as evidence for the existence of an underlying pattern of the social reality and each instance of phenomenon mutually reinforces each other. Each action takes place in the context of the conversation or situation involved; this condition is called indexicality. For example, the words 'you are dead' can be interpreted differently depending on the context, manner and tone in which it is expressed (Slattery, 2003).

Accounting is people's ability to make others conscious that the meaning of a situation is understood by them. Accounting involves both language and meaning. People constantly give linguistic and verbal accounts in order to explain their actions. For example, if students prepare an art, he or she uses and attaches own meaning to it. When a teacher asks 'tell about the art' instead of 'what it is', it attracts interpretation of art. That is a student will give her/his account about art or own meaning attached with the art. Accounts and meanings in any situation are largely dependent on the nature of the situation.

7.4.1 Counselling experiment

Garfinkel demonstrated the use of the documentary method by people and its reflexive nature by an experiment conducted in a university department of psychiatry. In this experiment, Garfinkel illustrated the documentary method and two procedures. In the psychiatry department of an American University, a few students were asked to get advice or the solution of their personal problem from trained counsellors. The counsellor sat in the adjoining room; the students and counsellor could not see each other and communicate via an intercom. The students were not aware of the fact that the answer to their questions about their personal problem was not given by a trained counsellor but by Garfinkel himself. The students were asked to formulate their personal problem in the form of a question, which could have only yes or no answer. Accordingly, students started asking their personal problem and Garfinkel just gave the solutions in yes or no answer

randomly. After the experiment when students were being asked about their feedback, all of them replied that they got the solutions. In one case, a Jewish student asked about his worry in a relationship with a Gentile girl. He was worried about the reaction of his parents to the relationship and marriage. He got a random answer, which had no reference to the content of the questions and even contradicted previous answers. Despite being the random answer that Garfinkel gave, he found the answers helpful, reasonable and sensible. Garfinkel thus concluded the experiment by saying that the students themselves gave the appearance of order to the random answer given to them as a solution of their problems.

Garfinkel concluded: *"students made sense of the answers where no sense existed; they imposed an order on the answers where no order was present".*

The students accepted the answer as a solution by saying that contradictory or unreasonable answers given to them by counsellor because of the fact that the counsellor was unaware of the full matter of their personal problems. This appearance of order was imposed by the students on the random answers given to them as a result of the use of the documentary method. The students assumed the existence of the underline pattern of the answer. Each answer was an evidence of the existence of an underlying pattern and each answer was explained by the underlying pattern even if it was contradictory or unreasonable. Thus, the existence of the underlying pattern and the instance of each answer mutually reinforce each other and this is called the procedure of reflexivity (Haralambos & Holborn, 2014).

7.4.2 Indexicality
This experiment was also used to understand the idea of indexicality. Indexicality means that the sense of an object or activity is derived from its context. Consequently, individuals do interpret, explain or make account of everyday life with reference to particular situation and circumstances. Thus, the students in the experiment made sense of the counsellor's answer

because it was derived from the context of the interaction. The context was an interaction between counsellor and students, so the answers students received were interpreted in this context only. Therefore, the answers received by the students were sensible even if these were random and not relevant. The same answers if students would have received from the friend in the coffee bar, probably students had different interpretations because of the change of context. The answers from their friends might have been seen as a joke or unnatural response while drinking. Therefore, Garfinkel argued that the sense of any action is achieved only in the concerned context. Individuals interpret the action depending on the particular context that interpretation can vary according to the contexts. So understanding and account of the members of society are indexical (Haralambos & Holborn, 2014).

We can sum up this in the following points:
1. The sense of any action is achieved by reference to its context.
2. Member's sense of what is happening or going on depends on the way they interpret the context of the activity concerned.
3. People make sense of something in terms of particular settings.

7.4.3 Breaching Experiments

In breaching experiments, a situation was created to break the usual pattern of social reality to see the methods by which people construct social reality. There was an assumption that methodical creation of social life occurs all the time and participants are unaware about such engagement. The objective of the breaching experiment was to disturb the normal pattern of life to observe how members of society create and recreate the social reality. Garfinkel asked his students to behave by assuming that they are boarders in their homes between fifteen minutes to an hour. They are instructed to behave in a polite fashion, avoid getting personal, to use the formal address and speak in limitation. In majority cases, family members were felt awkward by such behaviour. It is written by Ritzer about the

result of the experiment: "*reports were filed with accounts of astonishment, bewilderment, shock, anxiety, embarrassment and anger and with charges by various family members that the student was mean, inconsiderable, selfish, nasty or impolite*". It indicates that people behave according to the common-sense assumptions of the pattern of behaviour. The important point is that family members demanded an explanation of the peculiar behaviour from the students. Family members tried to interpret the odd behaviour based on the previous experiences. They thought that students might be frustrated due to personal issue or official matter and behaving oddly. This explanation helped to convince them that in normal situation interaction would occur as it occurs always. Breaching experiments were undertaken to illustrate the way people make their everyday life orderly (Ritzer, 2011).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is documentary method?

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2. What is indexicality?

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3. What is reflexivity?

7.5 CRITICISM OF ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

Alvin Gouldner criticized ethnomethodology for dealing with insignificant aspects of social life, which were already known. He gives an example to

criticize the experiments conducted by Garfinkel; "*an ethnomethodologist might release chickens in a town centre during the rush hour and stand back and observe as traffic was held up and crowds gathered to watch and laugh at police officers chasing the chickens*". Gouldner explained his example that Garfinkel might say that people now realized the importance of an important rule, which had not been noticed that chickens must not be dropped in the streets during rush hour. Anthony Giddens argued that there is little reference to the 'pursuance of practical goals or interests'. Critics argued in the writings of ethnomethodologists that there is a little indication about the fact, why people want to behave in a particular way. There is no consideration of the nature of power in the social world and the possible effects of differences in power on members' behaviour. Critics also pointed out that most ethnomethodologists tend to ignore such objects, which are not recognized and accounted for by members of society. They believe that members of society remain unaffected if they don't recognize the existence of objects and events. John H. Goldthorpe in his criticism of ethnomethodology argued that "*if for instance, it is bombs and napalm that are zooming down, members do not have to be oriented towards them in any particular way or at all in order to be killed by them*". It means that members of society do not have to recognize certain constraint, which determines their behaviour (Haralambos & Holborn, 2014).

7.6 SUMMING UP

Ethnomethodology is a sociological perspective, which opposed positivism and supported the phenomenology of Alfred Schutz. Garfinkel popularized ethnomethodology after he published his book, *The Studies in Ethnomethodology* in 1967. Garfinkel advocated the ideas that were highlighted by phenomenology that the world is not orderly but appears as ordered. He investigated the fact that how members of society make sense of every reality in everyday life and how they make the order in society. Garfinkel found that documentary method and the procedures of reflexivity

and indexicality are used by members of society to make the social world orderly. He carried out some experiments like counselling experiment and breaching experiment to illustrate how members of society make the everyday life orderly by following a pattern of behaviour. The behaviour outside the normal pattern gets rejection, denouncement and un-acceptance.

Thus ethnomethodologists tend to be highly critical of mainstream sociology. As we have seen that mainstream sociologists are seen as imposing their sense of social reality on people rather than studying what people actually do. Sociologists distort the social world in various ways through imposing their concepts, utilising statistics and so on. Again sociologists are also accused of confusing topic and resource, which means they are using everyday world as a resource rather than as a topic in its own right. In contrast to it ethnomethodologists study the everyday practices used by the ordinary members of society in order to deal with their da-to-day lives. Here people are seen as accomplishing their everyday lives through a variety of artful practices.

7.7 QUESTIONS

1. What is ethnomethodology?

2. How is ethnomethodology linked with phenomenology?

3. How is ethnomethodology of Garfinkel different from mainstream sociology?

4. Write brief notes on:
    a) Documentary method
    b) Reflexivity
    c) Indexicality

5. Critically examine Garfinkel's idea of ethnomethodology.

7.8 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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