

Lesson 01

Introduction: Sociological Perspective
(Topic 001-002)**Topic 001-002: What is Sociological Perspective?**

Perspective refers to a view, outlook, approach, or imagination of reality. **In simple terms**, it is an approach to understanding reality. In our context, reality could encompass the entire society, its workings, various parts, institutions, or segments. Therefore, perspective implies an approach to comprehending that reality. In our example, we might consider society as a whole or perhaps focus on its individual components.

Sociological theory essentially delves into the reality and offers insights into its workings. It can be conveyed verbally or in written form. When we mention that it is presented, it signifies an image of reality, a vision of society. This is what **theory entails – assumptions about society**. When these assumptions or propositions are logically organized, they form a "theory." Perspective implies an orientation for examining different aspects of the social world, which can eventually be translated into scientific theory.

There are various ways to understand society, including its operations, interpretations, and explanations. Explanation involves illustrating how one aspect leads to another, showcasing the interconnectedness of different societal segments. The goal of theory is to establish general principles governing the functioning of societies. When sociologists engage in sociology, they approach their subject with specific assumptions, emphasize particular research methods, and seek answers to particular questions. This is how sociologists perceive things and present them in the form of sociological theory. The formulation of theories can differ, whether deductively or inductively formulated. Deductive reasoning moves from general to specific, while inductive reasoning moves from specific to general.

Therefore, **sociological theory may be viewed as a collection of perspectives for understanding human behavior**. Society can be observed from numerous perspectives, aiming to develop principles that govern societal functioning. Societies operate in a harmonious manner, maintaining a balance or equilibrium.

Sociologists have examined society from various perspectives, with four key perspectives being:

1. Levels of analysis

Sociologists examine society based on subject matter, whether at the macro or micro level.

Macrosociology: Focuses on large-scale characteristics of social structure and roles.

Microsociology: Concentrates on person-to-person interactions.

Different sociological perspectives fall under these two broad categories. For instance, Functionalism and conflict theory analyze the overall characteristics of social structure and the general nature of social institutions, indicating a macro-level analysis. On the other hand, symbolic interactionism and phenomenology scrutinize human interactions in intricate detail, representing a micro-level analysis. Some sociological theories adopt both macro and micro approaches, such as rational choice theories, which examine individual decisions and choices while considering structural qualities within society.

2. View of human beings

Human behavior can be perceived as predictable, with Functionalism and conflict theorists often emphasizing that the environment determines individuals' behavior. Alternatively, individual behavior may be viewed as entirely controlled by the individual, driven by individual creativity. Symbolic interactionism and phenomenology explore the concepts of "Me" and "I," where "Me" reflects external influences and societal expectations, while "I" represents individuality and personal perspectives.

3. Motivation for human social action

Personal interests reside within the individual, while social values operate at the societal level, serving as standards of desirability set by society. Functionalists believe that people's motives and behavior are shaped by internalized social values, while conflict theorists prioritize interests as the primary

driving force behind behavior. Symbolic interactionism incorporates social values into the concept of "Me," reflecting societal expectations, while phenomenology emphasizes values over interests, highlighting the importance of trust in shaping behavior.

4. Scientific Approach

Sociological perspectives vary in their methods of argument and research, advocating either deductive or inductive reasoning. The deductive approach, akin to natural sciences, involves outlining concepts/variables, formulating hypotheses, and theories. In contrast, the inductive approach entails understanding reality, developing hypotheses, and constructing theories. Functionalism, conflict theory, and rational choice theory align with the deductive approach, while symbolic interactionism and phenomenology lean towards the inductive approach. Deductive approaches utilize quantitative data, while inductive approaches focus on qualitative data.

Comparison of sociological perspectives

Level of Analysis	Macro	Micro
	Functionalism Conflict	Symbolic Interactionism Phenomenology Rational Choice
View of Human Beings	Predictable	Creative
	Functionalism Conflict Rational Choice	Symbolic Interactionism Phenomenology
Motivation for Human Social Action	Values	Interests
	Functionalism Phenomenology Symbolic Interactionism	Conflict Rational Choice
Scientific Approach	Deductive	Inductive
	Functionalism Conflict Rational Choice	Symbolic Interactionism Phenomenology

Perspectives differ in their objectives of describing, explaining, or predicting social realities, each contributing to human understanding of societies. Several questions may arise, such as:

- Is understanding and explanation an end in itself, satisfying curiosity?
- Can this understanding be a means to other ends, such as controlling and managing undesirable aspects of life?

Scientific deductive explanation is a powerful tool with tight statistical correlations and predictions, borrowing from natural sciences. It moves from explaining something to possible outcomes, which could be desirable or undesirable. Making judgments allows for decisions on how to manage situations. Description is valuable for understanding, explaining reality, and predicting and managing it for societal well-being. Due to the complexity of human behavior, social sciences have limitations in making universal predictions. Environments and individuals vary, so social scientists cannot propose predictions applicable to all individuals and societies.

Lesson 02

Major Sociological Perspectives**(Topic 003-010)****Topic 003-004: Functionalism**

Functionalism is derived from the word "function," which refers to the **functioning of society**. It focuses on how a society survives and how social systems within the society exist. The main idea is to understand the requirements for the survival of a society and its social systems. Functionalists analyze the functioning and survival of society and identify the forces instrumental for its survival. They believe that different societies function through different structures, and every structure contributes to the society's survival. The perspective was initially labeled as "structural functionalism," but later proponents abandoned the term "structural."

The **goals of functionalism** include understanding **how individuals' actions are organized through their roles in social institutions**. Individuals learn these roles through socialization, with different institutions contributing to this process. Family is a crucial institution in this socialization process. Functionalism focuses on the overall functioning of the social system, making it a macro-sociological perspective. While the analysis is at a macro level, it can also be applied to micro and meso levels. Functionalists examine how individual actions are regulated by society through socialization processes within the cultural framework of the society. This regulation helps maintain equilibrium in society, which is a central idea of functionalism. The perspective follows a deductive approach for theorization, similar to natural science.

Main Focus of Functionalism

The main emphasis of functionalism includes:

1. The interrelatedness and interdependence of the system's parts.
2. The existence of a "normal" state of affairs or equilibrium in society.
3. The reorganization of all parts of the system to restore normalcy.

Actions are individual and voluntary but regulated by social values and norms. While individual actions may be revolutionary, they must align with society's norms. Functionalism aims to achieve agreement and consensus on values and behavior patterns across society. It emphasizes the unity of society, contrasting with the conflict perspective that stresses divisions within society.

Topic 005-006: Conflict Perspective

The conflict perspective is a major alternative to functionalism in understanding and analyzing the structure of societies. It has gained popularity in contemporary sociology, despite variations among its proponents. **Conflict theorists view society as an arena where groups struggle for power, highlighting the necessity of conflict in social life**. Unlike functionalists who see society as integrated parts of social systems working together for equilibrium, conflict theorists focus on power struggles and social order maintenance through force rather than consent.

Key assumptions of the conflict

Key assumptions of the conflict perspective include;

1. People have basic interests they seek to acquire.
2. Power is central to social relationships and is unequally distributed.
3. Values and ideas are used as weapons by different groups to advance their interests.

Conflict theorists argue that powerful individuals benefit from social order at the expense of others. The perspective raises questions about how conflict is controlled and the basis of social order, suggesting that powerful individuals may use force to maintain control. While some social scientists aim for objective analysis, others believe in providing subjective value judgments to resolve conflicts.

Topic 007-08: Social Exchange/Rational Choice

The social exchange/rational choice perspective **focus on how people interact to realize their interests through action**. Individuals act based on their interests, and their actions are guided by rational strategies. This perspective explores how interests translate into action, who benefits from interactions, and the rationality of strategies employed.

Key assumptions of this perspective

Key assumptions of this perspective include:

- People act rationally based on their interests.
- Rewarding interactions are repeated.
- Rewards influence rational choices.
- Continuous interactions condition individuals and lead to patterns of social exchange.

This perspective allows sociologists to predict behavior patterns on various scales, emphasizing the rationality behind actors' choices. Prominent figures in this perspective include **Homans and Blau**, who explain actions based on what works effectively for actors seeking to realize their interests.

Rational choice theory builds on the foundation of social exchange theory, focusing on identifying rational courses of action and comparing them with actual behavior. Rationality in this context refers to efficiency, and the perspective aims to understand how individuals' actions collectively influence the social system. It employs a methodological individualism approach, observing individual actions within a system to explain its operation. Social systems are analyzed by observing the actions and interactions of actors within the system, with inferences drawn about the system as a whole. **Exchange and rational choice theories** seek to explain the system's functioning based on aggregate patterns of action rather than individual motivations. The emphasis is on identifying rational actions that optimize outcomes within a social system.

Topic 009-010: Interactionism**Interactionism**

It is a prominent perspective in sociology that focuses on interpersonal relations and individual experiences. Symbolic interactionism, founded by **G. H. Mead and further developed by H. Blumer**, emphasizes how people develop their identities and understanding of society through interactions. This perspective is linked to **pragmatist philosophy**, highlighting the **practical ways** in which social order and knowledge are achieved.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is another sociological perspective within interactionism, **focuses on the close observation of human experiences and the formation of basic categories of understanding**. **Alfred Schutz** led this perspective, influencing ethnomethodology, which studies the methods people use to construct their everyday understanding of social life.

Interactionism emphasizes **face-to-face interactions; meanings assigned to actions, and lived experiences over abstract concepts of society**. It focuses on how human agents experience and support regularized patterns of social interaction, highlighting the importance of communication and symbolic meanings in creating social order. Interactionism is characterized by its emphasis on human interactions, meanings, and lived experiences rather than abstract social structures.

Lesson 03

Functionalist Perspective
(Topic 011-013)**Topic 011: Intellectual Roots-I**

Functionalism held a dominant position among contemporary sociological theories, with other perspectives emerging as a challenge to it. Due to its dominance, some sociologists, like Kingsley Davis, claimed that **sociological analysis and functional analysis** are one and the same. Davis argued that sociology involves examining the role (or function) that an institution or type of behavior plays in society and the way it is related to other social features, and explaining it in essentially “social” terms. **The most important intellectual ancestors of modern functionalism are the sociologists Comte, Spencer, Pareto, and Durkheim. Among the anthropologists, Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski are also notable. Comte, Spencer, and Pareto** emphasized the interdependence of parts of the social system, which is reflected in the division of labor. When there is a division of labor, each part performs a specific function, contributing to the functioning of the whole system. **Durkheim** emphasized integration or solidarity, which influenced **Radcliffe-Brown’s and Malinowski’s** analysis of the function of social institutions.

Auguste Comte, the founder of sociology, derived his interest in “statics” (order) and “dynamics” (progress) in society from his investigation of the foundations of social stability. Order refers to equilibrium, while dynamics is associated with change and progress in society. Herbert Spencer was also a forerunner of functionalism. **Spencer’s concept of differentiation** emphasized the mutual dependence of unlike parts of the system, highlighting the necessity of differentiation for the system’s interrelatedness and integrity. Another sociologist, **Vilfredo Pareto**, patterned his system of sociology on a physiochemical system characterized by the interdependence of parts and adjustive changes, rather than a biological organism. **For Pareto**, the “molecules” of the social system were individuals with interests, drives, and sentiments. He provided a precise description of a social system in terms of interrelations and mutual dependencies among parts. Parsons borrowed Pareto’s idea of dynamic or “moving” equilibrium that produces harmony for the system, illustrating how systems adapt to change while maintaining equilibrium.

Topic 012: Intellectual Roots-II

Emile Durkheim is an important sociological precursor of modern functionalism. Comte’s influence on Durkheim and, in turn, **Durkheim’s impact on Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski were crucial to its development.** Durkheim was a significant role model for Parsons, and both Parsons and Merton demonstrated their indebtedness to Durkheim. The influence of Durkheim can also be seen in symbolic interactionist and phenomenological perspectives. Some of Durkheim’s most important functionalist ideas stem from his lifelong interest in the concept of integration, which refers to the incorporation of individuals into the social order. Integration or social solidarity is essential for maintaining social equilibrium. In his work "**The Division of Labor in Society,**"

Durkheim examined the **function of the division of labor** and viewed **social evolution** as a progression from the mechanical solidarity of tribal societies to the organic solidarity characteristic of industrial societies. According to him, primitive societies exhibit mechanical solidarity, while industrial societies demonstrate organic solidarity due to the division of labor. Two concepts that need to be discussed are collective conscience and individualism. Collective conscience is prevalent in primitive societies, while individualism is emphasized in industrial societies.

Laws, morals, customs, and fashions are social facts, which can be considered institutions, all serving a functional purpose. These institutions are created by members of society to ensure its functioning, and they fulfill their roles. While there may be aspects or situations that individuals dislike, they serve functions in society, such as crime. Crime disrupts social order but unites members of society to collectively combat it, fostering cohesiveness. Another example is punishment, which generates collective intensity of sentiments as people unite to punish crimes and take action. **Durkheim referred to sociology as the science of institutions and their functioning. Social integration,**

anomie, and suicide all play functional roles in society, contributing to its operation. Durkheim developed the **theory of suicide**, categorizing it into **four types**. He posited that excessive integration leads to **altruistic suicide**, while low integration results in **egoistic suicide**. Durkheim viewed religion as a potent integrative force in both traditional and modern societies, facilitating the transmission of values across generations through socialization. Values aid in the integration of society.

Topic 013: Intellectual Roots-III

Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski, the two anthropologists, adopted Durkheim's approach to the analysis of societies. Malinowski was the first to use the term "functional" for this type of analysis. There is a link between Malinowski's work and modern functionalism in sociology. The link is that **Talcott Parsons** studied under Malinowski at the London School of Economics. Malinowski's and Radcliffe-Brown's levels of analysis differed. Malinowski was concerned with psychological needs and functions, which he believed all societies developed ways to fulfill. On the other hand, Radcliffe-Brown was focused on sociological functions – the functions of institutions in the social system.

Let's take the example of **magic rites** to understand the difference between these two anthropologists. **For Malinowski**, magic was used more in open-sea fishing than in inland fishing because of the individual's feelings of danger and insecurity on the open sea. So, magic rites played a function, and the function was to overcome the dangers that people face when fishing on the open sea. Magic both developed and functioned to reduce these feelings.

Radcliffe-Brown treated magic in terms of social functions. Societies define what is dangerous and threatening. On the sea, perhaps there is no society, as people are fishing, so they might be looking at it from a psychological perspective. Therefore, he is looking at it from a different angle. Societies define what is dangerous and how to overcome that danger. Individuals are taught by society to have appropriate responses to these situations.

Magical rites exist to maintain an orderly society; their function is social, not individual. When Parsons developed his functionalist framework, he borrowed more heavily from Radcliffe-Brown. Radcliffe-Brown emphasized social needs and social explanations more than from Malinowski. Although modern functionalism has roots in the works of Comte, Spencer, and Pareto and is also indebted to Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, it owes its greatest debt to Durkheim.

Lesson 04

Functionalism (Talcott Parson-I)
(Topic 014-017)**Topic 014-015: Talcott Parsons System Levels**

The concept of a system is fundamental in Parsonian theory. Parsons emphasized the importance of the system in his general theory of action, outlining four key systems: the social system, cultural system, personality system, and behavioral organism.

1. Social System:

At the macro level, society is viewed as a system, while at the micro level, even a family can be considered a system. Individuals are seen as part of the social system, interacting within a culturally structured environment. The social system is governed by shared values and customs, promoting social solidarity and integration. Key concepts include actors, interaction, environment, optimization of gratification, and culture.

2. Cultural System:

Culture is a patterned system of symbols that guides actors' behavior and integrates the personality and social systems. It shapes values and norms, which are transmitted through socialization. Cultural values are internalized by individuals, influencing their actions and interactions.

3. Personality System:

The personality system focuses on individual needs, motives, and attitudes. Need dispositions, shaped by social influences, drive individuals to seek gratification. Actors are impelled by drives and cultural norms, leading to acceptance, rejection, or seeking new objects to satisfy needs. The personality system is integrated with the social system, emphasizing the role of culture in shaping individual behavior.

4. Behavioral Organism:

The behavioral organism represents the biological aspect of human beings and serves as a source of energy for the other systems. It is influenced by genetic constitution and shaped by conditioning and learning processes. Individuals internalize societal values and demonstrate them through their behavior, highlighting the interconnectedness of the four systems.

Overall, the four systems are interrelated and functionally interdependent, emphasizing the importance of understanding their dynamic interactions in social life.

Topic 016-17: Parsons' theory of action

Parsons' (1937) early theory of social action was based on an intensive critical analysis of the works of Alfred Marshall, Vilfredo Pareto, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber. His major argument was that these theorists converged, despite different starting points, in pointing to the essential elements of a voluntaristic theory of social action. Parsons regarded his contribution as identifying these crucial elements and integrating them into a more general and systematic perspective. In pursuing this goal, he made extensive use of the means-ends framework. His analysis was complex, but the basic ideas are consistent with our common sense and everyday experience.

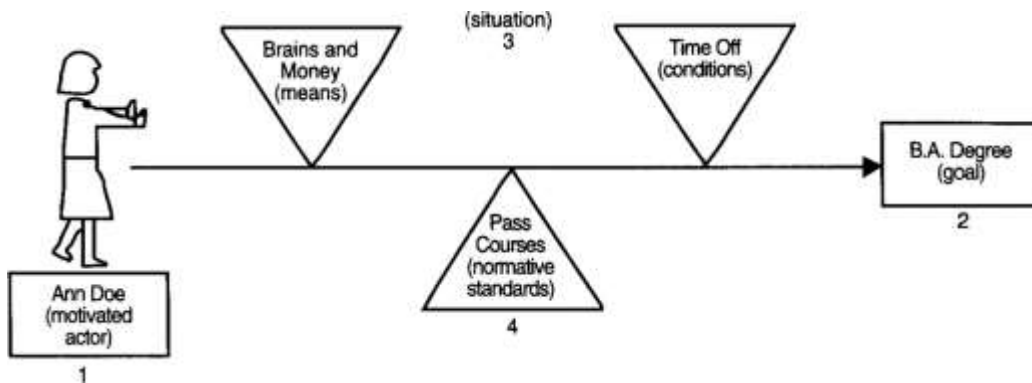
Key Elements of Social Action

In simple terms, his argument is that all social action has the following key elements:

- Motivated actor.
- Social action is goal-directed (or has an end).
- Social action takes place in a situation that provides means individuals can use to achieve their goal, along with conditions the actor cannot change such as biological traits and external constraints that shape their goals and means.
- Social action is normatively regulated with respect to the choice of both ends and means. Values, norms, and ideas play a significant role in guiding actors' decisions on goals and means. Action occurs within a specific context that includes means (facilities, tools, or resources) and conditions (obstacles that arise in the pursuit of the goal). These elements are governed by normative standards of the social system. Actors must adhere to the rules of the game, which define their

objectives and behavior. Normative expectations motivate actors to pursue their goals by internalizing these norms. While actors may appear rational and free in their actions, the influence of norms and situational constraints cannot be overlooked. Despite the appearance of voluntary individual actions, questions arise about the rationality and freedom of human behavior within an unregulated system. How is order maintained in a competitive environment? Voluntarism is understood as the subjective decision-making process of individual actors, influenced by various constraints, both normative and situational.

For example, everyone is an actor. For instance, as a motivated student (actor), you have a goal to obtain a degree with a good CGPA, and you are motivated to achieve your goal. All goals are defined by the cultural system, which provides mechanisms to achieve these goals.



Lesson 05

Functionalism (Talcott Parson-II)
(Topic 018-019)**Topic 018-019: The pattern variables**

Parsons' voluntaristic theory of social action is a key starting point, aiming to explain variations in individuals' subjective orientations that regulate their goal-directed behavior normatively. In his book "**Toward a General Theory of Action**," categories were created to differentiate between various types of subjective orientations. In his theory of action, Parsons described actors as purposeful, with all actions directed towards goals and regulated by norms. Actors meet normative expectations to achieve their goals, which are structured and patterned. Subjective normative orientations can be situation-specific, based on motivational and value orientations. Motivational orientation involves balancing immediate needs with long-term goals, while value orientation governs choices and priorities.

Relationships involve mutual orientations and can be classified based on pattern variables. Parsons' pattern variables are dichotomous, with no rank ordering. In traditional societies, relationships are personal and stable, while in modern societies, they are impersonal and instrumental. Both types of relationships are necessary in modern society, such as sex-role differentiation in families. Parsons proposed a set of five dichotomous value-orientations that shape social behavior, which he called pattern variables. These variables provide a multidimensional way of analyzing societies and social structures. By examining different combinations of normative orientations, we can understand social processes more effectively.

Parsons proposed five dichotomous choices for social situations:

1. Affectivity vs. Affective Neutrality
2. Self-orientation vs. Collectivity Orientation
3. Universalism vs. Particularism
4. Ascription vs. Achievement
5. Specificity vs. Diffuseness

Affectivity vs. Affective Neutrality:

This dilemma involves seeking emotional gratification in relationships. Affective orientation involves emotional involvement and gratification, seen in relationships like lovers or family members. Affective neutrality, on the other hand, avoids emotional involvement, as seen in professional relationships like doctor-patient or social worker-client.

Self-orientation vs. Collectivity Orientation:

This dilemma involves prioritizing personal interests (self-orientation) or the needs of others or the collective (collectivity orientation). Market transactions typically reflect self-orientation, while family, friendships, or church relations often prioritize collectivity.

Universalism vs. Particularism:

This variable concerns the scope of normative standards in social relationships. Universalistic norms apply to all based on impersonal categories, like equality under the law. Particularistic norms are based on specific relationships or characteristics, like family ties or shared ethnicity.

Ascription vs. Achievement:

Ascription evaluates others based on who they are, while achievement focuses on accomplishments. Ascriptive characteristics include family background, gender, or race, while achievement is based on merit and performance.

Specificity vs. Diffuseness:

This variable deals with the scope of obligations in relationships. Specificity involves narrow, defined obligations like contracts, while diffuseness involves a wide range of exchanged gratifications. In specific relationships, the burden of proof is on the demanding party, while in diffuse relationships, it's on the party being demanded from.

These choices determine emotional involvement, priority of interests, scope of normative standards,

evaluation of others, and scope of obligations in social relationships.

The pattern variables can be related to Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* types of social relations, serving as basic dimensions of his typology.

Expressive (<i>Gemeinschaft</i>)	Instrumental (<i>Gesellschaft</i>)
Ascription	Achievement
Diffuseness	Specificity
Affectivity	Neutrality
Particularism	Universalism
Collectivity	Self

Lesson 06

Functionalism (Talcott Parson-III)
(Topic 020-021)

Topic 020-021: The AGIL framework

The AGIL framework, used in most of Parsons' subsequent writings (e.g., Parsons, pp. 30–79 in Parsons et al., eds., 1961), was highly influential at the time and continues to be regarded as the most distinctive feature of his structural/functional theory. However, the specific meaning of each functional requirement denoted in the AGIL model may vary for different types of social systems. These requirements are further elaborated below and also related to Parsons' earlier voluntaristic theory of social action.

Parsons and his colleagues gradually expanded the strategy of functional analysis to other types of social systems, including dyadic relations, small groups, families, and complex organizations. This modified form is more systematic in identifying functional requirements of all types of social systems and more abstract in analyzing the dynamic interrelations between the component parts (or subsystems) of the system in question. This revised version is referred to as the AGIL model; the acronym refers to generic requirements faced by all types of social systems. These expanded requirements are as follows:

A—Adaptation to the environment: transforming the material environment to meet needs and cope with environmental conditions that cannot be changed.

G—Goal attainment: deciding on collective goals (not individual goals) and mobilizing resources to achieve them.

I—Integration: coordinating the actions of the various "parts" of the system, including individual members and other subsystems.

L—Latent pattern maintenance: maintaining and reinforcing commitments to underlying cultural values and motivation to conform.

For survival, a system must perform the listed four functions:

Adaptation to the environment

All social systems must cope with their physical and social environment. For small groups, the environment would include the larger institutional setting, and for total societies, it would include other societies plus the physical or geographical setting.

Two dimensions of this requirement may be distinguished.

First, there must be "an accommodation of the system to inflexible 'reality demands' " imposed by the environment (or, to use Parsons' earlier terminology, to the "conditions" of action).

Second, there may be some type of "active transformation of the situation external to the system." (Parsons et al., 1953:183) This involves utilizing resources available in the environment as the "means" for accomplishing some goal. However, any particular set of means (or resources) may be used for a variety of goals; thus the procurement of means and the accomplishment of goals are analytically distinct. (In everyday life, deciding on strategies to try to earn money is not the same as deciding how to spend it.)

Goal Attainment

This requirement grows out of Parsons' contention that action is goal-directed. In this context, the concern is not limited to personal goals but also includes the collective goals individuals share as members of the system. Actual goal achievement represents a kind of intrinsically gratifying culmination of action following the preparatory adaptive activity (such as procuring resources). In the means/ends framework, goal achievement is the end, while the earlier adaptive activity is the means for achievement (Parsons et al., 1953:184, see also p. 88). At both the individual and the social system levels, there are numerous, sometimes conflicting goals that might be desired. Thus, the goal attainment functional requirement will involve making decisions regarding the priority of different goals. For social systems, this is essentially a political process.

Integration

To function effectively, social systems must have some solidarity among the individuals involved, and their activities must be coordinated in some fashion for maintaining social order and achieving other desired outcomes, both individual and collective. The integrative problem refers to the need for appropriate socio-emotional attachments and willingness to cooperate in coordinating their interdependent and mutually supportive lines of action. Socio-emotional bonds must not be wholly contingent on personal benefits received; otherwise, social solidarity and willingness to cooperate would be much more precarious, since they would be based on individuals' personal self-interests, which often lead to conflict.

Latent Pattern Maintenance

The concept of latency suggests a suspension of interaction. Members of any social system are subject to fatigue and satiation as well as the demands of other social systems (or subsystems) in which they may be involved. Therefore, all social systems must provide periods when members are temporarily relieved of the obligations of their roles in the system. During this period of latency, however, their commitment to the system must be maintained and sometimes reinforced. In some cases, special mechanisms may be developed to help restore motivational energy and to renew or reinforce commitment to shared cultural values and norms. For large-scale systems, such as total societies, this may take the form of collective rituals such as holiday celebrations like Thanksgiving or July 4 celebrations. For smaller systems, other types of rituals may be followed, such as birthday celebrations, for example.

Lesson 07

Functionalism (Talcott Parson-IV)
(Topic 028-029)

Topic 028-029: Theory of Evolutionary Change

Parsons's (1966) general orientation to the study of social change was shaped by biology. To deal with this process, Parsons developed what he called "**a paradigm of evolutionary change.**" At an early stage, Parsons was criticized for not paying attention to the study of change, and he was conscious of this critique. In the early 1960s, Parsons developed his ideas about change in *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspective*. He looked at change from an evolutionary perspective and introduced the Paradigm of evolutionary change. **The roots of Parsons' evolutionary thinking can be traced back to August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Durkheim, and Marx, who believed that societies are evolving inevitably through conflict towards a communist utopia.** Parsons' idea was a revival of interest in the evolutionary development of human society. Parsons' three stages in the evolution of society are as follows:

1. **Primitive stage:** kinship relations and religious orientation were prominent.
2. **Intermediate stage:** written language, documents, and history.
3. **Modern stage:** formal relationships and procedures. Laws institutionalized.

Characteristically, he differentiated among these stages primarily based on **cultural dimensions**. The crucial development in the transition from primitive to intermediate is the development of language, primarily written language. The **key development** in the shift from intermediate to modern is "**the institutionalized codes of normative order," or law.** The focus is on the concept of differentiation. Any society is composed of a series of subsystems that differ both in their structure and functioning. **Differentiation in structure and functions is continually increasing, which is the key to the evolution of social systems.**

Parsons argued that the process of differentiation leads to a new set of problems of integration for society. As subsystems proliferate, the society is confronted with new problems in coordinating the operations of these units. A society undergoing evolution must move from a system of ascription to one of achievement. A wider array of skills and abilities is needed to handle the more diffuse subsystems. **The generalized abilities of people must be freed from their ascriptive bonds so that they can be utilized by society.** Most generally, this means that groups formerly excluded from contributing to the system must be freed for inclusion as full members of society.

Change from primitive to modern societies implies a shift from a situation with fused roles to a situation in which roles are allocated based on specialized skills. Economic production becomes more efficient in specialized factories than in self-sufficient households. Six evolutionary "universals" identified are Social stratification, Cultural legitimation, Bureaucratic organization, Money economy and markets, generalized universalistic norms, and Democratic associations. The evolutionary sequence starts from greater differentiation, incorporating both structures and processes, and the structures are the six universals identified.

The **first component of that paradigm** is the process of differentiation. Parsons assumed that any society is composed of a series of subsystems that differ in both their structure and their functional significance for the larger society. As society evolves, new subsystems are differentiated. This is not enough; however, they must also be more adaptive than earlier subsystems. Thus, the essential aspect of Parsons' evolutionary paradigm was the idea of adaptive upgrading. Parsons described this process: If differentiation is to yield a balanced, more evolved system, each newly differentiated substructure must have increased adaptive capacity for performing its primary function compared to the performance of that function in the previous, more diffuse structure. We may call this process the adaptive upgrading aspect of the evolutionary change cycle. Inclusion, a sort of desegregation process, where there is no exclusion based on gender, race, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or national origin. The main focus is on talent and skills. Value generalization, societies go for civil religion, where patriotism is treated as a religion. Values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

are the ultimate goals of social life and progress. Value generalization provides a general pattern for the society with a variety of differences.

For Parsons, all societies do not follow an inevitable and uniform course of development, yet there is an evolutionary trend toward an increase in adaptive capacity. All societies may not progress gradually and evenly. **Evolution and progress are synonymous, and democracy is considered a logical and stable social development. Parsons' theory of change is functional, and the evolving social order is not dysfunctional. Evolution leads to change within, but not a change of, the system.** Parsons never attempted to explain either sudden or total change. Revolution has no place in the theory of social change presented by Parsons.

Lesson 08

Functionalism (Robert K. Merton-I)
(Topic 030-031)**Topic 030-031: Merton's Structural- Functionalism**

Merton criticized the **three basic postulates** of functional analysis developed by anthropologists like Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown.

1. The **first postulate** is the functional unity of society, which suggests that all social and cultural beliefs and practices are functional for society and individuals. Merton argued that this may be true for small societies but not for larger, complex societies.
2. The **second postulate** is universal functionalism, claiming that all social structures have positive functions, which Merton disagreed with, citing examples of dysfunctional structures like rabid nationalism.
3. The **third postulate** is indispensability, stating that all aspects of society are necessary for its functioning, which Merton challenged by proposing alternative structures and functions.

Robert Merton, a prominent sociologist, advocated for **middle-range theory** as opposed to grand theorizing. He emphasized the importance of empirical testing in functional analysis and developed the concept of dysfunction to address negative consequences of social structures. Merton's functional analysis focuses on standardized social elements like roles, institutions, and norms, examining their functions and dysfunctions.

Examine the **functions of slavery** by analyzing its impact on various social units such as black families, white families, black political organizations, and white political organizations. Consider the net balance of slavery, recognizing that it may have been more functional for some social units while being more dysfunctional for others. Evaluate the overall effects of slavery on different groups and institutions. For example, consider how slavery may have functioned as a highly efficient system within bureaucracy, despite its drawbacks such as excessive red tape. Analyze the institution of marriage within the context of slavery and determine whether it was functional or dysfunctional for different groups.

He distinguished between **manifest and latent functions**, highlighting the interdependence of social structures and the potential for meaningful social change through functional analysis. A dysfunctional structure may persist within a system, such as discrimination against females and minority groups in society. While this discrimination may serve a functional purpose for certain parts of the social system, it can have negative consequences. **For example**, discrimination can lead to under productivity and increase the risk of social conflict. Not all structures are essential for the system to function, and functionalism allows for the possibility of meaningful social change. One alternative is to eliminate discrimination against minority groups to improve society.

Lesson 09

Functionalism (Robert K. Merton-II)**(Topic 035-037)****Topic 035-036: Latent functions, Social problems, and Change**

In Merton's view, functional analysis extends beyond stability and social order. Institutional patterns can persist for reasons other than their contribution to society's functional requirements. These patterns may endure due to vested interests of influential groups, traditions, and habits. The distinction between functional and dysfunctional aspects can be understood through manifest and latent functions. **Some actions intended to benefit the system may have unanticipated negative consequences. Dysfunctional patterns may persist if their negative effects are not recognized,** leading to the accumulation of latent dysfunctional consequences that eventually manifest as social problems requiring solutions and driving social change.

The **concept of dysfunction is valuable in analyzing social problems and change. For instance, widespread environmental pollution** resulting from industrial activities leads to global warming, necessitating urgent attention and regulatory measures. However, these interventions may also have unintended consequences, such as increased costs and decreased freedom. For example, raising minimum wages benefits labor but can lead to unemployment due to automation. Increased investment in automation can boost productivity but also impact employment. Evaluating whether the positive outcomes outweigh the negative ones is essential for understanding the long-term effects of social changes.

Topic 037: Social Structure and Anomie

Merton did not aim to present a comprehensive theory of social behavior or society in his work. "**Social Theory and Social Structure**" by Merton consists of a series of middle-range theories that can stand on their own. According to Merton, social structure refers to the organized set of social relationships in which members of a society or group are involved. The basic contention of Merton's theory is that various forms of deviant behavior arise from a mismatch between the material and occupational success goals (ends) and the institutional means available for achieving these goals. There is an emphasis on equality and achievement as societal values and ideals to be pursued. While all individuals aspire to high-level occupational and financial success, not everyone has equal access to legitimate means to achieve these goals, leading to frustration and anomie.

Individuals may internalize culturally approved goals but lack the institutionalized means to attain them, resulting in a discrepancy between cultural goals and means, which can lead to deviant behavior. Anomie, as a form of deviant behavior, has been widely used to explain crime and delinquency, with the general assumption that deviance is dysfunctional for society. However, some forms of deviant behavior, such as innovation in creating new products or services, may actually be functional for society and the innovative individual. Merton proposed five modes of adaptation to address the discrepancy and anomie, suggesting that deviance can stimulate social change aimed at improving the distribution of opportunities for success. The relationship between deviant behavior and its impact on society's functioning remains a separate question to consider.

Lesson 10

Functionalism (Robert K. Merton-III)
(Topic 039-040)**Topic 039: Reference Group Theory**

Reference groups are the groups individuals identify with for self-evaluation, comparison, and normative guidance. Individuals derive their self-concepts and attitudes from these groups, striving to follow the "generalized other." Sometimes, individuals are oriented towards standards of groups they do not belong to, which can undermine solidarity within a group but may be functional in an open society. **For example**, a lower-class individual may aspire to be like the upper class for upward mobility.

Anticipatory socialization is the process of preparing to join a desired group, bridging the gap between identification and membership. Merton's analysis emphasizes the consequences of behavior patterns, particularly unintended or dysfunctional functions, requiring individuals to adapt to new situations.

Topic 040: Theory of deviance

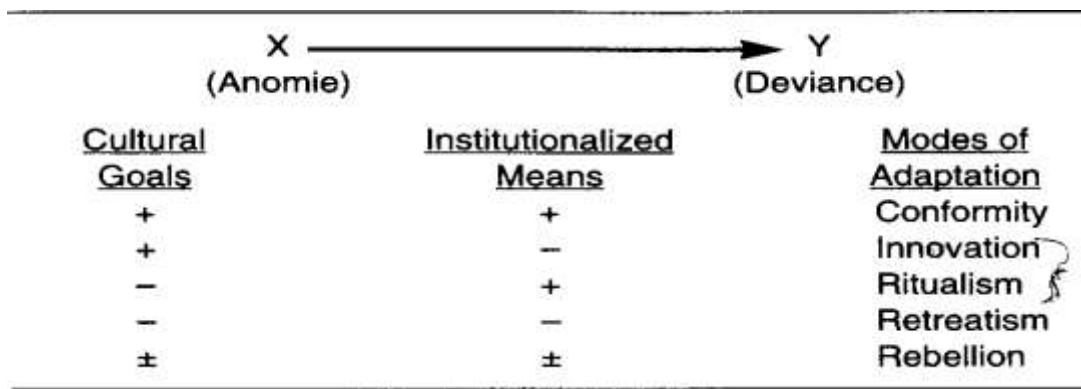
Merton's significant contribution lies in his analytical framework that explains the connection between social structure and cultural factors influencing deviant behavior. While influenced by Parsons's focus on cultural values and institutional structures in shaping social action, Merton emphasized the variability of cultural goals and demonstrated a more flexible relationship between goals and their realization. He argued that deviance is not solely a result of cultural values being improperly transmitted or an individual's flawed socialization, as Parsons suggested.

Merton's work in "**Social Theory and Social Structure**" presents a series of middle-range theories that can stand independently. Social structure refers to the organized set of social relationships in which members of a society or group are involved. Merton proposed that certain social structures exert pressure on individuals to engage in nonconforming behavior rather than conforming behavior. This pressure leads to higher rates of deviant behavior in specific groups, not due to inherent biological tendencies but as a response to their social circumstances. According to Merton, deviant behavior, like conforming behavior, is a result of specific social structural conditions.

Modes of Adaptation and Deviance

Merton's typology categorizes individuals into **five groups** based on their relationship to **cultural goals** and **societal means**: conformists, innovators, ritualists, retreatists, and rebels. **Conformists** adhere to cultural goals and approved means, while **innovators** accept goals but seek alternative means to achieve them. (e.g., **racketeering**-someone who commits crimes for profit (especially one who obtains money by **fraud** or **extortion**). **Ritualists** reject goals but comply with behaviors, (as seen in the current economic and political situation of Pakistan) represent pure cases of anomie, with a disconnect between goals and means. **Retreatists** (e.g., drug addiction) involves rejecting both monetary success and the means to achieve it. **Rebels** reject cultural goals and means, creating their own paths.

For example, a **conformist** pursues academic success by meeting expectations and excelling in coursework, while an **innovator** aims for success through unconventional methods like plagiarism. The **ritualist** goes through the motions without ambition, the **retreatist** shows no interest, and the **rebel** rejects societal norms entirely.



Lesson 11

Neo-Functionalism
(Topic 041-044)

Background

The structural functionalism theory faced a bombardment of criticisms from the mid-1960s to the present day, coinciding with significant changes in American society, such as:

- The anti-war movement
- Civil rights movement
- The growing popularity of the neo-Marxist approach and Critical theory gained popularity during this period.

Parsons' image of value consensus leading to social equilibrium was challenged. The symbolic interactionist perspective offered an alternative to functionalism; leading to fragmentation in the functionalist perspective (*it refers to the division of society into specialized parts or institutions that perform specific functions to maintain social order and stability. This division allows for efficiency in meeting societal needs. Critics argue that this fragmentation can lead to social inequality and conflict. Overall, fragmentation is viewed as essential for society's functioning, but it also has its drawbacks*). In the mid-1980s, there was a major effort to revive the theory under the heading of "neo-functionalism." Neofunctionalism is a theoretical development that emerged in the **mid-1980s** in the United States and Germany. **In 1984**, the American Sociological Association held a conference on Neofunctionalism, where papers presented were reappraisals and reconsideration of the empirical implications of Parsonian theory.

Introduction

Neo-functionalism was employed to show continuity with structural functionalism and address its main challenges. "*Neo-functionalism is a self-critical approach within functional theory that aims to expand its intellectual scope while maintaining its core theoretical principles*" (Alexander and Colomy). Structural functionalism was considered too limited in scope, leading to the development of a more comprehensive theory known as "neo-functionalism." This new approach aimed to incorporate a diverse range of theoretical perspectives, with Parsons striving to create a strong synthetic core in the theory from its beginning. Neo-functionalism was originally intended as a grand theory of integration.

Parsons demonstrated the interconnectedness of the cultural, social, and personality systems in the social world. However, he later shifted towards a narrower structural-functionalist perspective, emphasizing the cultural system's influence on other systems. This led Parsons to move away from his original synthetic approach. Neo-functionalism emerged as an attempt to revive this holistic perspective.

Major contributors of neo-functionalism

Key contributors to neo-functionalism include **Jeffrey Alexander** in the United States and **Richard Münch** in Germany. Alexander (1985) identified various issues linked to structural functionalism.

Neo-functionalism had to overcome challenges such as;

- Anti-individualism,
- Antagonism to change
- Conservatism/idealism
- An anti-empirical bias

Basic orientations of neo-functionalism

Neo-functionalism, as defined by Alexander, consists of **six basic** orientations.

1. Neofunctionalism operates with a **descriptive model of society**, viewing society as composed of interacting elements that form a pattern. This pattern differentiates the system from its environment, with parts of the system being symbiotically connected. Interaction among the parts is not dictated by a single overarching force, leading neo-functionalism to reject mono-causal determinism in favor of an open-ended and pluralistic approach.

2. Neo-functionalism emphasizes **both action and order**, unlike structural functionalism which primarily focuses on macro-level sources of order in social structures and culture. It also considers micro-level action patterns.
3. Neo-functionalism maintains a **focus on integration**, viewing it as a social possibility rather than a completed state. It acknowledges the presence of deviance and social control within social systems and emphasizes the importance of equilibrium. This approach is broader than traditional structural-functionalism, encompassing both dynamic and partial equilibrium. It avoids viewing social systems as static and uses equilibrium as a reference point for functional analysis.
4. Neo-functionalism embraces the traditional **emphasis on personality, cultural, and social systems**. The interplay of these systems creates tension, which serves as a catalyst for both change and control.
5. Neo-functionalism **focuses on social change** through differentiation within social, cultural, and personality systems. Change does not lead to conformity and harmony, but rather to individuation and institutional strains.
6. Neo-functionalism emphasizes the importance of conceptualization and theorizing as **independent processes in sociological analysis**.

Key objectives of neofunctionalism

In the mid-1980s, Alexander introduced the term 'neofunctionalism' as a reconstruction and revision of Parson's theory, known as a Neo-Parsonian stance. This movement is characterized by its synthetic nature, aiming to integrate social system theory with Marxism to address societal crises adequately. Neofunctionalism is more of a tendency than a fully developed theory, with the following key objectives:

- 1) Creating a multidimensional form of functionalism that includes analysis at both micro and macro levels.
- 2) Moving functionalism towards the left and rejecting Parsons' optimism about modernism.
- 3) Arguing for an implicit democratic aspect in functional analysis.
- 4) Incorporating a conflict-oriented perspective.
- 5) Emphasizing contingency (uncertainty) and interactional creativity.

Issues of neofunctionalist

- How should researchers characterize the relationship between conflicts or contingency and social order?
- To what extent should Parsons' emphasis on the relationship between social action and social order be revised for empirical research?
- A key goal of neofunctionalism was to restore the legitimacy and significance of Parsonian theory, which it has achieved. Neofunctionalism has achieved success in this endeavor.

Lesson 12

Conflict Perspective
(Topic 045-047)

Topic 045: Conflict Perspective**Introduction:**

Conflict theory is the major alternative to functionalism as an approach to analyzing the general structure of societies; and it is increasingly popular and important in modern sociology. Conflict theorists of all types share a number of important assumptions and preconceptions. Together these create a distinctive way of looking at the world.

Functionalists, as we have seen, look at societies and social institutions as systems in which all the parts depend on each other and work together to create equilibrium. They do not deny the existence of conflict; but they believe society develops ways to control it, and it is these methods that they analyze.

Conflict theorists' perceptions of society could hardly be more different. Where functionalists see interdependence and unity in society, conflict theorists see an arena in which groups fight for **power**, and the "**control**" of conflict simply means that one group is able, temporarily, to suppress its rivals. *Functionalists see civil law*, for example, as a way of increasing social integration, whereas *conflict theorists see civil law* as a way of defining and upholding a particular order that benefits some groups at the expense of others.

Conflict theorists see society as an arena where: Groups fight for power, control of conflict means the suppression of rivals and civil law benefits some groups at the expense of others. Conflict theory is interested in the rivalries among different workers and management and in the position each group is in to do well for itself. A conflict theorist might point out that the air controllers want more staff and additional expensive equipment; that the pilots are continually trying to restrict entry into the profession in order to keep salaries high; that the porters, maintenance staff, and cleaners all belong to militant unions; and that all these groups are at odds with the airlines and terminal management, who want to keep **costs down and profits up**. The focus is on the shifting balance of power among competing groups, not on the equilibrium of interdependence and cooperation.

Assumptions:

The general "conflict" orientation incorporates **three central and connected assumptions**.

1. The first is that people have a number of basic "**interests**," things they want and attempt to acquire and which are not defined by societies but are rather common to them all. Indeed, Marxists generally argue that if people do not behave in accordance with these interests it can only mean that they have been deceived about what their "true interests" are by a social system that works in others' favor.
2. Second, and central to the whole conflict perspective, is an emphasis on **power as the core of social relationships**. Conflict theorists always view power not only as scarce and unequally divided and therefore a source of conflict *but also as essentially coercive*. This analysis leads, in turn, to a concern with the distribution of those resources that give people more or less power.
3. The third distinctive aspect of conflict theory is that **values and ideas** are seen as weapons used by different groups to advance their own ends rather than as means of defining a whole society's identity and goals. We shall find that conflict theorists have a great deal to say about ideas as an aspect of groups' interests, especially under the categories of "*ideology*" and "*legitimacy*."

Topic 046-047: Intellectual Roots**Power, Position, and Legitimacy: Marx and Weber**

The basic elements of conflict theory were set out by **two of the greatest early sociologists, Karl Marx and Max Weber**. Much of Weber's work incorporates a debate with Marx and Marxist analysis, but in both these authors we find the same **two concerns**:

1. First, with the way **social positions** bestow more or less power on their incumbents.
2. Second, with the role of ideas in creating or undermining the **legitimacy** of a social

position.

Marx emphasized the primacy of modern technology and of patterns of property ownership in determining:

- The nature of people's lives
- The course of social conflict

Marx's work is also distinguished by its claim to predict the future and its belief in the possibility of a perfect, conflict-free, communist society. The divide between the two approaches thus derives from the central differences between Marx and Weber themselves. Like Marx, Weber wanted to identify the origins of essential characteristics of "modern" society, but he did not see modernization as the road to perfection. On the contrary: modern rationality could be an "iron cage," creating a narrow "disenchanted" world of bureaucratic officialdom.

Weber did not have Marx's impact. Weber's ideas had the most important influence on "analytic" conflict theory. Like Marx, Weber saw people's activities as largely self-centered. A sociologist must recognize the importance of goals and values specific to a society. Acquisition of wealth is a universal interest. Calvinists' desire to save their souls: Unique goal of simply accumulating wealth Evidence of God's favor. Whereas enjoying the fruits of wealth would be sinful indulgence. People maneuver values in pursuit of advantage.

Weber formulated **ideal types** by abstracting from different historical contexts the essential elements of a general concept. Real-life examples need not correspond exactly to the stylized ideal type: for example, it may be impossible to find any examples of bureaucracy which correspond in every particular to Weber's model of it. However, an ideal type is very important in making historical and contemporary events intelligible. He distinguished between **unlegitimated domination and legitimated domination**, which has authority, and involves claims that certain people have the right to be obeyed.

Three "ideal types"/Three main foundations of authority

Weber suggested that there are **three main foundations** for successful claims to authority-or **three "ideal types**.

1. **Charismatic authority** rests on a leader's personal qualities, so that "the governed submit because of their belief in the extraordinary quality of the specific person. The legitimacy of charismatic rule thus rests upon the belief in magical powers, revelations and hero worship."! Thus, Jesus' disciples followed him because of what he was, not because of some position which he held.
2. **Traditional authority** is also personal, but it is enjoyed because it has been handed down from the past. A king or a tribal chief may not personally be very capable or effective, but he enjoys authority legitimated by custom. Weber argues that in general "patriarchalism is by far the most important type of domination the legitimacy of which rests upon tradition.
3. **Rational-legal authority** is derived from formal rules. Thus, modern bureaucrats are obeyed because and insofar as laws empower them to do certain things and because our societies accept statutory laws as the ultimate source of authority. According to Weber, the anchoring of legitimacy in particular sorts of rules is central to modern society's ongoing "rationalization" of everything.

Weber agreed with Marx that economic interest often underlie people's behavior and disagreed with the idea that economic interests are the sole crucial determinant of social structure and people's chances in life. Someone's religion, education, political status be as important a source of power and success.

Instead Weber focused on class, status, and party. Modern "analytic" theorists subscribe to this idea. Ideas and values have important and independent effect on history. Ideas and values may not be simply reflections of underlying interests but they can strengthen the position of a social group and provide legitimacy to the position and system.

Conflict Perspective: Ralf Dahrendorf-I
(Topic 048-052)

Topic 048: Ralf Dahrendorf

Introduction

Ralf Dahrendorf (1929) has for many years been widely known and respected in both Europe and North America. Dahrendorf discusses the relationship between social class and conflict in capitalist societies, and he argues that social conflict is an ordinary and necessary aspect of social life. Dahrendorf argues that social conflict arises from the unequal distribution of power and authority within society. He contends that social classes are defined by their relationship to power and that conflict between classes is inevitable as they compete for power and resources.

Major exponent by Dahrendorf are that society has **two faces**:

1. Conflict
2. Consensus

Sociological theory therefore should be divided into two parts: **Conflict theory and Consensus theory**.

- **Consensus theorists** should examine value integration in society. It entails coordination, integration and consensus and ever growing interest in comparatively small ‘social systems’ such as communities, enterprises and small groups.
- **Conflict theorists** should examine conflicts of interest and coercion that holds society together.

Society could not exist without both conflict and consensus, both are necessary for society. We cannot have conflict unless there is some prior consensus, no contact between any entities, no prior integration to serve as a basis for a conflict. Conversely, conflict can lead to consensus and integration. There is a relationship between conflict and consensus, developing a single sociological perspective encompassing both the processes is doubtful.

Dahrendorf constructed a conflict theory of society. It was a reaction to structural functionalism, for functionalists, the social system was held together by voluntary cooperation or general consensus or both. For conflict theorists, society was held together by “enforced constraint.”

Some positions in society are delegated power and authority over others. Power of authority not power of ownership of means of production. The differential distribution of authority by positions in organization is the determining factor of systematic conflicts. Authority does not reside in individuals but in positions. Authority attached to positions is key element in his analysis. Authority always implies super ordination, subordination. Those in positions of authority expected to control subordinates; they dominate because of expectations that surround them, not because of psychological characteristics. Like authority, expectations attached to positions, not people. Authority is legitimate, sanctions can be brought against those who do not comply.

Groups on top and at the bottom are defined by common interests, dominant groups seek to maintain the status quo while subordinates seek change. A conflict of interest within any unit is at least latent at all times. Individuals may not be conscious of this conflict, but occupants of positions behave in expected manner which is usually adapted.

Dahrendorf defined key features of modern societies:

- Class conflict contained and regulated
- Chances of revolution are far less
- Conflict leads to gradual evolutionary change that strengthens the system
- Main focus is on corporate organizations.
- Conflict is not just because of ownership of resources but ownership of power and authority so conflicts inevitable.
- Marx’s class conflict applicable to early stages of capitalism

- Conflict of interest is always latent but may become manifest.

Topic 049-050: Power, conflict, and social explanation

Dahrendorf argues, there is inevitably a conflict of interest and an impetus for the **powerless** to conflict with the **powerful**, the former in pursuit of power, and the latter in defense of it. Power is a "lasting source of friction." Distribution of power is crucial determinant of social structure. Coercive view of power, which is common to most conflict theorists, is very different from that of functionalism. For functionalists power embodied with political institutions. These institutions solve the functional imperatives of goal attainment. Use of coercive power is secondary.

For Dahrendorf, power is necessary if large organizations are to achieve their goals. May be defensive war. Powerful are not granted power by the community they grasp and use their power for their own ends. Actors use power within social relationships just one's influence to get things done thus power has the inherent tendency to create conflict in society. Groups with or without power have different interests, each group will pursue its interests that results in conflict. When balance between power and opposition shifts society changes, thus conflict is the great creative force of human history.

Norms Like other conflict theorists, Dahrendorf argues that societal norms do not define or emerge from social consensus. He argues that norms "are established and maintained by power, and their substance may well be explained in terms of interests of the powerful." This may be seen from the fact that norms are backed by sanctions. Vivid examples of what Dahrendorf means can be found in China, where protestors still risk prison or labor camp, or in the pre-civil rights South, where so called "uppity" blacks or nonconforming whites could lose their livelihoods or even their lives. Sanctions involve the control and use of power, particularly the power of law and punishment. "In the last analysis, established norms are nothing but ruling norms," he suggests.

Conflict theory's explanation of social stratification

Conflict theory's explanation of social stratification draws on Dahrendorf's view clearly distinguishes between **two facts**:

1. **First**, that positions and jobs are different and demand different skills.
2. **Second**, that different jobs are treated as "superior" or "inferior" to one another.

There are both "social differentiation of positions and social stratification based on reputation and wealth and expressed in a rank order of social status." Social stratification results in rank ordering of social status, ranking of different occupations and high ranking paid more than low ranking. Pattern of ranking gets established through norms and this pattern is institutionalized. Stratification, Dahrendorf argues, is caused by norms, which categorize some things as desirable and others as not. In every group, norms defining how people should behave entail discrimination against those who do not comply.

Every society has general norms, which define certain characteristics as good (such as being an aristocrat or having more education than average) and which therefore entail discrimination against those who do not or cannot conform. These norms, Dahrendorf argues, are the basis of social stratification, and they themselves are derived from and upheld by power. Once again, therefore, power is the central concept. This is a very different explanation from that of functionalists, who argue that social stratification derives from society's need to attract talented people into important positions. The two may not be as totally irreconcilable as Dahrendorf implies, however. Dahrendorf does not explain how a group becomes powerful in the first place, but this will surely often depend, at least in part, on its offering skills and a type of social order that people value.

Topic 051-052: Theory of conflict groups

Dahrendorf addresses the question of when inequalities and conflicting interests will actually produce conflicts. His central argument is that social conflicts will take place, systematically, among groups that differ in the authority they enjoy over others. By authority, Dahrendorf (again following Weber) means the sort of power that is attached to a social role or position that is legitimate in the sense of being defined and delimited by social norms, and that is backed by

sanctions up to (and no further than) these limits. Inequalities and conflicting interests produce conflict. Social conflict takes place among groups that differ in authority over others. It is part of the system and authority is attached to social role/position, a means to power.

Authority is legitimized, defined, and delimited by social norms, is backed by sanctions. A person may have the power but may not have authority. Criminal may have the power but no authority. Authority of university to charge the fee but no power to usurp money. Institutionalized authority systematically gives rise to social conflict between groups with authority and those without it. Dahrendorf calls these groups as classes instead of economic groups, for Dahrendorf "the term 'class' signifies conflict groups that are generated by differential distribution of authority in imperatively coordinated associations". Class means organizations in which orders are given and taken, People with authority give orders. Here authority is dichotomous: Either a person has it or does not. Interests are formed accordingly. Just like Marx, conflict involves only two sides, all classes do not engage in active conflicts all the time to be mobilized.

When will people be actually mobilized?

The structural requirements for people to form active "interest groups" are "technical," "political," and "social."

Technically, Dahrendorf argues, a group requires a founder and a charter or ideology to become active.

Politically, the more liberal the state, the more likely is the mobilization for active conflict; the more totalitarian the state, the less likely the mobilization. All this means the amount of freedom for groups to organize and engage in collective action.

Finally, **three social factors** are important for group formation. Group formation is more likely first,

1. If potential members are fairly well- concentrated **geographically**;
2. If they can **communicate** easily (as modern communications technology makes it easier for them to do); and
3. If people who stand in the **same relation to authority** (same social class standing). are recruited in similar ways and come, for example, from the same type of families or educational organizations.

Conflict Perspective: Ralf Dahrendorf-II
(Topic 053-057)

Topic 053: Theory of conflict groups

For Dahrendorf **three broad types of groups** are:

1. **Quasi group**, or “aggregates of executives of positions with identical role interests” These are the recruiting grounds for interest groups.
2. **Interest group**, it has a structure and a well-organized goal, Personnel of members with common modes of behavior.
3. **Conflict group**, which emerge out of many interest groups, they actually engage in group conflict.

Example for conflict group can be class opposition between factory workers and owners, vividly apparent as a result of unsafe working conditions in late nineteenth-century factories and mills, gave rise to political solutions establishing new norms (e.g., legislation regulating work- hours) and new structures and opportunities (e.g., legalization of unions) for the airing and negotiation of grievances. Dahrendorf argues that the establishment of trade unions reduces the intensity of conflict between workers and owners. With the democratization of conflict, “Organized groups stand in open, and therefore in controllable, conflict”. This process is exemplified in the US in the relations between the car manufacturing companies (e.g., GM, Ford, Chrysler) and the car workers’ union, the United Auto Workers (UAW); though they frequently have tense relations, both sides ultimately resolve their disputed issues (at least temporarily). Perhaps for this same reason, Walmart is rethinking its negative attitude toward unionization, recognizing that conflict is more easily controlled when it is institutionalized rather than suppressed.

Topic 056: Consequences of conflict

Conflict often triggers social change, particularly with respect to the authority structure of an organization or the overall society. Structural change may involve changing the personnel in positions of authority or incorporation of the interests of the subordinate class in the policies of the dominant class. Members of the subordinate class are actually incorporated, and ultimately co-opted into the dominant class, means they shift their priorities in maintaining the new positions and eventually neglect the interests of subordinate class. *Here the question is the change radical or sudden,*

Radicalness: refers to the extent of structural change.

Suddenness: refers to the speed of change.

Some **common characteristics of change** are:

- Change may be sudden and radical (revolution),
- Change may be slow but also radical, may not be consciously experienced.
- Change can be slow and non-radical like minor renegotiations with subordinates and compensations
- Rapid but non radical change like change in party government, little change in policies.

Conditions of class formation and class conflict

Class formation and class conflict took place under the following historically specific conditions:

- (a) Absence of mobility
- (b) Superimposition of authority, property, and general social status
- (c) Superimposition of industrial and political conflict
- (d) Absence of effective conflict regulation

Conflict Perspective: C. Wright Mills-I
(Topic 058-060)

Topic 058: Introduction of C. Wright Mills

C. Wright Mills was an American Sociologist. **He combined a conflict perspective with a strong critique of functionalist perspective.** Mills provided a radical and impassioned dissenting voice during the period of functionalism's dominance. Talcott Parsons' focus was on stability and social order. Mills insisted that sociology should promote a critical stance toward the existing social structure. His focus was critical understanding of the social structure; how it affects the behavior and actions of the people. Therefore, a **particular concept associated with Mills** was "**Sociological Imagination**". He was strong advocate for a developing a "sociological Imagination."

Imagination involves understanding society through a particular approach. The sociological imagination helps us to understand how personal troubles are connected to larger social issues. **For example**, a person is poor and unemployed, then question arises that is he responsible for unemployment? Or is he responsible for poverty or social system is making people poor. Here sociological imagination approach will help to understand these issues. You try to look into the analysis of social structure and we might see the problems of large number of people emerge out of the operation or working of the structure. Individuals' problems rooted in the way society is organized.

The problems may relate to:

- a) **Material problems** such as unemployment and poverty or
- b) **Psychological problems** such as alienation.

In his opinion social structure should be analyzed. Social structures should therefore be analyzed critically to show:

- *How they prevent people from meeting their basic needs, or*
- *How they prevent them in developing to their full potential as human beings?*

He developed his **argument** by understanding the American society. The structure of American society was governed by a "**power elite.**" The member of this power elite see their own class interests as equivalent to the general welfare. They try to maintain the *status-quo* because it looks after the general welfare. In this critical perspective, individual needs should have priority rather than maintenance of the equilibrium of the social system.

Topic 059: Sociological Imagination

Sociological imagination (SI) is to see things sociologically. it's more like developing a deep understanding of:

- How individuals' biography is a result of historical process
- How it occurs within larger social context.

SI enables to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. Let's take an **example** of a person who is poor. When we look his biography then we would know how he became poor. Is he highly intelligent or least intelligent? His biography would help us to know where he was born. Which factors were responsible? Secondly, we would look at the history of the society. By history of the society we mean social structure, the stratification in the society, the institutions of the society, social classes in the society where that individual was raised, developed his level of talent. It will help us to understand the larger historical scene for the inner life and external career i.e. appearance of a poor person i.e. poverty.

The sociologists should take into account how individuals (having unlimited/unorganized experiences) often falsely become conscious of their social positions. Individuals can only understand their own experiences fully if they can locate themselves within their period of history. Try to make distinction between **personal troubles and public issues. Personal troubles are which**

*occur within individual as biographical entity and within the scope of immediate milieu. Scale of the problem is limited to individual e.g. unemployed person or violence against wife. It is a Private trouble. On the other hand, **Public issues** means matters that have to do with institutions of historical society as a whole. We see issues in larger social structures. Scale of the problem is larger. For example, Unemployment in the society, how many people are unemployed in the society OR Violence against wives? The scale of the problem and the law's lack of concern makes it a public issue. Here the lesson is an individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate by locating himself within his period. This is Imaginative understanding of individuals' life chances. In order to overcome the problems, we either change their self or environment or both. Using sociological imagination researchers can also make policy recommendations.*

Lesson 16

Conflict Perspective: C. Wright Mills-II
(Topic 061-065)

Topic 061-062: Power elite

Mills argues consistently that the growth of large structures has been accompanied by a centralization of power and that the men who head government, corporations, the armed forces, and the unions are very closely linked. He carries this part of his analysis the furthest in his discussion of the "power elite."

Mills argues that America is ruled by a "power elite" made up of people who hold the dominant positions in political, military, and economic institutions.

Characteristics of the Power Elite

"Within the American society," he writes, "**major national power now resides in:**

1. **The economic:** major corporate owners and directors
2. **The political :** the highest political leaders including the president and a handful of key cabinet members and close advisers
3. **The military domains:** high-ranking military officers

Within each of the big three, the typical institutional unit

- Has become enlarged
- Has become administrative
- In the power of its decision, has become centralized.

The means of power at the disposal of centralized decision-making units have increased enormously. "Mills argues, moreover, that the three domains are interlocked, so that "the leading men in each of the three domains of power-the warlords, the corporate chieftains, the political directorate-tend to come together to form the power elite of America. The military capitalism of private corporations exists in a weakened and formal democratic system containing an already quite politicized military order." Mills believed that power can be based on factors other than property. However, the unity of the elite's institutional interests brings them together and maintains a war economy.

Central thesis:

The central thesis of Mills is that those who occupy the top positions of the economic, military, and political institutions form a more or less integrated and unified power elite. Their decisions determine the basic structure and direction of the society. Many non radical sociologists agree that economic life is increasingly intertwined with the activities of the government. However, they argue that it is not simply military expenditures that are important, but rather the increased involvement of government in all spheres of economic life. Those of us who live in Washington notice how, month by month, more and more industrial, trade, and labor associations set up headquarters in the city's growing office blocks, close to the federal government and its power.

Critics of Mills disagree with the perception of a single "power elite" pursuing its interests and excluding others from influence. They argue that powerful interests may-and frequently do- conflict with each other. "Business," for example, undoubtedly has power. It gets some of the measures it wants, and some firms and industries acquire a protected, semi monopolistic position from government regulators. For others, however, plans are delayed or demolished by decisions about environmental quality, prices are set at levels they oppose, or costs are raised by taxes, government paperwork, population requirements, and the like. However the large size and high level of centralization of the **dominant economic, military, and political structures** mean that the decisions and actions of their elites have wide-ranging ramifications for one another, for the overall society, and each can facilitate or hinder others in achieving their goals.

The elites may not be consciously aware of the conflict between their goals and interests and the overall welfare of society. Instead, they simply identify their own interests with the general welfare. Mills, like Marx, looked at society sharply divided between the power-full and the powerless. He

also looked at:

- Alienation
- Social structure
- The effects of social structure on personality
- “Manipulation” of people by mass media.

At the same time, however, Mills clearly belongs to a distinctively American populist tradition, which does not regard property as such as the main source of evil in society. To Mills, small-scale property ownership and the class of independent entrepreneurs are the major safeguards of freedom and security, and he regrets the declining of the old American society of independent farmers and businessmen."

Topic 063: Centralization of power in modern society

Both the large size and the high centralization of the dominant institutions depend on:

- Modern technologies of production
- Administration
- Communication

Technological advancement is central to this change.

Mills claimed that “the means of oppression and exploitation, of violence and destruction, as well as the means of production and reconstruction, have been progressively enlarged and increasingly centralized.”

Mills looked at American society as modern society. Change from decentralized economic structure as well as political structure to large size and the high centralization of the dominant institutions in the second half of 19th century. If we look at the three domains of power – economic, political, and military. Each of these domains becomes enlarged and centralized, the consequences of its activities become greater, and its traffic with the others increases.

For example, the decisions of a handful of **corporations** bear upon military and political as well as upon economic developments around the world. The decisions of the **military establishment** rest upon and grievously affect political life as well as the every level of economic activity. The decisions made within the **political domain** also determine economic activities and military programs. There is interpenetrating and interlocking nature of the policies and activities of the dominant institutional orders. Interpenetration and interlocking is based on social, psychological as well as social structural factors.

The elites in these structures had similar social backgrounds (wealth, power, prestige) and worldviews. Many of them came from long-established families that traditionally enjoyed high status or had social acquaintances among them. They tended to have the same kind of educational background. They intermingled with one another in various clubs and cliques. In addition, some of them moved back and forth between the top of one institutional order and another.

Topic 064: Mass media and mass society

Mills did not consider American power structure as pluralistic. Pluralistic means numerous, largely autonomous centers of power. These power centers must negotiate with one another in establishing national policies. It applies to middle level of power than the top level.

Characteristics of people under middle level of power:

Beneath the **middle levels of power**, a vast majority of the people are:

- Fragmented
- Passive
- Inarticulate mass society

Members of mass society are unorganized, having no impact on public policy or even on middle levels of power. We see the passive nature of mass society results largely the way the mass media

are able to *manipulate* public opinion and attitudes. Mass media manipulate the public issues in the ways that are not conducive to public dialogue. **Why it manipulates?** The answer is because mass media is managed by power elite.

The elites present their decisions and actions as being in accordance with democratic principles. They justify the sociopolitical status-quo and their elite positions. Further media offer escapist form of entertainment that divert people's attention from sociopolitical issues.

Mills' critique of the mass media and mass society may seem to be less relevant today. Because nowadays we don't only have one news channel or newspaper. There are so many t.v channels and newspaper in each society. Some might be supporting certain type of policies of the government and others might not be supporting. So we can say that mass media is now less homogeneous and its role in criticizing the political power structure has expanded greatly.

Moreover, since the late 1960s there has been a higher level of mobilization of various segments of the population to deal with various social problems. Some of the important **social movements** have developed since Mills' diagnosis of his times include:

- The civil rights movement
- The women's movement
- The environmental movement
- The gay/lesbian movement

Moreover, through new electronic forms of communication, there are increased opportunities for the public to be heard, even though they may not be organized effectively. In some case, the news media themselves provide opportunities for public feedback. On the other hand, the mass media today also offer multiple options for being diverted to a highly simulated world that they create, thereby avoiding the practical world of public affairs or civic involvement.

Key point of Mills' critique

The key point is that Mills' critique leads us to look at how power elites are able to maintain their position, sometimes by neutralizing or coopting their opponents, in an environment of widespread public apathy. The mass media still play a crucial role in this process.

Lesson 17

Frankfurt school: Critical theory-I
(Topic 066-069)

Topic 066: Frankfurt School: The Major Critiques of Social and Intellectual Life

Critical theory/perspective is the product of a group of German neo-Marxists who were dissatisfied with the state of Marxian approach. The term *critical theory* is specifically associated with the theorists of the Frankfurt school. These theorists were revolutionaries. The Institute of Social Research, founded in Frankfurt, Germany in 1923, was associated with this group. Critical theory has spread beyond the confines of the Frankfurt school. Critical theory was and is largely a European orientation, although its influence in American sociology has grown. The analyses of the Frankfurt theorists owe a great deal to Marx, and, like him, they emphasize the importance of conflicts of interests based on property relationships. However, they are by no means orthodox Marxists. They are very interested in uniting psychoanalysis and Marxism, an effort toward which orthodox Marxism (or Marxism-Leninism) is highly unsympathetic.

Critical theory aims:

“Critical theory” or perspective aims at two things;

- a) Social theory must be critical of oppressive arrangements
- b) It must propose emancipatory alternatives.

This theme exists in Marx’s work. It is blending theory with action or use theory to stimulate action and vice versa.

Critical theorists wanted theory:

- To expose oppression in society
- To propose less constrictive options

Yet they were confronted with the spread of political and economic domination of the masses. Critical theory is composed largely of criticisms of various aspects of social and intellectual life, but its ultimate goal is to reveal more accurately the nature of society.

Topic 067: Criticism of Marxian theory

Critical theory is composed largely of criticisms of various aspects of social and intellectual life. Their Ultimate goal was to reveal more accurately the nature of society. *The most disturbing point in Marxian theory was the idea of economic determinism.* Conflicts of interests was based on property relationships. Economic determinism is implicit in parts of Marx’s original work. The focus of criticism of critical theorists was primarily on neo-Marxists because they interpreted Marx’s work too mechanically. The critical theorists do not say that economic determinists were wrong in focusing on the economic realm but that they should have been concerned with other aspects of social life as well. Marx argued that people produce their ideas and conceptions of the world because of social structures in which they are born, raised, and lived. People’s lives are the process of production. First they produce for survival, then new needs come and people need new forms of production. Here if we talk about industrial society; there is division of labor in these societies. It increasingly deprives humans of their capacity to control their productive activities and leads to “**Alienation**”. It can lead to spread of political and economic domination of the masses. This capitalist stage will lead to a new era of human organization.

Marx believed that the capacity **to use language, to think, and to analyze** their conditions would enable humans to alter their environment. People use their capacities for thought and reflect. For Marx, the goal of social theory: logically expose those oppressive social relations and propose alternatives actions. Action to change social conditions generates increased knowledge, use it to mount more effective change-producing action. The interplay between action and theory continuously taking place. Information technologies, as well as markets for services and cultural symbols have changed. This transformation has changed the very nature of humans’ capacities to understand and respond to their conditions. *Economic determinism may not be the main factor*

determining the nature of society. Critical theorists criticized those being concerned only with economic determinism. They should have been concerned with other aspects of social life as well. The critical theorists seek to rectify the imbalance by focusing its attention on the cultural realm.

Topic 068: Criticism of Positivism

One of the focuses of critical theorists was the philosophical underpinnings of scientific inquiry, especially positivism. The criticism of positivism is related, at least in part, to the criticism of economic determinism, because some of those who were determinists accepted part or all of the positivistic theory of knowledge.

Positivism is depicted as accepting the idea that a single scientific method is applicable to all fields of study. It takes the physical sciences as the standard of certainty and exactness for all disciplines. Positivists believe that knowledge is inherently neutral. They feel that they can keep human values out of their work. This belief, in turn, leads to the view that science is not in the position of advocating any specific form of social action.

Propositions

Social analysis for critical theorist revolves around two propositions. The propositions are as follows:

1. *People's ideas are product of the society in which they live. Impossible to reach objective knowledge, free of the influence of particular era and its conceptual patterns.*
2. *The intellectuals should not try to be objective and to separate fact from value judgment in their work. What they should adopt is a critical attitude to the society being examined. An attitude that makes people aware of what they should do and has as its aim social change.*

Intellectuals should maintain a critical attitude toward their own work. They should examine and make explicit its relationship to the current state of society and socially created "knowledge."

Two critical attitudes can be different because:

1. Critical theorists are also product of a particular society.
2. Their own work is subject to its influences and is not uniquely objective.

Critical theorists believe in the truth and knowledge. That norm need to be followed by the researchers. So consider this approach better than the one followed by positivists who attempt to separate value judgments from analysis. Critical theorists focus on human activity as well as on the ways in which such activity affects larger social structures. Human actor is distinct, can be unique. Hence general laws of science cannot be applied without question to human action.

This critique leads to the view that:

Positivism is inherently *conservative, incapable of challenging the existing system*. It may be too narrow an approach to the contributions of positivism.

Topic 069: Criticisms of Sociology

Sociology is attacked for its "**scientism**," *Excessive belief in the power of scientific knowledge and techniques* that is, for making the scientific method an end in itself. In addition, sociology is accused of accepting the status quo. *The critical school maintains that sociology does not seriously criticize society or seek to transcend the contemporary social structure.* Sociology, the critical school contends, has surrendered its obligation to help people oppressed by contemporary society. *Members of this school are critical of sociologists' focus on society as a whole rather than on individuals in society; sociologists are accused of ignoring the interaction of the individual and society.* Although most sociological perspectives are not guilty of ignoring this interaction, this view is a cornerstone of the critical school's attacks on sociologists. Because they ignore the individual, sociologists are seen as being unable to say anything meaningful about political changes that could lead to a "just and humane society". Sociology becomes "an integral part of the existing society instead of being a means of critique and a ferment of renewal"

Lesson 18

Frankfurt school: Critical theory-II
(Topic 070-072)

Topic 070: Critique of Modern Society

Most of the critical school's work is aimed at a critique of:

- Modern society
- A variety of its components

Whereas much of early Marxian theory aimed specifically at the economy, *the critical school shifted its orientation to the cultural level* in light of what it considers the realities of modern capitalist society. That is, **the locus of domination in the modern world shifted from the economy to the cultural realm**. Still, the critical school retains its interest in domination, although in the modern world it is likely to be domination by cultural rather than economic elements. The critical school thus seeks to focus on the cultural repression of the individual in modern society. The critical thinkers have been shaped not only by Marxian theory but also by Weberian theory, as reflected in their focus on rationality as the dominant development in the modern world. In fact, supporters of this approach often are labeled "Weberian Marxists".

For critical theorists, in modern society:

- The repression/domination produced is by rationality.
- It has replaced economic exploitation.
- That is the dominant social problem.

The critical school clearly has adopted Weber's differentiation between:

- Formal rationality
- Substantive rationality

Formal rationality is concerned unreflectively with the question of the most effective means for achieving the given purpose. It is "**technocratic thinking**" the objective is to serve the forces of domination, not to emancipate people from domination. The goal is to find the most efficient means to achieve the ends. Ends defined as important by those in power. The approach is rational but not reasonable one. In contrast, reason is the hope for society. Reason involves the assessment of means in terms of the ultimate human values of justice, peace, and happiness. Despite the seeming rationality of modern life, the critical school views the modern world as rife with irrationality. This is the "irrationality of formal rationality".

Substantive rationality, in which individuals might consider a range of possible values or actions, and attempting to make them consistent. Weber termed this substantive rationality and considered it problematic in modern society in that rationalization of social life makes it difficult for people to pursue particular values. For example, pursuit of family or religious values may be difficult in modern society, given economic pressures and dominance of bureaucratic organizations.

In Herbert Marcuse's view, "this society is irrational as a whole" because:

- The rational world is destructive of individuals and their needs and abilities
- Peace is maintained through a constant threat of war
- People remain impoverished despite the existence of sufficient means

One example of formal rationality is modern technology. It can be used for repression or emancipation. Powerful people in the society use it for their own benefits.

Topic 071: Critique of Culture

The critical theorists level significant criticisms at what they call the "culture industry" (Kellner and Lewis, 2007), the rationalized, bureaucratized structures (for example, the television networks) that control modern culture. The culture industry, producing what is conventionally called "mass culture," is defined as the "administered, nonspontaneous, reified, phony culture rather than the real thing".

Two things worry the critical thinkers most about this industry:

1. **First**, they are concerned about its falseness. They think of it as a prepackaged set of ideas mass-produced and disseminated to the masses by the media.
2. **Second**, the critical theorists are disturbed by its peacemaking, oppressive, and astonishing effect on people.

Topic 072: Subjectivity

Traditional Marxian concern with objective structures. The great contribution of the critical school has been its effort to reorient Marxian theory in a **subjective direction**. Although this constitutes a critique of Marx's materialism and his dogged focus on economic structures, it also represents a strong contribution to our understanding of the subjective elements of social life at both:

- The individual
- The cultural levels

Economic determinism was being the central point for Marx. Many of the critical thinkers see themselves as returning to those roots, as expressed in Marx's early works. In doing so, they are following up on the work of the early-twentieth-century Marxian revisionists. ***The critical school has shifted to a concern with the cultural "superstructure" rather than with the economic "base."*** In addition to this factor, a series of external changes in society point to such a shift. In particular, the prosperity of the post-World War II period in America seems to have led to a disappearance of internal economic contradictions in general and class conflict in particular. False consciousness seems to be nearly universal: all social classes, including the working class, appear to be beneficiaries and ardent supporters of the capitalist system. In addition, the former Soviet Union, despite its socialist economy, was at least as oppressive as capitalist society. Because the two societies had different economies, the critical thinkers had to look elsewhere for the major source of oppression. What they looked toward initially was culture.

Critical theory: Juregen Habermas-I
(Topic 074-076)

Topic 074: Juregen Habermas Differences with Marx

Jürgen Habermas is a primary figure in Frankfurt school of critical theory. He belongs to second generation of Frankfurt school.

Goal of Habermas

- To develop a theoretical program for the reconstruction of historical materialism. He Started with Marx. Marx failed to distinguish between two analytically distinct components of species-being:

1. Work (or labor, purposive- rational action)
2. Social interaction (Symbolic or communicative action)

Karl Marx ignored social interaction. Everything reduced to labor. Habermas made a distinction between work and interaction.

- Work is purposive-rational action
- Interaction is communicative action

Purposive-rational action, Habermas distinguishes between:

- **Instrumental action** involves a single actor rationally calculating the best means to a given goal.
- **Strategic action** involves two or more individuals coordinating purposive-rational action in the pursuit of a goal.

Both involve the calculated pursuit of self-interest.

Communicative action

Habermas is most interested in communicative action, in which the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding. In communicative action participants are not primarily oriented to their own successes; they pursue their individual goals under the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions. Leads to communicative understanding. Whereas the end of purposive-rational action is to achieve a goal, the objective of communicative action is to achieve communicative understanding. It is broader than that encompassing “speech acts or equivalent nonverbal expressions.” Marx’s focus was on work, Habermas is led to focus on communication.

Baseline to analyze work

For Marx free and creative work was a baseline for critically analyzing work in various times. **For Habermas** communicative action was the baseline.

Topic 075-076: The Legitimation Crisis in the Political Organization of Capitalism

Habermas looked at the process whereby political and economic systems are legitimated through:

- Cultural beliefs
- Ideologies
- Worldviews

However Modern capitalist societies face a legitimation crisis.

The Crisis occur due to:

- Transformation from the early forms of entrepreneurial capitalism to modern organized capitalism.
- Tremendous expansion of scope of the government’s role in modern democratic societies. People’s resistance to this role.
- The Government’s role expanded due to:
- The need to deal with the periodic economic crises of capitalism.
- Meeting the basic welfare needs that inevitably develop in unregulated market systems.

The increasing government regulation is inconsistent with a political ideology i.e. limited government role for the sake of individual freedom. It amounts to putting restrictions for the development of political democracy. Lower the restrictions on individual freedom, more the development of political democracy. Practicing of this principle opened the door for the early development of entrepreneurial capitalism. Separation (“uncoupling”) of economic activity from political control. There should be separation (“uncoupling”) of economic activity from political control. Reality is: With the expansion in capitalist enterprises there is expansion in political interference (recoupling). Justified to insure economic stability and protect the general welfare.

The goal of stability was crucial for capitalist enterprises, while the general welfare goal was important for providing some protection for individual citizens from the growing power of these large-scale corporate enterprises. This is “recoupling” of economic activity and political regulation. Even though justified in terms of the general welfare, a lot of the expansion of government programs and regulations occurred without widespread democratic discussion or clear consensus regarding the proper role of government in insuring the general welfare in a complex society. The long-term outcome was that government policies often seemed to benefit particular groups or “special interests” more than the general welfare.

While critical theory is oriented toward increasing individual freedom, the question of when restrictions are needed to prevent exploitation and promote the overall welfare of society are always matters of political debate. The problem in modern societies is that public participation in such discussion tends to be limited and one-sided. This lack of citizen participation makes it possible for large-scale corporate structures to have an inordinate influence on public discourse and political policy decisions. The restrictions and distortions in the communication process in modern society result in part from heavy reliance on impersonal “steering mechanisms” as a source of control and integration of large-scale complex systems. This leads us to Habermas’s (1987) important distinction between system and lifeworld. Modern societies differ from earlier types of society in terms of their heavy reliance on impersonal procedures of macro-level system integration.

Moreover, these mechanisms have become detached (or “uncoupled”) from the micro-level processes whereby people’s everyday life worlds are integrated through open communication leading to mutual understandings and the possibility of well-informed consensus. This discrepancy between system integration based on impersonal steering mechanisms and social integration based on communication results in large part from the growing size and complexity of society. His analysis of the system is consistent with Durkheim’s argument regarding the effects of the expansion of the division of labor in increasing functional interdependence while simultaneously decreasing moral solidarity. This process can also be related to Marx’s description of how social ties between members of different socioeconomic classes have been replaced by purely market transactions (or a narrow “cash nexus”).

Critical theory: Juregen Habermas-II
(Topic 077-079)

Topic 077-079: Alternative forms of communication and rationality

For Habermas **rationality is grounded in the communication process**. If there is no coercion or restrictions on communication, then people become more reflective regarding their implicit and taken-for-granted common sense assumptions. Such discourse, in the absence of coercion or other restrictions on communication, may lead to questioning and criticizing beliefs and values handed down through tradition and accepted implicitly as “just the way things are.”

Forms of communication/discourse

Different forms of communication can be distinguished according to its concern with:

- The objective world
- The intersubjective world
- The subjective (or personal) world

Each of these different forms of discourse is associated with its own distinctive type of rationality and its own specific type of action.

Types of action

The four types of action include:

1. Purposive (or teleological) action
2. Normative action
3. Dramaturgic action
4. Communicative action

The kinds of statements associated with these different types of rational action are summarized below.

1. Factual statements and purposive (or teleological) action

Rationality in this area is reflected in the methods of scientific research whereby statements are evaluated against objective empirical facts. **Purposive action employs objective factual knowledge in selecting means to achieve goals.** This type of action corresponds to Weber’s instrumental rationality and is also consistent with the rational choice perspective. Rationality considerations are involved in assessing the effectiveness or efficiency of means in reaching whatever ends are being sought. Habermas called it as the *strategic action* i.e. efforts to influence other people’s actions as means for achieving one’s own ends. This form of relating to others is not oriented toward reaching mutual understanding.

Strategic action is exemplified in market relations where buyers and sellers negotiating with one another in terms of the individual interests they seek to satisfy. Buyer may be forced to buy because of no alternative. It is also manifested in authority relations in organizations, where controlling the actions of subordinates is simply the means for achieving the goals of an organization or those of the authority figures within it.

2. Normative statements and normative action

Rationality in this area involves evaluating behaviors in terms of their conformity with widely accepted norms. Such actions may also fulfill various goals for oneself or for others, but this is not the primary motivation. Instead, *the focus is on the norms themselves and the ideals and values they reflect.* Communication in this category may include efforts to establish consensus or to evaluate the norms critically. This type of communication is particularly important for the critical theory goal of changing normative patterns and institutionalized structures so as to improve human welfare.

3. Expressive Statements and Dramaturgical Action

Expressive statements reflect one’s own personal subjective orientations and intentions. They cannot be evaluated by “checking the facts,” since the “facts” are subjective in nature. And their validity also does not depend on social consensus. Rationality with regard to expressive

communication would involve discourse that seeks to discover and correct patterns of deliberate deceit or unwitting self-delusion or to improve self-disclosure. This type of action would include dramaturgical action, including the various strategies of presentation of self as analyzed by Goffman. If a person's self-presentation is intended to manipulate the behavior of others to benefit oneself, it could be seen as a form of strategic action as well. A high level of systematic and disciplined expressive self-disclosure is represented by those involved in the creation of cultural products such as art, music, and literature. The goal of these forms of creativity is to communicate a subjective or experiential response to some aspect of the human condition. Expressive communication of this type can be evaluated in terms of intersubjectively shared aesthetic standards. Rational analysis of the meaning of such cultural products would involve evaluating how well they represent common human experiences or convey a meaningful reaction to the human condition that can be shared.

4. Communication And Communicative Action

Discourse is oriented explicitly toward:

- a) Communicative competence
- b) Mutual understanding

It Includes analysis of:

- The grammatical structure of sentences, paragraphs, texts, and speeches
- The expressed or implied meanings carried through different forms of communication

The goal of communicative action is **mutual understanding - consensus**. Actions are coordinated on the basis of consensus in contrast with force, tradition, authority, or manipulation.

Habermas relates the forms of communication and rationality to:

- i. Personality formation
- ii. Social integration
- iii. The creation and reproduction of cultural meanings and values

The process takes place through socialization whereby the individuals learn their culture.

Habermas argues that system integration at the level of the overall society has expanded in modern society at the expense of the social integration of the lifeworld. The process of communication at the lifeworld level has been overshadowed by the macro system level. It resulted in inadequate levels of socialization, breakdown in normative consensus, and erosion of cultural meanings and values. When such consequences are widespread, the symptoms may include antisocial behavior, disruptive conflict, anomie, and alienation. These problems are more serious than simple misunderstandings that can be corrected through communicative action within individuals' micro-level life worlds.

Social integration in Economic system:

The way social integration at the lifeworld level is subordinated to system integration can be seen in the economic system in the growth of a consumer society. In various ways (particularly through advertising), individuals are encouraged to pursue ever increasing levels of personal consumption as the key to a fulfilling life. This lifestyle helps compensate them for their subordinate status and lack of autonomy while their enthusiastic conformity to the consumer role promotes the expansion of the economic system.

Social integration in political structure:

Within the political structure, system integration is promoted as citizens become clients or beneficiaries of the state through their dependence on government for personal benefits or for policies that will serve their interests. The roles of both consumer and citizen are also reinforced through ideologies that simultaneously idealize individual freedom and material success, the "free enterprise" economic system, and government responsibility for the general welfare in a democratic system.

From a critical theory perspective, the increased allocation of general welfare responsibilities to the

government may be seen as restricting the freedom of individuals and organizations in the private sector in many different ways. Here we see following things:

- Erosion of close-knit communities as well as shared “lifeworld.”
- No shared communication of lifeworld experiences.
- No open communication in large scale systems.
- Difficult for large public to communicate with one another and with officials or other authority figures.
- Lack of “appropriate” knowledge for meaningful participation can be another hurdle.
- In large-scale macro systems, subordinates and others in marginal positions are often left out of the discussion.
- Nevertheless, they are affected in major ways by decisions or actions undertaken by agents for macro-level systems.

Lesson 21

Critical theory: Juregen Habermas-III
(Topic 080-082)

Topic 080-082: Critical Theory Today

Habermas is considered the most prominent of today's social thinkers. Yet he is not alone in struggling to develop a critical theory that is better adapted to contemporary realities.

Axel Honneth has emerged as today's leading critical theorist. To achieve that status, he has developed a theoretical position that builds on:

- The work of the critical school
- That of Habermas in particular

For Honneth, critical theory must be based on and emerge from practical critiques that exist in the everyday world.

The explanation of a social phenomenon must be done in such a way that:

- A practical dimension of critique emerges as a constitutive requirement for critical understanding.
- Its aim should be in emancipating people from the domination and oppression that they experience in the real world.

Critical theory must have an integrative interest in both theory and practice. It must seek the determination of the driving forces of society. So effort should stimulate two things:

- i) The critical analysis of the historical process of the reality
- ii) Finding ways to overcome established forms of domination within society

The *emancipatory interest* of critical theory lies within (is immanent within) society itself. For Honneth, the basic problem with classic critical theory is:

- it's totally administered view of the capitalist world led to negativism
- It left no hope for practical critique and emancipatory possibilities in the everyday world and in critical theory itself.

Honneth thought that earlier critical theory supposed a:

- Closed circle between capitalist domination and cultural manipulation.
- There could remain within the social reality of their time no space for a zone of moral-practical critique.

Honneth's concluded that the key problem for critical theory today is:

- a) How to come "to grips with the structure of social domination, as well as
- b) With identifying the social resources for its practical transformation."

Honneth sees Habermas's **communication theory as a step forward**. This theory offered a way of dealing with, and getting at, the everyday life-world. In everyday life world there exists a layer of moral experiences (Normative expectations of interaction). Normative expectations can be the point of reference for critique (critical analysis). Honneth's focus is on the *recognition of identity claims* made by individuals and collectivities. Consistent with critical theory he wants to deal with the violence committed against claimants for recognition. Claimants of recognition of identity are at lower position (subordinate). Dominants commit acts of violence against claimants of recognition. Under the normative expectations of social world, it is considered as unfair. Hence claimants of identity feel that they deserve recognition. Contrarily. Their sense of fair play is upset. They resist those seen as unfair to them. It is violence to individual or collective claims to social recognition within the life-world. Claimants consider this experience as moral injustice.

Historically people often have felt that they did not get the recognition they deserved. Possible, even likely, that there is an increasing crisis of recognition in contemporary society. For example it is difficult for some entities like women to get recognition they need for their work. It becomes disappointing and can result in conflict.

People needing three forms of recognition:

- I. **Love** i.e. caring for a person's needs and emotions. People gain confidence on such recognition.
- II. **Respect** for a person's moral and legal dignity, and this leads to self-respect.
- III. **Esteem** for a person's social achievements, and this leads to self-esteem.

These forms of recognition are acquired and maintained intersubjectively. i.e. in order to relate to themselves in these ways, people must receive recognition from others. Ultimately, the relations of recognition are a necessary condition of our moral subjectivity. With adequate recognition people can realize their full autonomy as human beings.

Disrespect occurs when people do not receive the recognition, they feel they deserve, and this adversely affects their ability to form appropriate identities. Conflict and resistance are likely to result when they do not get the recognition the normative system says they should.

Normative standards provide the basis for such actions of conflict, The evaluation of those actions, and the concrete claims for recognition on which those actions are based. Use the normative standards to evaluate claims for recognition.

Major criticisms of Honneth's critical theory

There are **four major criticisms** of Honneth's critical theory:

1. Why recognition is placed at the heart of social and ethical theory? Is recognition as important as Honneth suggests? Is it as important as work and labor in Marx's theory?
2. There are doubts about the kind of monistic theory created by Honneth: Is recognition all that matters?
3. Why only three bases of recognition: Why not more or less?
4. It is hard to recognize the operations of power in Honneth's theory.

Feminism as Part of Conflict Perspective-I
(Topic 083-86)

Topic 083: The Challenge of Feminist Theory Introduction

In the late 1970s a new theoretical outsider issued a challenge to established sociological theories—and even to Marxian sociology itself. This latest brand of radical perspective was contemporary feminist theory. Critical feminist writings can be traced back to almost 500 years. There has been an organized political movement by and for women for more than 150 years. In America in 1920, the movement finally won the right for women to vote, fifty-five years after that right had been constitutionally extended to all men. Exhausted and to a degree satiated by victory, the American women's movement over the next thirty years weakened in both size and vigor, only to spring back to life, fully reawakened, in the 1960s.

Factors helped new wave of feminist activism

Three factors helped new wave of feminist activism. The factors are as follows:

- i) The general climate of critical thinking that characterized the period;
- ii) To encounter the sexist attitudes of the liberal and radical men to women activists who participated in antiwar, civil rights, and student movements; and
- iii) Women's experience of prejudice and discrimination as they moved in ever-larger numbers into wage work and higher education.

Movement continued into the 21st century and became international. A major feature of this international women's movement has been an explosively growing new literature on women that makes visible all aspects of women's hitherto unconsidered lives and experiences. This literature, which is popularly referred to as women's studies, is the work of an international and interdisciplinary community of writers, located both within and outside universities and writing for both the general public and specialized academic audiences.

Feminist scholars launched a probing, multifaceted critique that made visible the complexity of the system that subordinates women. Feminist theory looks at the world from the vantage points of women, with an eye to discovering the significant but unacknowledged ways in which the activities of women subordinated by gender and variously affected by other stratificational practices, such as **class, race, age, enforced heterosexuality, and geosocial inequality** help create our world.

Feminist theorists have challenged sociological theory, especially its classical statements and early research. Feminist writings now assume a critical mass in sociology. They offer an exciting paradigm for the study of social life.

Feminist theory is moving increasingly into the mainstream of the discipline; engaging all its subspecialties; influencing many of its long-established theories; and interacting with the new developments.

Feminist theory is a generalized, wide-ranging system of ideas about social life and human experience developed from a woman-centered perspective. It is the work of an interdisciplinary and international community of scholars, artists, and activists.

Topic 084-085: Feminism's basic questions

Feminist theory has many questions. Of these, it begins with a simple first question:

First question “And what about the women?” In other words; where are the women in any situation being investigated? If they are not present, why?

If they are present then:

- What exactly are they doing?
- How do they experience the situation?
- What do they contribute to it?
- What does it mean to them?

In response to this question, feminist scholarship has produced some **generalizable answers**. Women are present in most social situations. Where they are not, it is not because they lack ability

or interest but because there have been deliberate efforts to exclude them. Where they have been present, women have played roles very different from the popular conception of them (as, for example, passive wives and mothers).

Despite women actively present in most social situations, scholars, publics, and social actors themselves have been blind to their presence. Also, women's roles in most social situations, though essential, have been different from, less privileged than, and subordinate to the roles of men.

Second question is: "Why is all this as it is?" In answer, feminist theory has produced a general social theory with broad implications for sociology.

One of feminist sociological theory's major contributions to answering this question has been the development of the concept of "**gender.**"

Feminist theorists made it possible for people to see the distinctions between:

- (a) Biologically determined attributes associated with male and female
- (b) The socially learned behaviors associated with masculinity and femininity.

They did so by designating the latter as "gender".

Starting point of agreement among nearly all varieties of feminist theory is an understanding of gender as a social construction, something not emanating from nature but created by people as part of the processes of group.

Third question is. "How can we change and improve the social world so as to make it a more just place for all people?" This commitment to social transformation in the interest of justice is the distinctive characteristic of critical social theory, a commitment shared in sociology by feminism, Marxism, neo- Marxism, and social theories being developed by racial and ethnic minorities and in postcolonial societies.

Fourth question: "And what about the differences among women?"

The answers to this question lead to a general conclusion that the *invisibility, inequality, and role differences* in relation to men that generally characterize women's lives are profoundly affected by a woman's social location that is, by her *class, race, age, affectional preference, marital status, religion, ethnicity, and global location*. Feminist theory is not just about women, nor is its major project the creation of a middle-range theory of gender relations.

It is another **discovery which is similar to Marx's accomplishment**: He effectively demonstrated that one also could view the world from the vantage point of the world's workers. This insight relativized ruling-class knowledge and, in allowing us to compare that knowledge with knowledge gained from the workers' perspective, vastly expanded our ability to analyze social reality. The claim is to view the world from the vantage point of people concerned i.e. the laborers, students, women.

Topic 086: Waves of Feminism

Feminism and sociology share a long-standing relationship originating in feminists turning to sociology to answer **feminism's foundational questions**: *what about the women, why is all this as it is, how can it be changed to produce a more just society, and, more recently, what about differences among women?* Sociology was identified from its beginning by activist women as one possible source of explanation and change. Women, mostly feminist, were active in the development of sociology. Repeatedly their achievements erased from the history of sociology by a male-dominated professional. Feminist writing is linked to feminist social activism. Intensity varied over the last two hundred years. High points occur in the liberationist 'moments' of modern Western history. In US history, major periods of feminist mobilization frequently are understood as "waves."

First Wave feminism began in the 1830s as an offshoot of the antislavery movement and **focused on women's struggle for political rights, especially the vote.**

Feminist ideas were abroad in the world in the 1830s when Auguste Comte coined the term "sociology." Women were "present at the creation" of sociology, as writers, editors, publishes. Period overlapped with the rise in activism in First Wave feminism as women pushed their crusade

for the right to vote. Between 1920 and 1960 feminist thinking and activism ebbed.

Second Wave feminism (1960-90) worked to translate **basic political rights into economic and social equality**. Women sociologists did research on women's lives. They Re-conceptualized relations between men and women with the concept "**gender.**" Second wave of feminist activism energized feminist thinking. Women in sociology drew strength to confront their professional organization. They re-established a feminist perspective in the discipline. The effects of 2nd wave feminism continue to this day in sociology.

Women have moved into the profession in unprecedented numbers, as students, teachers, scholars, and office holders in professional associations. Central to this Second Wave triumph has been establishing gender as a core concept in sociology. Gender is broadly understood as a social construction. A Concept needed for classifying people and behaviors in terms of "man" and "woman," "masculine" and "feminine." Inclusion of concept in research implies a normative commitment to some standard of gender equality.

Third Wave Feminism is used in **two senses**:

- i) To describe the responses by women of color, lesbians, and working-class women to the ideas of white professional women claiming to be the voice of Second Wave feminism,
- ii) To describe the feminist ideas of the generation of women who will live their adult lives in 21st century.

Feminism as part of conflict perspective-II
(Topic 87-90)

Topic 87-88: Varieties of feminist theories, Gender difference

This section presents a typology of contemporary feminist theories that guide feminist sociological theorizing. Our typology is organized around answers to feminism's most basic question. *And what about the women?*

Essentially, there have been **five answers to that question**.

1. The first of these can be framed in terms of *gender difference* women's location in, and experience of, most situations is *different* from that of the men in those situations.
2. The second is that of *gender inequality*: Women's location in most situations is not only different from but also less privileged than or *unequal* to that of men.
3. The third is that of *gender oppression*, which is a direct power relationship between men and women through which women are restrained, subordinated, moulded, used, and abused by men.
4. The fourth is that women's experiences of difference, inequality, and oppression vary according to their location within societies' arrangements of *structural oppression* such as class, race, ethnicity, age, affectional preference, marital status, and global location.
5. The fifth, a major focus in third-wave feminism, *questions the concept of a woman (interrogating gender)* so central to other theoretical positions, asking what implications flow from assuming the concept of "woman" as a given in social analysis.

Overview of Varieties of Feminist Theory

Basic varieties of feminist theory—answers to the descriptive question "What about the women?"	Distinctions within theories—answers to the explanatory question, "Why is all this as it is?"
Gender difference	
Women's location in, and experience of, most situations is different from that of men in the situation.	Cultural feminism Sexual difference theories Sociological theories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional • Interactional
Gender inequality	
Women's location in most situations is not only different from but also less privileged than or unequal to that of men.	Liberal feminism
Gender oppression	
Women's experience of difference, inequality, and oppression varies by their social location within capitalism, patriarchy, and racism.	Psychoanalytic feminism Radical feminism
Structural oppression	
Women's experience of difference, inequality, and oppression varies by their social location within capitalism, patriarchy, and racism.	Socialist feminism Intersectionality theory
Interrogating gender	
What is really to be understood by the category "woman"? How is it produced and maintained?	Postmodernist feminism

All theories of gender difference have to confront the problem of what is usually termed "the essentialist argument": the thesis that the fundamental differences between men and women are immutable. That immutability is usually seen as traceable to **three factors**:

1. Biology
2. Social institutional needs for men and women to fill different roles, most especially but not exclusively in the family; and
3. The existential or phenomenological need of human beings to produce an "other" as part of the act of self-definition.

Gender differences

Cultural feminism focuses on the positive aspects of "feminine personality." Women's virtues of being cooperative, emotional, caring, passive, and less aggressive. Gender differences are valuable for producing a just society. Sexual differences are there because humans are sexed beings. Difference is a process, and masculine culture creates it. Creates a construct of the woman as "the other." An objectified being who is assigned traits that represent the opposite of the subject male. 'One is not born a woman; one becomes one.'

Existing Sociological Theories: Institutional and Interactionist Institutional theories see social institutions as the major determinants of gender difference. Sexual division of labour that links women to the functions of wife, mother, and household worker. Women's lifelong series of events and experiences is different from men's. Women's roles as mothers and wives in producing and reproducing a female personality and culture. Women's roles carried over to other institutions. Finally producing differences between women and men. Gender gap in voting, caring professions as female (the mommy track, pink occupations).

Interactionist theories say that in interaction, "people do gender." At birth, children are assigned a sex on the basis of their biological sex. Over time, people begin to identify with gender and act in ways considered appropriate to the sex category designation. People act according to the norms of appropriate gender behaviour. Gender is produced during interaction. Ways of hugging, laughing, and complaining are deeply gendered and are situationally enacted.

Topic 89: Gender inequality

Four themes characterize feminist theorizing of gender inequality.

1. Men and women are situated in society not only differently but also unequally.
2. Women get less of the material resources, social status, power, and opportunities for self-actualization than do men who share their social location—be it a location based on class, race, occupation, ethnicity, religion, education, nationality, or any intersection of these factors.
3. This inequality results from the organization of society, not from any significant biological or personality differences between women and men.
4. Individual human beings may vary somewhat from each other in their profile of potentials and traits, no significant pattern of natural variation distinguishes the sexes. Instead, all human beings are characterized by a deep need for freedom to seek self-actualization and by a fundamental malleability that leads them to adapt to the constraints or opportunities of the situations in which they find themselves.

To say that there is gender inequality, then, is to claim that women are situationally less empowered than men to realize the need they share with men for self-actualization. All inequality theories assume that both women and men will respond fairly easily and naturally to more egalitarian social structures and situations. They affirm, in other words, that it is possible to change the situation. In this belief, theorists of gender inequality contrast with the theorists of gender difference, who present a picture of social life in which gender differences are, whatever their cause, more durable, more penetrative of personality, and less easily changed.

Liberal Feminism

The major expression of gender inequality theory is liberal feminism. The beliefs of liberal feminism includes:

1. All human beings have certain essential features such as capacities for reason, moral agency, and self-actualization,
2. Secure the capacities through legal recognition of universal rights,

3. The inequalities between men and women assigned by sex are social constructions having no basis in 'nature' and
4. Social change for equality can be produced by an organized appeal to a reasonable public and the use of the state.

Women equality possible if we change the division of labor by re-patterning of key institutions i.e. law, work, family, education, and media. Gendered division of labor has organized society into public and private spheres. Women allocated to private sphere. Men have access to the public sphere (rewards of social life like money, power, status, freedom, opportunities for growth and self-worth). Presently the two spheres interact. Women demand on men to assist in the work of private sphere. Two spheres are still shaped by patriarchal ideology. Liberal feminists pursue change through: law, appeal for reasoned moral judgments.

Topic 90: Gender oppression

Oppression is a result of direct power relationships between men and women. Men's interest in controlling, using, and oppressing women Practise dominance. Women being dominated and oppressed by men is called patriarchy. Gender differences and gender inequality are byproducts of patriarchy.

There are **two major variants** of gender oppression theory:

1. Psychoanalytic feminism
2. Radical feminism

Psychoanalytic feminism emphasizes the emotional dynamics of personality. Emotions are often deeply buried in subconscious or unconscious areas of the psyche. See patriarchy as a universal and durable system in which men subjugate women, women accepted their subordinate position.

Why is patriarchy sustained? Explanation of the socio-emotional environment that shapes the personality in childhood.

Assumptions:

1. Humans grow up by learning to balance a never- resolved tension between 'individuation' and 'recognition.'
2. Infants in all societies experience their earliest development in close relationships with a woman. Feelings for the woman or mother due to need, dependence, love, fear, possessiveness, and rage. A relationship with a father or man is occasional, secondary, and emotionally uncluttered. A child grows up in a culture that values maleness and devalues women. For males in adulthood, there is an emotional carryover from early childhood towards women: the need for love, hate, and possessiveness. It energizes the man's quest for a woman who meets his emotional needs yet is dependent on and controlled by his urge to dominate. A female child brings the same feelings towards the woman or mother. She faces a culture that devalues women. Acts of freedom and recognition take a different shape, often submissively.

Women's oppression is explained in terms of men's deep emotional need to control women. A drive arising from ambivalence towards the women who reared them. Women are psychically lacking an equivalent source of energy to resist dominance.

Radical Feminism: Two central beliefs

1. Women are of absolute positive value as women.
2. Women are everywhere oppressed by patriarchy.

A system of domination-subordination, i.e., patriarchy, exists in every institution. Image of patriarchy as violence practiced by men and by male-dominated organizations against women. Violence can be hidden in more complex practices of exploitation and control. Violence is used to protect patriarchy. Men create and maintain patriarchy. Women serve as compliance tools. Defeating patriarchy. It must begin with a basic reworking of women's consciousness so that each woman recognizes her value and strength; rejects patriarchal pressures to see herself as weak, dependent, and second-class; and works in unity with other women to establish a broad-based sisterhood of trust, support, appreciation, and mutual defence.

Lesson 24

Feminism as Part of conflict perspective-III
(Topic 91-96)

Topic 91-92: Structural oppression (socialist feminism)

Structural Oppression

Social structure: recurring and routinized large-scale arrangements of social relations that arise out of history and are always arrangements of power Structural oppression: Some groups of people derive direct benefits from controlling, using, and subjugating other groups of people. Focus on the structures of patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and hetero sexism. Locate enactments of domination and experiences of oppression in the interplay of these structures. Structures mutually reinforce each other.

There are **two types** of structural oppression theories: **socialist feminism theory** and **intersectionality theory**.

Socialist Feminism

Three goals:

1. To do a critique of the distinctive yet interrelated oppression of patriarchy and capitalism in women's experience.
2. To develop explicit methods of analysis out of an expanded understanding of historical materialism.
3. To incorporate an understanding of the significance of ideas into a materialist analysis of the determination of human affairs.

For Marx, the major concern was social class oppression. Occasionally turned attention to gender oppression. Marxian feminism is a relatively dormant theory that has influenced socialist feminism. Marxian feminism claims that a woman's subordination results not from her biology but from social relations that have a clear and traceable history and that presumably can be changed. The relational basis of subordination lies in the family. Family as it exists in complex societies It is a recent relational invention. In prehistory, women had an independent economic base. Replacement of hunting and gathering by farming economies. Amounts to the economic defeat of the female sex. Men had the upper hand in resources and advantages over women. Invention of the concept of private property. Male to own the economic resources of production needed a compliant labour force (slaves, captives, women-wives, and children) and hires of property. The emergence of the master and his slave-servants, wife-servants, and children-servants the exploitation of labour developed into complex structures of dominance reflected the injustices of the economy and consistently enforced the subordination of women. Destroy property rights through class revolution, and women will attain freedom of social, political, economic, and personal action.

Locating the origin of patriarchy in the emergence of property relations subsumes women's oppression under the general framework of Marxian class analysis. "Property" understood not as personal possessions but as ownership of the resources necessary for social production (the means of production) is the basis of class division because it creates a situation in which some groups are able to claim that they own the means of production while other groups work to do the producing. Marxian analysis focuses particularly on how this class division works out under capitalism, the economic system of modern societies. The distinctive feature of capitalism is that the class that owns the means of production the capitalists operates on a logic of continuous capital accumulation; capital is wealth (money and other assets), which can be used to generate the material infrastructure of economic production.

Unlike other forms of economic organisation in which people may seek to exchange either goods or money for more goods, capitalists seek to exchange goods in order to a mass wealth. The mechanism

by which capitalists turn goods into wealth is surplus value; surplus value is the difference between the compensation given to workers for their production and the value of the goods they produce. This surplus value is appropriated by the capitalist, who uses it to enhance his own lifestyle and power and, above all, to reinvest in the ongoing process of capital accumulation and expansion.

Socialist feminists accept the Marxian analysis of capitalism's class relations as an explication of one major structure of oppression. But they reject the Marxian analysis of patriarchy as a byproduct of the same economic production. Instead, they endorse the radical feminist argument that patriarchy, while interacting with economic conditions, is an independent structure of oppression. Socialist feminism sets out to bring together these dual pieces of knowledge—knowledge of oppression under capitalism and oppression under patriarchy—into a unified explanation of all forms of social oppression. One term used to try to unify these two oppressions is capitalist patriarchy. But the term perhaps more widely used is domination, defined above (under "Gender Oppression") as a relationship in which one party, the dominant, succeeds in making the other party, the subordinate, an instrument of the dominant's will, refusing to recognize the subordinate's independent subjectivity.

Socialist feminism's explanations of oppression present domination as a large-scale structural arrangement, a power relation between categories of social actors that is reproduced by the willful and intentional actions of individual actors. Women are central to socialist feminism as the primary topic for analysis, and the patriarchy, while interacting with economic conditions, is an independent structure of oppression. Socialist feminism sets out to bring together this dual knowledge—knowledge of oppression under capitalism and oppression under patriarchy—into a unified explanation of all forms of social oppression. One term used to try to unify these two oppression is capitalist patriarchy. But the term perhaps more widely used is domination, defined above (under "Gender Oppression") as a relationship in which one party, the dominant, succeeds in making the other party, the subordinate, an instrument of the dominant's will, refusing to recognize the subordinate's independent subjectivity.

Socialist feminism's explanations of oppression present domination as a large-scale structural arrangement, a power relation between categories of social actors that is reproduced by the willful and intentional actions of individual actors. Women are central to socialist feminism as the primary topic for analysis and as the essential vantage point on domination in all its forms. But these theorists are concerned with all experiences of oppression, both by women and by men. They also explore how some women, themselves oppressed, actively participate in the oppression of other women; for example, privileged-class women in American society who oppress poor women provide an essential vantage point on domination in all its forms. But these theorists are concerned with all experiences of oppression, both by women and by men. They also explore how some women, themselves oppressed, actively participate in the oppression of other women; for example, privileged-class women in American society who oppress poor women.

Topic 93-94: Structural oppression (Intersectionality)

The central issue is that women experience oppression in varying configurations and with varying degrees of intensity. The explanation for variation is that all women potentially experience oppression on the basis of gender. Nevertheless, women are differentially oppressed because of the varied intersections of other arrangements of social inequality. The vectors of oppression and privilege include not only gender but also class, race, global location, sexual preference, and age. The variation in these intersections qualitatively alters the experience of being a woman. The argument in intersectionality theory is that it is the intersection itself that produces a particular experience of oppression. It is not just an additive strategy of gender, plus race, plus class, plus sexuality. Some women and men may be privileged.

The central point of theories is *to understand the arrangements of inequality as hierarchical*

structures based on unjust power relations. The theme of injustice signals the consistent critical focus of this analysis. The link between ideology and power Dominants create ideals of superiority or inferiority in differences. Use such ideals to justify oppressive practices. People are socialized with such evaluations as 'better' or 'worse.' Ideologies create 'a mythical norm' against which people evaluate. Mythical norm of US society: "white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure." Anyone not meeting this norm is devalued. Create criteria within their own group for excluding, punishing, or marginalizing group members.

Observing the mythical norm is 'othering." Establishing that a group member is unacceptable, an "other," by some criterion. The intersection of vectors of oppression and privilege creates variations in both the forms and the intensity of people's experiences of oppression. In response to their material circumstances, people create interpretations and strategies for surviving and resisting the persistent exercise of unjust power. Take stock of the group knowledge worked out in specific life experiences created by historical intersections of inequality. Develop various feminist expressions of this knowledge. Intersectionality theory develops a critique of work done in Second Wave Feminism. That work reflected the experiences and concerns of white, privileged-class feminists in North Atlantic societies. This critique has produced questions about what we mean by categories such as "woman," "gender," "race," and "sisterhood." Focused on the diversity of experience in such seeming universals as "mothering" and "family."

This critique has led to a repositioning of the understandings of "whiteness" by white feminists who seek to understand whiteness as a construction, the ways whiteness results in privilege, what they can actively do to reduce racism, and how they can contribute to producing amore inclusive feminist analysis. Vectors of oppression and privilege like race, class, gender, age, global location, and sexual preferences intersect in all people's lives. Intersectionality theorists argue that the way they intersect markedly affects the degree to which a common standpoint is affirmed. Questions to be looked at: How do these factors coexist? In balance? In hierarchy? in the shifting schema of ascendance? What are the implications of this issue for methods of studying intersectionality?

Topic 95: Feminism and post modernism

The postmodernist theory begins with the observation that people no longer live under conditions of modernity but now live in "postmodernity."

This **postmodern world is produced by the interplay of four major changes:**

1. An expansive stage in global capitalism;
2. The weakening of centralized state power (with the collapse of the old imperial systems, the fragmentation of the communist bloc, and the rise of ethnic politics within nation-states);
3. The patterning of life by an increasingly powerful and penetrative technology that controls production and promotes consumerism; and
4. The development of liberationist social movements based not in class but in other forms of identity—nationalism, race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and environmentalism.

These changes, as feminist philosopher Susan Bordo explains, were brought about by people worldwide engaged in political practice and asking a new set of questions: "Whose truth? Whose nature? Whose version of reason? Whose history? Whose tradition?"

Humans can, through the exercise of pure reason, arrive at a complete and objective knowledge of the world. That knowledge is a representation of reality, "a mirror of nature." This principle is full of errors, as reflected in the questions, critiqued the methods, and suggested alternatives.

The major contribution of postmodernist theory to general feminist theory questioned the primary category of feminist theory, i.e., women. Is there a coherent relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality? Feminism is not a stable subject. Women are not a "seamless" category of women. Deconstruct and see variety. Variety suggests the necessary limits of identity politics. The

paradoxical opposition to feminism from "women," whom feminism claims to represent. The category of woman arises out of the process that produces gender. This process is "performativity" a work-in-progress. Gender arises as people perform it in interaction with each other. The judge in the court pronounces two persons as man and wife for marriage. Repeated performances lead to a sense of gender between women and men. People are not free to choose their performances. Regulatory discourses and expressions control. Expressions even control the shape of a man's or woman's body. Exercise and diet mean being in shape. In response, it is said that postmodernists take feminists away from the materiality of inequality, injustice, and oppression. Hence, it amounts to moving feminism away from its commitment to progressive change—the foundational project of any critical social theory.

Topic 96: Concluding remarks

- Feminism has a history as long as women's subordination.
- Women have been subordinated almost always and everywhere.
- Feminist theory develops a system of ideas about human life that features women as:
 - ✓ objects and subjects,
 - ✓ doers and knowers.
- Feminist theory has typically expanded and contracted with societal swings.
- The contemporary stage of feminists shows a self-sustaining expansion despite new conservative societal trends.
- Feminists guided by four basic questions:
 - ✓ And what about the women?
 - ✓ Why is women's situation as it is?
 - ✓ How can we change and improve the social world? and
 - ✓ What about differences among women?
- Answers produce the varieties of feminist theory.
- Feminist theory offers five key propositions as a basis for the revision of standard
 1. The practice of sociological theory must be based in a sociology of knowledge that recognizes the partiality of all knowledge.
 - ✓ The knower is embodied and socially located.
 - ✓ The function of power in effecting what becomes knowledge.
 2. Macro social structures are based in processes controlled by dominants.
 - ✓ Subordinates' work is made largely invisible and undervalued even to themselves by dominant ideology.
 - ✓ Dominants appropriate productive work of society, including not only economic production but also women's work of social reproduction.
 3. Micro-interactional processes in society are enactments of these dominant subordinate power arrangements, enactments very differently interpreted by powerful actors and subordinate actors.
 4. These conditions create in women's subjectivity a bifurcated consciousness along the line of fault caused by the just a position of patriarchal ideology and women's experience of the actualities of their lives.
 5. What has been said for women may be applicable to all subordinate peoples in some parallel, though not identical, form.

Questions to be looked at:

- ✓ How do these factors coexist?
- ✓ In balance?
- ✓ In hierarchy?
- ✓ In shifting schema of ascendance?
- ✓ What are the implications of this issue for methods of—studying intersectionality?

Social Exchange (Topic 97-98)

Introduction

In everyday life, we clearly understand the contrast between market transactions at the shopping mall or an automobile dealership and our relationships with family members, friends, and lovers. In market transactions, our goal is to get the best deal for ourselves without being obligated to show concern for the personal welfare of the person with whom we happen to be doing business. In contrast, our relationships with family members, friends, and lovers reflect our emotional attachments to one another. This means we are expected to consider their wishes and needs as well as our own, and we are confident they would do the same for us. But personal relationships, like market transactions, can also be viewed in terms of costs and rewards.

Being involved in family relationships or spending time with close friends or lovers is intrinsically rewarding. But there are certain costs to consider as well, even though they may not always be experienced as such. At the very least, there are the costs of time, energy, and alternative activities that may be foregone, plus the obligation to provide help to our family and friends when they need it. Even though friends and family members may feel it is not appropriate to "keep score," their mutual sharing and caring are probably expected to be balanced over time. If costs and rewards seem to either party to be unevenly distributed, this may lead to feelings of resentment or conflict that may eventually undermine the relationship.

Exchange theory and rational choice theory are related, yet there is a difference. One **fundamental difference** is that **rational choice theorists focus on individual decision-making**, while **exchange theorists consider social relationships as their unit of analysis**. Recently, exchange theorists have devoted more attention to networks of social relationships. Exchange theory has its roots in behaviourism. Behaviourism is best known in psychology. A behavioural sociologist is concerned with the relationship between an actor's behaviour and the environment. How do they affect each other? This relationship is basic to **operant conditioning**: The learning process by which "behaviour is modified by its consequences." The environment in which the behaviour exists and the environment in which it occurs mutually affect each other. That reaction—positive, negative, or neutral—affects the actor's later behaviour. If the reaction has been rewarding to the actor, the same behaviour is likely to be emitted in the future in similar situations. The past consequences of a given behaviour govern its present state. So the behaviour can be predicted. Behaviourists are interested in rewards (reinforcers) and costs (punishments).

Rewards are defined by their ability to strengthen (reinforce) behaviour, while costs inhibit the likelihood of behaviour. The ideas of rewards and costs had a powerful impact on early exchange theory. The contrast between market transactions and personal relationships Nothing personal vs. emotional attachment Personal relationships, like market transactions, can also be viewed in terms of costs and benefits. Family or friend relationships can be rewarding. Personal relationships also involve costs, though they are not taken as such. Costs of time, energy, and alternative activities foregone. Plus the obligation to provide help to family and friends when they need it. No record-keeping of scores Mutual sharing and caring are balanced over time. Unevenly distributed costs and rewards can result in feelings of resentment or conflict. Undermine the relationships.

The perspective of exchange and rational choice theory involves looking at all social relations—like friendships and other personal relations, as well as one-time market transactions and long-term formal contracts—in terms of costs and rewards, both material and nonmaterial.

Social exchanges of all types reflect individuals' efforts to meet their own needs and interests through the choices they make. Even if actions are consciously oriented towards others' welfare. In both social exchange and rational choice theory, the focus is on the benefits received in return. Social exchange has been around long before the current exchange and rational choice theories. The social exchange process can be analyzed from an individualistic, utilitarian (rationalistic) perspective. A direct or simple exchange. The basic law remains the same. People seek to avoid pain (reduce costs) and maximise pleasure (rewards). Exchange is reflected in market transactions, individual transactions in the market but the whole system is based on a collectivist version of exchange theory. The complex division of labour (specialization) may be an expansion of exchange networks in modern society. Change amounts to a shift from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity. The shift from restricted exchange to generalized exchange. The exchange of marriages between tribes or even families results in a strong network of relations, also known as a restricted exchange. **The generalized exchange** involves a larger network of transactions. Indirect, with less emphasis on personal negotiation of exchange terms. Individuals were more oriented towards the overall system. Each party is expected to make contributions that benefit others without expecting an immediate benefit in return. A high level of trust is associated with a high level of moral development. This form of exchange is not a matter for individuals to decide on their own. Exchange patterns are institutionalized and legitimized by a moral code that transcends individuals' utilitarian interests.

Lesson 26

Social Exchange: George C. Homans
(Topic 99-103)

Topic 99: George C. Homans Elementary Exchange

Introduction

The heart of George Homans's exchange theory lies in a set of fundamental propositions. Although some of his propositions deal with at least two interacting individuals, Homans was careful to point out that these propositions are based on psychological principles. According to Homans, they are psychological for two reasons.

First, "they are usually stated and empirically tested by persons who call themselves psychologists" (Homans, 1967:39–40).

Second, and more importantly, they are psychological because of the level at which they deal with the individual in society: "They are propositions about the behaviour of individual human beings, rather than propositions about groups or societies as such; and the behaviour of men, as men, is generally considered the province of psychology.

Reductionism, according to Homans, is "*the process of showing how the propositions of one named science [in this case, sociology] follow in logic from the more general propositions of another named science [in this case, psychology].*" Homans made the case for psychological principles, though. I did not think of individuals as isolated; they are social and interact with others. Explained social behaviour with psychological principles.

Homans tried to develop a theory that focuses on psychology, people, and the elementary forms of social life. This theory envisages social behaviour as an exchange of activity, more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two people. In exchange theory, Homans sought to explain elementary social behavior in terms of rewards and costs. Homans' exchange theory is derived from both behavioural psychology and elementary economics (rational choice theory). Homans began with a discussion of B. F. Skinner's study of pigeons. In the pigeon's inborn repertoire of behaviours, which it uses to explore its environment, there is the "peck." As the pigeon wanders around the cage, pecking away, it happens to hit a round red target. In response, the pigeon got some grain to feed on. The probability of the pigeon's emitting the behaviour again not just pecking but pecking on the target has increased. The pigeon's behaviour in pecking the target is an operant; the operant has been reinforced.

Grain is the reinforcer, and the pigeon has undergone operant conditioning. The pigeon learned to peck the target by being rewarded for doing so. Skinner was interested in this instance of pigeons' concern for humans. Skinner's pigeons are not engaged in a true exchange relationship with the psychologist. Pigeons are one-sided (not a true exchange), whereas human exchanges are at least two-sided. Sociologists study social behaviour. The activity of each of at least two animals reinforces (or punishes) the activity of the other. Each influences the other. Homans restricted himself to everyday social interaction. Homans developed several propositions.

Topic 100-103: Exchange Propositions

Focusing on this sort of situation, and basing his ideas on Skinner's findings, Homans developed several propositions.

The Success Proposition

For all actions taken by persons, the more often a particular action of a person is rewarded, the more likely the person is to perform that action. (Homans, 1974:16) In terms of Homans's Person-Other example in an office situation, this proposition means that a person is more likely to ask others for advice if he or she has been rewarded in the past with useful advice. Furthermore, the more often a person received useful advice in the past, the more often he or she will request more advice. Similarly, the other person will be more willing to give advice and give it more frequently if he or she often has been rewarded with approval in the past.

Three stages

Generally, behavior in accord with the success proposition involves three stages:

1. a person's action
2. a rewarded result
3. a repetition of the original action or at minimum one similar in at least some respects.

Homans specified a number of things about the success proposition.

First, although it is generally true threateningly frequent rewards lead to increasingly frequent actions, this reciprocation cannot go on indefinitely. At some point individuals simply cannot act that way as frequently.

Second, the shorter the interval is between behavior and reward, the more likely a person is to repeat the behavior. Conversely, long intervals between behavior and reward lower the likelihood of repeat behavior.

Finally, it was Homans's view that intermittent rewards are more likely to elicit repeat behavior than regular rewards are. Regular rewards lead to boredom and satiation, whereas rewards at irregular intervals are very likely to elicit repeat behaviors.

The Stimulus Proposition

If in the past the occurrence of a particular stimulus, or set of stimuli, has been the occasion on which a person's action has been rewarded, then the more similar the present stimuli are to the past ones, the more likely the person is to perform the action, or some similar action. Again we look at Homans's office example: If, in the past, Person and Other found the giving and getting of advice rewarding, they are likely to engage in similar actions in similar situations in the future. Homans offered an even more down-to-earth example: "A fisherman who has cast his line into a dark pool and has caught a fish becomes more apt to fish in dark pools again". Homans was interested in the process of *generalization*, that is, the tendency to extend behavior to similar circumstances. In the fishing example, one aspect of generalization would be to move from fishing in dark pools to fishing in any pool with any degree of shadiness. Similarly, success in catching fish is likely to lead from one kind of fishing to another (for instance, freshwater to saltwater) or even from fishing to hunting. However, the process of *discrimination* is also of importance. That is, the actor may fish only under the specific circumstances that proved successful in the past. For one thing, if the conditions under which success occurred were too complicated, similar conditions may not stimulate behavior. If the crucial stimulus occurs too long before behavior is required, it may not actually stimulate that behavior. An actor can become oversensitized to stimuli, especially if they are very valuable to the actor. In fact, the actor could respond to irrelevant stimuli, at least until the situation is corrected by repeated failures. All this is affected by the individual's alertness or attentiveness to stimuli.

The Aggression-Approval Propositions

Proposition A: When a person's action does not receive the reward he expected, or receives punishment he did not expect, he will be angry; he becomes more likely to perform aggressive behavior, and the results of such behavior become more valuable to him. (Homans, 1974:37) In the office case, if Person does not get the advice he or she expected and Other does not receive the praise he or she anticipated, both are likely to be angry. We are surprised to find the concepts of frustration and anger in Homans's work because they would seem to refer to mental states. In fact, Homans admitted as much: "When a person does not get what he expected, he is said to be frustrated. A purist in behaviorism would not refer to the expectation at all, because the word seems to refer to a state of mind" (1974:31). Homans went on to argue that frustration of such expectations need *not* refer "only" to an internal state. It also can refer to "wholly external events," observable not just by Person but also by outsiders. Proposition A on aggression-approval refers only to negative emotions, whereas Proposition B deals with more positive emotions.

Proposition B: When a person's action receives the reward he expected, especially a greater reward than he expected, or does not receive punishment he expected, he will be pleased; he becomes more likely to perform approving behavior, and the results of such behavior become more valuable to him. (Homans, 1974:39) For example, in the office, when Person gets the advice that he or she expects

and Other gets the praise that he or she expects, both are pleased and are more likely to get or give advice. Advice and praise become more valuable to each one.

The Rationality Proposition

In choosing between alternative actions, a person will choose that one for which, as perceived by him at the time, the value, V , of the result, multiplied by the probability, of getting the result, is the greater. (Homans, 1974:43) While the earlier propositions rely heavily on behaviorism, the rationality proposition demonstrates most clearly the influence of rational choice theory on Homans's approach. In economic terms, actors who act in accord with the rationality proposition are maximizing their utilities. Basically, people examine and make calculations about the various alternative actions open to them. They compare the amount of rewards associated with each course of action. They also calculate the likelihood that they actually will receive the rewards. Highly valued rewards will be devalued if the actors think it unlikely that they will obtain them. In contrast, lesser-valued rewards will be enhanced if they are seen as highly attainable. Thus, there is an interaction between the value of the reward and the likelihood of attainment.

The most desirable rewards are those that are *both* very valuable *and* highly attainable. The least desirable rewards are those that are not very valuable and are unlikely to be attained. Homans relates the rationality proposition to the success, stimulus, and value propositions. The rationality proposition tells us that whether people will perform an action depends on their perceptions of the probability of success. But what determines this perception? Homans argues that perceptions of whether chances of success are high or low are shaped by past successes and the similarity of the present situation to past successful situations.

The rationality proposition also does not tell us why an actor values one reward more than another; for this we need the value proposition. In these ways, Homans links his rationality principle to his more behavioristic propositions. In the end, Homans's theory can be condensed to a view of the actor as a rational profit seeker. However, Homans's theory was weak on mental states (Abrahamsson, 1970; Mitchell, 1978) and large-scale structures (Ekeh, 1974). For example, on consciousness Homans admitted the need for a "more fully developed psychology" (1974:45). Despite such weaknesses, Homans remained a behaviorist who worked resolutely at the level of individual behavior. He argued that large-scale structures can be understood if we adequately understand elementary social behavior. He contended that exchange processes are "identical" at the individual and societal levels, although he granted that at the societal level, "the way the fundamental processes are combined is more complex"

Lesson 27

Social Exchange: Peter M. Blau-I
(Topic 104-107)

Topic 104: Blau Exchange theory Introduction

Peter Blau's (1964) goal was "an understanding of social structure on the basis of an analysis of the social processes that govern the relations between individuals and groups. The **basic question**, is how social life becomes organized into increasingly complex structures of associations among men" (1964:2). Blau's intention was to go beyond Homans's concern with elementary forms of social life and into an analysis of complex structures: "The main sociological purpose of studying processes of face to- face interaction is to lay the foundation for an understanding of the social structures that evolve and the emergent social forces that characterize their development". Blau focused on the process of exchange, which, in his view, directs much of human behavior and underlies relationships among individuals as well as among groups. In effect Blau envisioned a **four-stage sequence** leading from interpersonal exchange to social structure and to social change:

Step 1: Personal exchange transactions between people give rise to

Step 2: Differentiation of status and power, which leads to

Step 3: Legitimization and organization, which sow the seeds of

Step 4: Opposition and change

Micro to Macro

On the individual level, Blau and Homans were interested in similar processes. However, Blau's concept of social exchange is limited to actions that are contingent, that depend, on rewarding reactions from others—actions that cease when expected reactions are not forthcoming. People are attracted to each other for a variety of reasons that induce them to establish social associations. Once initial ties are forged, the rewards that they provide to each other serve to maintain and enhance the bonds. The opposite situation is also possible: with insufficient rewards, an association will weaken or break. Rewards that are exchanged can be either intrinsic (for instance, love, affection, respect) or extrinsic (for instance, money, physical labor). The parties cannot always reward each other equally; when there is inequality in the exchange, a difference of power will emerge within an association. When one party needs something from another but has nothing comparable to offer in return, **four alternatives are available.**

1. First, people can force other people to help them.
2. Second, they can find another source to obtain what they need.
3. Third, they can attempt to get along without what they need from the others.
4. Finally, and most important, they can subordinate themselves to the others, thereby giving the others "generalized credit" in their relationship; the others then can draw on this credit when they want them to do something. (This last alternative is, of course, the essential characteristic of power.)

Topic 105-107: Mediation of Norms and Values in Exchange

For Blau, the mechanisms that mediate among the complex social structures are the norms and values (the value consensus) that exist within society: Commonly agreed upon values and norms serve as media of social life and as mediating links for social transactions. They make indirect social exchange possible, and they govern the processes of social integration and differentiation in complex social structures as well as the development of social organization and reorganization in them. Need to reciprocate for benefits received in order to continue receiving them. Starting mechanism of social interaction. Once exchanges have occurred, "norms of reciprocity" emerge. Norms regulate the subsequent exchanges.

Norms establish the level of reward in exchange for a particular action. Exchange relations are normatively regulated. Consider them as norms of fair exchange, Justice principle. Violation of norms of fair exchange invites aggression. Norms and values govern: The processes of social integration and differentiation in complex social structures. The development of social organization

and reorganization in them, major focus is on value consensus. One member conforms to the group norm, receives approval for that conformity. Conformity contributes to group's maintenance and stability.

The group or collectivity engages in an exchange relationship with the individual. In contrast to Homans simpler notion, which focused on interpersonal exchange. Teacher and students. A teacher helps students by imparting knowledge. This is help to collectivity of students/parents, he does not receive reward (salary) from the students/parents, salary comes from the government. Look at charitable organization and individuals who benefit. No direct contact between the donors to organization and the individuals receiving help through organization. Exchange between collectivity and individual. It is a replacement to individual- individual exchange. Organized philanthropy and indirect social exchange. Norm. Norm in Blau's formulation moves him to the level of exchange between individual and collectivity.

The concept of the norm in Blau's formulation moves him to the level of exchange between individual and collectivity. The concept of values moves him to the largest-scale at societal level. Here he analyses the relationship among collectivities. "Interpersonal attraction" is replaced by shared values at macro level. Common values of various types can be conceived of as "media of social transactions." Provide common set of standards for conducting the complex chain of indirect exchanges. Expands the compass of social interaction and the structure of social relations through social space and time. The consensus values extend the range of social transactions beyond the limits of direct social contacts. Particularistic values are the media of integration and solidarity. Unites groups around things like patriotism. Values transmitted through socialization.

Values can be codified into laws, enforced by those in power. Similar at the collective level to those at the individuals on a face to face basis. Perpetuates social structures beyond the life span of human beings. Compared with Homans' individual level behaviors, Blau discussed groups, organizations, collectivities, societies, norms, values.

Shared values provide standards for the calculation of:

- a) expected rewards,
- b) reciprocity, and
- c) fair exchange.

Violation of the standards of fair exchange amount to the violation of principles of justice. Deprived parties may turn to aggressive behavior to get justice. Blau's analysis is concerned with: What holds large-scale social units together? And What tears them apart? These are clearly traditional concerns of the social factist. Value consensus is of crucial significance for the social processes in complex social structures. Value standards commonly agreed upon serve as mediating link for social transactions between individuals and groups. No direct contact. Sharing basic values creates integrating bonds and social solidarity among people at society level. Common standards of valuation produce media of exchange (like money). This media transcends personal transactions and develop complex networks of indirect exchange. Legitimizing values expand the scope of centralized control beyond the reach of personal influence. Authority of legitimating govt. This is institutionalization.

The processes that regularize and stabilize complex exchange processes. High level of trust associated with high level of moral development. This form of the exchange is not a matter for individuals to decide on their own. Exchange patterns are institutionalized and legitimated by a moral code that Institutions are a historical product. Institutional norms and underlying mediating values are handed down to from one generation to another. Limiting and circumscribing the kind of indirect exchange networks that can emerge. transcends individuals' utilitarian interests.

Stabilization of Power Structures Through Norms and Values

If an acknowledged leader is perceived as fair, norms and values are likely eventually to emerge whereby the leader's power is stabilized and reinforced by being transformed into legitimate authority (Blau, 1964:199–233). This means that the leader will be seen as having the right to expect compliance from subordinates. To the extent that members accept the existing distribution of power

and authority, and are also satisfied with the rewards they receive, they may augment the leader's authority by rewarding one another with social approval for their compliance with the leader (or by showing disapproval for noncompliance). This is especially likely if the values and norms that develop are consistent with members' own personal values and identities. Exchange relationships result in power differentials.

Lesson 28

Social Exchange: Peter M. Blau-II
(Topic 108-110)

Topic 108-109: Exchange and power

Richard Emerson and Peter Blau have both offered analyses of power differentials which root them in exchange relationships but also look beyond individual (or "dyadic") relationships to larger structural settings. Both see power as originating when valued services are provided as part of an unbalanced exchange, so that one party places a higher value on the outcome than the other. The approach is also that adopted by Homans in his more recent work.

Power originates when valued services are provided as part of an unbalanced exchange. One party places a higher value on the outcome than the other. Power differential may be rooted in exchange relationships. This principle is also applicable to larger structural settings, crucial notion that one partner in exchange is dependent on the other for services. Values those services more than the other person values anything he can offer. Coercive aspects of power in this exchange like someone who is in a position of power has the potential to secure submission and compliance. Conditions determining the power of service provider:

1. The individual who wants a service has nothing the supplier needs in return.
2. The recipient has no alternative to turn to.
3. The recipient cannot use coercion to extract the services needed.
4. The recipient cannot live without the service or find a substitute.

2nd and 4th condition depicts monopoly. So the buyer pays more. In social exchange the supplier can make general demands to secure compliance. Power is the ability of persons or groups to impose their will on others despite resistance. The acceptance of subordination. Superordinate power is a generic social reward. Such power gives one generalized means, a 'credit card,' which may be used to obtain variety of services. A person who commands services others need, and who is independent of any at their command, attains power over others. Exchange processes give rise to differentiation of power. This principle is applicable to the most intimate as well as to the most distant social relations.

Development of legitimate institutional power: Major determinants of legitimacy are found in the exchange aspects of power. Do subordinates feel that power is being exercised fairly and generously? If the subordinates feel that they derive fair returns for the costs they incurred for submission then there is collective approval. Exercise of power is legitimized. Legitimacy makes it right and proper to obey. Group develops norms, which help to enforce members' obedience. People find that deference and submission create costs of substantial order, should they comply with others commands? When power is exercised generously, individuals rationalize obedience. Such actions will be transformed into a collective norm that mandates obedience to legitimate authority. Failure to discharge obligations is subject to group sanctions. The more the reciprocal obligations of an exchange relationship are violated, the more are the deprived parties disposed to sanction negatively those violating the norms of reciprocity. Group norms regulate social exchange. Subordinates may experience collectively the unfair exercise of power. Collective disapproval generates opposition movements based on appropriate values.

Topic 110: Exchange among Structures

The emergence of power and authority structures enables leaders to control and coordinate the actions of subordinates in developing a collective line of action. The extent of this control will reflect the degree of dependency among group members, the value of the rewards they anticipate from the group's collective action, and their commitment to the group's legitimating values and norms. Members are being compensated for their contributions. Alternatively, goals may be based on group members' consensus. All are expected to share the rewards of goal accomplishment. The challenge for the leader is to coordinate members' actions so that they fit together in a collective line of action. It is the group, not its constituent members, that becomes the interacting unit.

Members may be seen as acting on behalf of the group or its leader. Members do not decide as

individuals whether to strike or go back to work. Personal goals are best served by united action. Is a leadership structure necessary for a group's line of action? Team members want to win, yet they need a captain. Groups can interact with each other through leaders. Macro structures consist of relationships among groups or organizations, while micro structures consist only of individuals. Once an organization is established, its collective action may be continued despite turnover in the group's membership.

Lesson 29

Social Exchange: Peter M. Blau-III
(Topic 111-113)**Topic 111: Exchange among Structures**

The exchange patterns that develop among different groups and organizations are similar to the processes that occur among individuals. Particular transactions may be balanced or imbalanced. If balanced, relations of reciprocal interdependence will be established. Imbalanced exchanges will result in the differentiation of status and power at the group level. The dominant group can organize subordinate groups into an even larger group or organization to engage in a joint line of action, one big collection of subordinate groups or organizations-coalition or alliance for action. Various patterns of internal exchange are likely to develop within the alliance.

Additional differentiation of status and power within Internal subgroups may get organized and engage in exchange transactions with other individuals or groups within or outside the coalition. When relationships exist between similar subgroups in different organizations, the stage is set for the emergence of new groupings for the pursuit of distinct goals. Another alliance is a complex society, which has an elaborate network of associations. Associations are involved in numerous kinds of exchange transactions. Many of these exchanges reflect varying degrees of imbalance and consequent relations of power and dependency. Bureaucratic organizations dominate almost all institutional sectors of society. Linked in various kinds of inter-organizational relationships. Modern society is honeycombed with innumerable overlapping and interpenetrating groups and associations of various types.

Topic 112-113: Legitimation versus Opposition to Power Structures

The legitimation of power structures through values and norms does not guarantee that members will continue indefinitely to be satisfied with the existing distribution of costs and rewards. Power structures are frequently resisted, sometimes overthrown, and replaced. This is true both in small-scale groups and large-scale complex associations, as well as in overall society. In the long run, the legitimacy of structures of power and authority rests on reward and cost outcomes that are widely perceived as fair. But if conditions change, the stage is set for the formation of an opposition movement and, in an extreme case, the overthrow of the existing power structure (Blau, 1964:224–252).

Numerous processes could adversely affect reward and cost outcomes for subordinates and lead to dissatisfaction. For example, authority figures may begin to take advantage of subordinates' dependency by increasing the demands made on them, which they would see as unfair. Or, even if demands remain stable, the reward-cost ratio may become relatively less attractive as members become satiated with the rewards they receive. Members may become aware of other groups in which reward or cost outcomes are more favorable, may develop feeling of disadvantaged by comparison. Power and authority structures are inherently precarious and potentially unstable. The member's continuing commitment rests in the long run on favorable reward and cost outcomes.

Even if dissatisfied with existing reward and cost outcomes, there is no guarantee that an opposition movement will be developed or the power structure will be overthrown. Several reasons exist for not starting a movement, e.g., people may fear that efforts to promote change would be unsuccessful, and the negative consequences of failure would be even worse than putting up with the existing situation. Despite the formation of an opposition movement, some

dissatisfied members may be reluctant to participate, they see such a struggle as risky and futile. Some dissatisfied members may simply leave the group and join alternative groups with a more favorable reward or cost outcome.

The relationship between legitimation mechanisms and opposition mechanisms can be seen as one of more or less continuous dialectical conflict (Blau, 1964:312–338). The emergence of strong authority structures invariably creates the conditions for the formation of opposition movements. For one thing, the authority structure rests, as we have seen, on resources the leader controls that can be used to reward subordinates for their compliance. But, to the extent that a leader is able to increase the resources at his or her disposal, he or she is likely to arouse dissatisfaction on the part of subordinates who would like to see these resources distributed more generously. Thus, for example, the loss of legitimacy of the Communist Party in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s reflected in part the widespread resentment of the affluence that high-level Communist Party officials enjoyed at a time when the emerging market system left many people without the basic economic survival guarantees to which they had become accustomed.

The emergence of strong authority structures invariably creates the conditions for the formation of opposition movements. The authority structure rests on resources the leader controls that can be used to reward subordinates for their compliance. An undue increase in the resources of a leader is likely to arouse dissatisfaction among subordinates. Imbalance in exchange. Subordinates want these resources distributed more generously. The affluence of the powerful but the poverty of the powerless Imbalanced exchange. Contradiction. Dissatisfied people would desire to change the imbalance. Will evaluate and debate alternative goals and strategies. Mobilise support.

A leader in power will convince the dissatisfied about reality. May not succeed. Imbalanced exchanges will develop the emerging opposition leader. Motivate the fellows to participate in a movement for change. May negotiate: Options Changes in the distribution of costs and rewards Replacing current authority figures. The revolutionary overthrow of the existing structure How successful was the opposition leader? The success of the dissatisfied in opposing or replacing the existing power structure depends on the emergence of its own leadership structure.

Lesson 30

Michael Hechter
(Topic 114-117)

Topic 114: Michael Hechter Rational choice theory

Assumption: *People are rational.*

Base their actions on what they perceive to be the most effective means to goal, constantly weighing alternative means against alternative ends and choose between the means and ends. Hence the term rational choice. The way to understand much of how people behave toward each other is by seeing them as rational decision makers. Individuals reveal preferences or hierarchies of utility (value) They seek to maximize these preferences, have their own rationale.

Some of the **basics of rational choice theory** by Hechter has been formulated by Turner like:

- i. Humans are purposive and goal oriented.
- ii. Humans have sets of hierarchically ordered preferences or utilities.
- iii. In choosing lines of behavior, humans make rational calculations about:
 - a. The utility of alternative lines of conduct with reference to the preference hierarchy.
 - b. The costs of each alternative in terms of utilities foregone.
 - c. The best way to maximize utility.
- i. Emergent social phenomena are ultimately the result of rational choices made by utility maximizing individuals. (Phenomena may include: social structures, collective decisions, collective behavior.)
- ii. Emergent phenomena that arise from rational choices constitute a set of parameters that determine.
 - a. The distribution of resources among individuals.
 - b. The distribution of opportunities for various lines of behavior.
 - c. The distribution and nature of norms and obligations in a situation.

Rational action is its own explanation. An action can be held as “explained” if and only if it is treated as “rational”: Action which can be accounted for. It contains no black boxes.

Topic 116: The Basis of Social control: Dependence, Monitoring, and Sanctioning

Groups exist to provide joint goods. Some individuals depend more on groups than others. Depends on group for resources that rank high in hierarchy of the individual needs. Dependence determines the potential power for group on that individual.

- Dependency over group is the rationale for creating rules and obligations.
- ✓ No alternative available for the valued goods.
- ✓ Lack of information for alternative sources.
- ✓ Costs of exiting the group are high
- ✓ Moving costs to another group are high.
- ✓ Personal ties are strong.
- Rules ensure access to this joint good. Dependence is incentive to create normative obligations
- The extensiveness of normative obligations in a group is related to the degree of dependence.
 - Extensive norms guide and regulate.
 - Extensiveness of a group alone has no necessary implications for group solidarity.
 - Crucial that all members comply with the norms.
 - Compliance depends upon group’s capacity to control.
 - Groups’ control capacity is a function of: Monitoring, and Sanctioning

Monitoring is the process of detecting the non-conformity to group norms and obligations. **Sanctioning** is the use of rewards and punishments to induce conformity. Lower the monitoring capacity, the lower to ensure compliance. Without monitoring sanctioning cannot effectively serve as an inducement to conformity. For Hechter, solidarity is the product of dependence, monitoring,

and sanctioning.

Topic 117: Group solidarity

Control capacity different in two types of groups:

- Compensatory group and
- Obligatory group

Compensatory group: A grouping produces joint good for market and does not consume itself. Group control capacity is reduced. Profit from sale used to buy conformity. Compensation bought for the labor provided. Low dependence on group, low social solidarity. Reduces the extensiveness of norms. Person can sell his labor elsewhere. Rational to leave the group.

Obligatory groups: Produce joint goods for members' own consumption. Rational to create obligations for contribution from members. Higher the dependence on joint good, higher the incentive for conformity. No easy alternative to the joint good. Monitoring and sanctioning efficient. Sanctions for violation very costly. Expulsion from the group possible. Sanctioning and monitoring costs low. High social solidarity.

Compensatory groups are large to produce marketable goods. *Obligatory groups* are smaller and provide goods for their members that cannot be obtained in market. High solidarity. The extent to which members' private resources are contributed to a collective end. High solidarity can be achieved only in obligatory groups. Here dependence, monitoring and sanctioning is high. As obligatory groups get large, their monitoring and sanctioning capacity decreases.

Gemeinschaft vs. geselleschaft i.e. primary vs. secondary groups; mechanical vs. Organic solidarity. Nature of joint goods consumed by members or produced for market determines the level of dependence of individuals on the group. Also determines the control capacity of group. High and low solidarity follow from rational choice of individuals.

Lesson 31

James Coleman-I
(Topic 118-120)

Topic 118: James Coleman Rational choice theory Introduction

Although it influenced the development of exchange theory, rational choice theory was generally marginal to mainstream sociological theory. It is largely through the efforts of one man, James S. Coleman, that rational choice theory has become one of the “hot” theories in contemporary sociology. For one thing, in 1989 Coleman founded a journal, *Rationality and Society*, devoted to the dissemination of work from a rational choice perspective. For another, Coleman (1990b) published an enormously influential book, *Foundations of Social Theory*, based on this perspective. Finally, Coleman became president of the American Sociological Association in 1992 and used that forum to push rational choice theory and to present an address entitled “The Rational Reconstruction of Society” (Coleman, 1993b).

Since we have outlined the basic tenets of rational choice theory, it would be useful to begin with Coleman’s (1989) introductory comments to the first issue of *Rationality and Society*. The journal was to be interdisciplinary because rational choice theory (or, as Coleman calls it, “the paradigm of rational action” [1989:5]) is the only theory with the possibility of producing paradigmatic integration. Coleman does not hesitate to argue that the approach operates from a base in methodological individualism and to use rational choice theory as the micro-level base for the explanation of macro-level phenomena. Even more interesting is what Coleman’s approach does not find “congenial”:

Topic 119: Foundations of Rational Choice Theory

Coleman argues that *sociology should focus on social systems but that such macro phenomena must be explained by factors internal to them, prototypically individuals*. He favors working at this level for several reasons, including the fact that data usually are gathered at the individual level and then aggregated or composed to yield the system level. Among the other reasons for favoring a focus on the individual level is that this is where “interventions” ordinarily are made to create social changes. As we will see, central to Coleman’s perspective is the idea that social theory is not merely an academic exercise but should affect the social world through such “interventions.”

Two key elements in this theory: **Actors and Resources.**

Resources: those things over which actors have control and in which they have some interest. Others also have interest in them. Interaction of individuals leads to the system of action level developments, actors are purposive: Each having the goal of maximizing its realization.

Results in interdependence, a systemic character. Coleman has faith in rational choice theory. Yet does not believe that this perspective, at least as yet, has all the answers. In reality people may not always behave rationally it is relative. “My implicit assumption is that the theoretical predictions made here will be substantively the same whether the actors act precisely according to rationality as commonly conceived or deviate in the ways that have been observed.” Coleman.

Whether behavior is:

- Conformist or
- Deviant,

Focus is on micro to macro linkage: From the combination of individual actions to the behavior of the system. System constrains the orientation of individuals it also interested in micro to micro relationship. The impact of individual actions on other individual actions. A key step in the micro-to-macro change is the granting of the authority and rights possessed by one individual to another i.e. The subordination of one actor to another, creates the most basic macro phenomenon—an acting unit consisting of two people, rather than two independent actors. This unit functions independently of the actors takes priority over individual rational interests. Rational for the functioning of collective unit. May have deficiencies and can generate special problems and problems need solutions.

Topic 120: Group solidarity

Actors have resources, they are interested in the resources of others they buy, borrow, and exchange the resources. Resultant system of interaction between the actors is exchange. Resultantly social organization revolve around transactions between those who have and those who seek resources. Transactions can occur between individuals directly, and Also occur indirectly through intermediaries. Can also occur in markets. Here resources are aggregated and bought and sold according to law of supply and demand.

Coleman conceived resources as *rights to act*. Right to determine the exchange rate or Price. Right can be given away in exchange for other rights to act. Authorizing others to determine the norms of exchange.

Authority relations consist of two types:

1. **Conjoint authority:** Actors unilaterally give control of their rights to act to another. Vesting of authority in others seen in the best interests of all actors.

2. **Disjoint authority:** Actors give their rights away for extrinsic compensation (money).

For Coleman, disjoint authority model is applicable to norms. Transfer of rights of control to a system of rules that are sanctioned by others. Norms are built by virtue of individuals giving up their rights to control resources in exchange for expected benefits. Norms taken as given. People invoke them to explain individual behavior. How norms can emerge and be maintained? Norms are initiated and maintained by people. People see benefits in abiding by and harm stemming from the violation. People are willing to give up some control over their own behavior. In return they gain some control (through norms) over the behavior of others.

End result: the control which was held by each alone, becomes widely distributed over the whole set of actors, who exercise that control through norms. Actors may not act in terms of their self interest but must act in the interest of the group. People maximize their utility by partially surrendering rights of control over themselves and gaining partial control over others. There is equilibrium in the case of norms.

For Coleman **two key questions in understanding social solidarity** are:

- 1 What conditions within a larger collectivity of individuals create demand for rational actors to give their rights of control over resources to normative rules and sanctions associated with these rules?
- 2 What conditions make realization of effective control by norms and sanctions?

Lesson 32

James Coleman-II
(Topic 121-123)

Topic 121: Group Solidarity**Two assumptions that help in group solidarity:**

1. There is demand for norms; and
2. Realization of norms through effective sanctioning, i. e. making the normseffective.

There is demand for norms:

- To counter the negative externalities (Harmful results in a particular context);
- To enable actors to bargain and reduce negative externalities;
- To create rules that govern the exchange. Market. Regulating the transactions.
- To control the free riding. Some actors do not contribute to production of joint good. Rein in the violators.
- To control he abusive use of authority, or any source of threat to others.

Actors see that by giving up some of their rights of control over their resources, they can reduce externalities. As the group size increases, individual bargaining becomes difficult. Big markets determine the price of resources i. e. supply and demand principle. Markets create their own negative externalities i. e. cheating, hoarding, so there is demand for norms to regulate transactions. Systems of norms, trust, and authority represent ways to organize actors. Norms canbe proscriptive as well as prescriptive. Realization of norms through their being proscriptive as well as prescriptive.

Proscriptive norms: the rule that prohibit certain type of behavior.

Impose *negative sanctions*.

Prescriptive norms: What is to be done?

Positive sanctions for conformity. Approval, support, esteem.

Operation of norms possible in small groups. Small groups have high social solidarity.

Topic 122: Principles of group solidarity

Turner summarized Coleman's principles of group solidarity in four propositions.

I. The level of interest in creating norms among actors who are producing a joint good increases with:

- ✓ The intensity of negative externalities the group experiences collectively.
- ✓ The rate of free riding in the production of goods.
- ✓ The level of actors' dependence on the production of the joint good.

II. The extensiveness of the norms created by actors with an interest in regulating theproduction of a joint good increases with:

- ✓ The actors' dependence on the production of the joint goods.
- ✓ The degree to which actors consume the joint good they produce.
- ✓ The proportion of all actors receiving utilities for the production of joint good.
- ✓ The rates of communication among members engaged in the production of a joint good which is:
 1. Negatively related to the size of the group.
 2. Positively related to the density of group network ties.

III. The ratio of prospective to prescriptive content of norms regulating the production of joint goods increases with:

- ✓ The capacity to lower the costs of monitoring conformity to normativeobligations, which in turn is positively related to:
 1. Rates of communication among actors.
 2. Density of networks ties.
 3. Ratio of informal to formal sanctioning.
 4. Ratio of positive to negative sanctioning.

IV. The level of social solidarity among actors producing joint goods is likely to increase when:

- ✓ Actors' dependence on joint goods is high.
- ✓ The extensiveness of norms is great.
- ✓ The ratio of prescriptive to proscriptive content of norms is high.
- ✓ The ratio of positive to negative sanctions is high.
- ✓ The costs for monitoring and sanctioning are low.
- ✓ The proportion of actors receiving utilities from the joint good is high.

Topic 123: Concluding remarks about rational choice theory

Three conclusions:

1. Social action in the general case depends on beliefs.
2. Beliefs, actions, attitudes should be treated as rational. All based on reasons perceived by social actors as valid.
3. Reasons of the "cost-benefit" type should not be given more attention than they deserve.

This is criticism: Rationality is one thing, expected utility another.

Rationality postulate:

- ✓ Social actors try to act in congruence with reasons they perceive as valid.
- ✓ They explain their behavior is normally meaningful to them.
- ✓ The context makes these reasons of the "cost-benefit" type.
- ✓ Action to be explained by its meaning to the actor.
- ✓ As part of general theory of rationality it is said:
- ✓ Any collective phenomenon is the effect of human individual actions.
- ✓ The action of an observed actor is always understandable. (provided the observer has sufficient information)
- ✓ Strength of reasons is a function of the context.
- ✓ Reasons for capital punishment accepted at one time may not be accepted in another time.
- ✓ RCT criticized from many quarters for being overly ambitious for seeking to replace all other theoretical perspectives.
- ✓ RCT attacked for underplaying or ignoring things such as culture and chance events.

Smelser argued:

- ✓ RCT has degenerated as a result of internal evolution or responses to external criticisms.
- ✓ It has developed the "capacity to explain everything and hence nothing" (Smelser, 1992).
- ✓ The number of supporters of rational choice theory is increasing in sociology.
- ✓ So is the resistance to it by those who support other theoretical perspectives.

Lesson 33

Interactionism-I
(Topic 124-127)

Topic 124: Introduction – Micro sociological analysis

Micro Sociology focuses primarily on persons and interpersonal relations. Micro decisions can also be aggregated to have huge effects. Individuals or families take decisions to have children or migrate. Have effects on population. Micro sociology grew as counterpoint to the dominance of structural functionalism. It focusses on action system, which determines actions. Systems shape the humans. Micro sociologists emphasized on the other side: social system was the creation of humans. Instead of order being imposed on individuals by the system, social order is produced from below – the human interaction.

Micro sociology places emphasis on three things:

- a. The face-to-face interaction. Focus on concrete humans.
- b. The meanings rather than on the functions. This is interpretive approach. It emphasizes to look at the subjective motivations of actions, meanings that people assigned to their actions and verbal and nonverbal symbols create meanings.
- c. The lived experiences rather than an abstracted concept of “society.”

The exchange of symbols allows to form solidarity by allowing common definitions of reality. Greeting rituals have important symbolic meanings. Interpretations depend on past experiences.

There are **three main approaches to micro-sociological analysis:**

- (i) Phenomenology
- (ii) symbolic interactionism
- (iii) “Dramaturgical” approach of Erving Goffman.

Phenomenology emphasizes on close observation of human experience. The methods ordinary people use to construct their own everyday understandings of social life, to confront practical challenges, to shape reality through the ways in which they conceptualize it, Bottom up approach to study in culture.

Symbolic Interactionism emphasizes the way in which people develop their own identities, their senses of how society works, what constitutes fair play during interaction and all knowledge achieved in practically situated action.

“**Dramaturgical**” approach of Erving Goffman emphasizes on lived experiences, something dramatized, acted upon. It suggests that people are always staging their performance for others. This approach focuses on how people play their roles in groups. Institutionalized. Govern the role-playing.

Topic 125: Edmund Husserl Phenomenology

In Europe, phenomenology began as a project of German philosopher, Husserl. Alfred Schutz took his concepts and converted them into interactionist analysis.

Turner explained **four features** of his work relevant to phenomenology as:

- (1) The basic philosophical dilemma,
- (2) The properties of consciousness,
- (3) The critique of naturalistic empiricism,
- (4) The philosophical alternative to social science.

The first feature of his work Basic dilemma is about exploring the such as What is real? What actually exists in world? And How is it possible to know what exists? Husserl reasoned Humans know about the world only through experience. For experience, senses mediate through mental consciousness. Awareness. The existence of other people, values, norms, and physical objects have to be experienced. Experiencing is registered on one’s conscious awareness. No direct contact with reality; only through the process of mind. To understand the process, we need to ask How this process of consciousness operate? How it influences human affairs? How experience creates a sense of external reality – became the central concern of phenomenology.

The second feature is Properties of consciousness. Humans operate in a taken for granted world

that permeate their mental life. Humans sense the existence of the world having material and non-material objects. There are **two conceptions** of the world;

- (a) This world is taken for granted (Reality)
- (b) Humans can experience this world or reality.

People experience through their own consciousness. It may not be correct because how we can ascertain what is real? Answer can be biased.

Third feature is critique of naturalistic empiricism. Science assumes that the world exists out there, external to human senses. According to them world can be studied through positivistic approach. Husserl criticised this approach. He said that how can science measure external world objectively? Bring in their own biases.

Fourth feature is Solution: Philosophical alternative to social science. It searches for the essence of consciousness and the process to study events. It suspends your natural attitude. Come up with 'Pure Mind.' Suspend your own life world and understand the reality under study. There is no use of structured measuring instruments. There are many limitations related to Husserl's doctrine. His ideas set a new line of thought which became the basis of modern phenomenology.

Topic 126: Alfred Schutz Introduction

Knowledge of the world based on our perceptions of it. Perceptions do not necessarily correspond to the way the world really is. One's knowledge of reality is based on one's perceptions. Perceptions are filtered through the senses. Perceptions are then organized through one's particular cognitive frameworks. The way we see and interpret the world is based largely on the formative influence of our social environment. The cultural world into which we are born provides not only the language we use to communicate but also the perceptual categories and cognitive and interpretive frameworks through which we actually perceive and make sense of our world. At the micro level children learn early in life from their parents and other adults how to name and respond to the various objects they encounter in their environment. All this process helps in how we actually perceive and make sense of our world. We see and interpret the world in our cultural framework. Framework could vary by social class, ethnicity, age, and gender. For example knowledge about police officer. It is based on perceptions which can vary. The consciousness of each individual person will vary from that of anyone else, despite similarities in personal characteristics or social background.

Schutz incorporated Weber's concept of *verstehen* (subjective understanding) in his analysis. The meaning that the individual attaches to situations in everyday life is of prime importance. It is individual's own definition of the situation. For Schutz, Weber simply assumed that actors share subjective meanings. Schutz asked: Why and how do actors come to acquire subjective states in a situation? How do they create a common view of the world? This is the problem of "intersubjectivity," and is central to Schutz's intellectual scheme. For defining the situation, one draws on a common "stock of knowledge." These are social recipes for conceptions of reality. Individuals construct an orderly world by using these typifications. These social types are "ideal types." This is the "stock of knowledge at hand." The relationship between an individual's unique consciousness and the "intersubjective" or shared consciousness that develops among people who share the same social world was explored in detail by Alfred Schutz.

Topic 127: Alfred Schutz Personal Vs. Intersubjective Consciousness

In the Phenomenology of the Social World, Schutz's point of departure was a critique of Max Weber's analysis of social action. He noted that establishing the subjective meaning of an individual's action is not as simple as Weber had suggested. This is because it is impossible for anyone (even a sociologist) to enter someone else's stream of consciousness and have an identical subjective experience, even when the other person is well known to the observer and the action is being observed as it actually takes place. Even when the other person's behavior is accompanied by observable facial indicators of subjective states (joy, satisfaction, frustration, anger, sadness, and so on), this information would be perceived through the observer's own perceptual and cognitive framework. Thus, the observer's experience could not be identical with that of the person being

observed. The difficulties are even greater if the observer is limited (as sociologists often are) to observing the effects of the action, or hearing an account thereof, after it has taken place, as opposed to observing it as it actually occurs.

Weber did not indicate whether the subjective meaning applies during the time that an action is taking place or after it has been completed. For Schutz, the two are not necessarily identical. The subjective meanings of a particular action have to be interpreted in a framework. Meanings may vary by the frame of reference used. Reading a textbook (action) may be defined as expanding one's knowledge or fulfilling course requirements. Attribution of meaning is a reflective process after an action takes place. Yet the anticipated meaning of some goal-directed action can be defined in advance. Such as action of student to achieve some goal. Actions may have multiple meanings. Student reading a book. The meaning of action may have temporal dimension. Uniqueness of each individual's background experiences and life course. So impossible to enter the stream of consciousness of another person or to have exactly the same subjective experience. Even so, people nevertheless manage to achieve sufficient level of mutual understanding that they can adjust to one another's actions, cooperate and communicate with one another, share emotional experiences, and even gain limited insights into some aspects of one another's subjective thoughts and feelings. Through common experiences, shared "stocks of knowledge" are developed that enable people to reach a certain level of mutual understanding. A critically important component of this implicitly shared knowledge is the language we use in communicating our subjective thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences—as emphasized in symbolic interaction theory. This process contributes to the accumulation of shared, or intersubjective, "stocks of knowledge" that are eventually taken for granted without additional discussion. In seeking to understand one another's subjective meanings, we typically make the assumption that other people's subjective experiences are probably similar to what ours would be in similar circumstances. This would apply even in the absence of communication and would include others who do not even share the same language. Thus, for example, when we observe television news stories that portray grieving parents in another country whose loved ones have been killed as a result of war or terrorism, we are able to understand and sympathize, despite the fact that our stream of consciousness as we hear and watch the news cannot be identical to the stream of consciousness of those who just received the bad news and are overcome with grief.

Lesson 34

Interactionism-II**(Topic 128-131)****Topic 128: Alfred Schutz Meaning, Motive, and Accounts**

The concept of motive is often used to try to grasp the subjective *meaning* of another person's action. Deciphering the meaning attributed to the motive to act as well as to the narrative of accounts of the actions of others is a dilemma.

Here we need to ask two questions in order to understand motives and the meanings people attach with action;

- (i) What is the motive to act?
- (ii) Does the actor and the "other" attach the same meaning to it?

Schutz distinguished between two clearly different meanings of this concept: the **"in order to"** motive and **the "because" motive**.

The "in order to" motive is future-oriented and involves explaining an action in terms of the goal or project for which it is being undertaken.

In contrast, the "because" motive involves looking to the past to identify background experiences that contributed to the development of the action being analyzed. As Schutz put it, "The difference between the two kinds of motive is that the in-order-to motive explains the act in terms of the project, while the genuine because-motive explains the project in terms of the actor's past experiences."

His example is a murder explanation—a common challenge in criminology and in actual crime investigations. An explanation using an "in-order-to" motive might be that the goal was to get the victim's money and then prevent the victim from contacting the police, while an explanation of the "because" type of motive might focus on the criminal's poverty, the prior influence of criminal companions, or inadequate socialization due to parental neglect. With regard to the in-order-to motive, questions can be raised as to whether the murderer intended from the beginning to kill the victim, decided to do so on the spur of the moment to silence the victim, or did so accidentally when the robbery did not go as planned or the victim fought back. Such questions beg for additional analysis in providing an adequate account. For some actions these two types of motives may seem more closely related than in the case of the two different explanations of murder. For example, a student studies hard in order to earn a high grade for the course. But the time and effort spent in preparing for the test may have resulted because the instructor indicated the test would be difficult and urged the students to study diligently. Such explanations may be incorporated in the accounts people are sometimes expected to provide of their own behavior. (The concept of accounts will be examined in more detail in connection with the ethnomethodological perspective.) At the same time observers (or social scientists) may be able to identify possible motives of which individuals are unaware.

The question of motivations and other aspects of subjective meaning are often of interest to other parties. In addition to trying to understand or account for our own behavior, people frequently make attributions regarding the motives of others, despite the difficulties involved in understanding what goes on in anyone else's subjective consciousness. In addition to simple curiosity, we may have practical reasons for wanting to understand how to motivate people, perhaps because of an interest in influencing their behavior. In any case, whether the motivations we attribute are consistent with the conscious motivations of the person whose behavior we are trying to understand or predict is always an empirical question that may be difficult to answer. People have varying interests in explaining their own motives or the motives of others. In the case of an accused murderer brought to trial, for example, efforts to provide explanations (including both in-order-to and because motives will likely differ for the individual accused, the arresting officer, the state's attorney, the defense attorney, the victim's family, and the alleged perpetrator's own family. Though none of them actually witnessed the murder, and state of mind of the accused. Even when an individual is being observed in the actual performance of an act, the observer's ability to understand the action is limited. The observer's

ongoing stream of consciousness while viewing the action may differ from that of the actor performing it.

Topic 129: Mutual Understanding In Personal Vs. Impersonal Relations

Despite the difficulties in reaching mutual understanding, the language people use to attribute motives and other kinds of subjective experiences (intentions, feelings, goals, wishes) makes it possible to develop a common frame of reference for mutual understanding. People have the ability to understand each other through the inter-subjective consciousness they share. They become aware of each other minds. Understanding can influence one another to make ongoing mutual adjustments in their behaviors. Schutz identified the highest level of mutual understanding as a “thou” orientation. This occurs in face-to-face relationships when the parties involved intentionally seek to “tune in” and share one another’s subjective thoughts and feelings. Such relationships are the type Cooley referred to as “primary group” relations. When people share this kind of mutual orientation, they form a “we-relationship” which can be contrasted with the less personal orientations involved in “they-relationships.” In face-to-face relationships people are able to gain a level of mutual understanding of one another’s subjective experiences that is much greater than in more impersonal relations. They can literally “read” one another’s faces, which are highly expressive of their current subjective states, as well as communicate their thoughts and feelings— which, of course, may or may not always be consistent with their facial expressions.

In contrast to “we-relationships” with mutual “thou” orientations, Schutz’s concept of “they relationships” describes encounters in which individuals’ orientations toward one another are more limited or impersonal. In such secondary relationships people may be in one another’s presence, read one another’s facial expressions, and actually influence one another, but they do not relate to one another as unique persons. Relationships may change over time from “they- relationships” to “we-relationships” and then back again. For example, students and professors initially see one another in rather impersonal terms, but over the course of a semester personal relationships sometimes develop. Such relationships usually end when the course is over, and the students and the professor will thereafter see one another as “former professors” and “former students.” In a successful employment interview, however, the relationship may change during the course of the interview from an impersonal encounter to a relationship that both parties anticipate will probably be longer lasting and perhaps somewhat more personal, though within limits. The same pattern of ebb and flow may also be seen in long-term relationships between couples who divorce, neighbors who move. The detailed mutual understanding that develops in “we-relationships” is not generalizable to the larger social world. Despite the similarities in best friend, lover, and family relationships everywhere, people generally see their relationships with their own friends and families as distinctive and unique.

Topic 130: Contemporaries, Procedures And Successors

If we move beyond the range of our own personal experiences in both personal and impersonal encounters, a comprehensive description of the social world would also include all of our contemporaries throughout our society and beyond—plus our predecessors from previous generations and our successors in future generations. All of these “others” are relevant for a phenomenological analysis because they are included in our subjective awareness of the social world as well as the intersubjective understanding we share with others. Our knowledge of particular persons beyond our own social circle is likely to be based on reputation and thus limited to second-hand reports by people we know (whose information may also be second-hand) or by the news media, through their cultural products (movies, songs, books, articles). Or general awareness about the roles played by individuals as teachers, parents, students, bankers, clerks physicians, city officials. The social world of our intersubjective awareness also includes a general awareness of past generations. For example; Historic role played by great leaders. Legacies of writers, artists, Tales of late great leaders like Quaid e Azam. Their innumerable artifacts preserved in museums.

In contrast to the world of our predecessors, which is now closed and unchangeable, and the world of our contemporaries, which is partially open and contingent on choices not yet made and

circumstances not yet determined, the world of our successors is one about which our subjective understanding is obviously limited. We know in general terms that our generation and all our contemporaries will eventually be replaced by future generations, and we tend also to assume that our successors will probably be like us in many ways, but no doubt different in other ways. Yet, the world of the future is open and unknown. Unlike the past, it is not yet determined, even though we may anticipate the continuation of present trends. People vary greatly in terms of their conscious concerns for the needs of future generations and their sense of commitment to them. Political leaders promote policies that they claim will preserve and protect the environment or Social Security for future generations. But rhetorical references such as these are not the same as knowledge about the actual life experiences of future generations. Moreover, our concerns for the future are always constrained by the need to deal with the problems and challenges of the present. Although we know that the world of future generations will be affected by the legacy we leave, for good or for ill, our ability to predict the long-range impact of our own actions is limited.

Topic 131: Alfred Schutz Concluding remarks

Schutz's work began with a critique of Weber. Weber employed the concept of social action in his research. For Weber, social action occurs when actors are consciously aware of each other and attribute meanings to their common situation. Understand social reality i.e. the phenomenon "at the level of meaning." Sociological study must penetrate people's consciousness to find how they view, define, and see the world. Weber called this method as *verstehen*: sympathetic introspection (understanding subjective meaning of actor). It is necessary to get inside the subjective world of actors. For Schutz, it was not enough. Few questions are important here such as Why, and through what processes, actors create common subjective world? How do they create a common subjective view of the world?. This is the problem of "intersubjectivity." It is central to Schutz. People's stock knowledge about reality is a sense of an absolute reality that shapes and guides all other social events and interactions. Stock knowledge gives the social world a taken for granted character. It is knowledge learned through socialization. Stock knowledge helps in creating a sense of "reciprocity of perspectives." Stock of knowledge gives the actors a sense that the world is the same for all. It holds society united. Presumption of common world allows actors to engage in the process of typification. It helps to categorize one another and to adjust to their responses to these typifications. Humans can treat each other as categories, or typical objects of a particular kind. On the basis this stock knowledge actors categorize one another adjust to their responses to these typifications. Humans can treat each other as categories, or typical objects of a particular kind. Schutz recognized the limitations of sociologists in achieving the in-depth understanding of other people's subjective consciousness. Such understanding is possible in genuine "we-relationships" where participants share mutual "thou" orientations. This insight seems inconsistent with the optimistic expectations regarding the possibilities for deepening our sociological understanding through participant observation research leading to ethnographic "thick descriptions" of the ways of life among particular people in their local setting. This type of qualitative research is often promoted by symbolic interactionists as being able to provide in-depth insights that cannot be captured through the more impersonal strategy of survey research. Although ethnographic research may indeed reveal interesting details that might be missed in survey research, it is important to recognize that the understanding researchers may gain regarding social processes they observe and document is likely to differ from insiders' own collective self-understanding. In fact, insiders themselves may be expected to vary in terms of their understanding of themselves. Schutz proposed that sociological knowledge should be based on the ideal-type form of understanding. Identify patterns of action and relationships that can be associated with general social types.

Lesson 35

Symbolic Interactionism-I
(Topic 132-135)**Topic 132: Symbolic Interactionism****Background**

Interaction is a form of communication where **people use symbols to convey meaning** through **vocal, facial, and physical gestures**. Symbols are created and used by humans as a means of communication, such as language composed of letters, sounds, and signs. The interpretation of symbols varies from person to person based on their **understanding and subjective meanings** they assign to objects, events, ideas, and behaviors. Some meanings may be **socially constructed**, like those related to race, gender, status, gestures, and actions. People decide whom to interact with and how to behave based on their interpretation of symbols and meanings. Communication involves the **exchange of meaning through language and symbols**.

Symbolic interactionism, introduced by Herbert Blumer, emphasizes the significance of shared symbols in shaping individuals' interactions. This perspective focuses on individuals as active participants in constructing their behavior, interpreting their thoughts and emotions, and engaging in **small-scale interpersonal relationships**. Individuals are seen as decision-makers who form opinions and make choices based on their own understanding and evaluation of situations. **Blumer highlights the processes through which individuals make decisions and shape their actions.**

Topic 133: Georg Simmel Primary Concerns

Georg Simmel is best known as a micro sociologist who made significant contributions to small-group research, symbolic interactionism, and exchange theory. He was one of the first European sociologists to dig into the study of social interaction. Simmel believed that macrostructures such as class, the state, family, and religion are reflections of specific interactions among people. He emphasized the importance of studying forms and types of social interaction to understand emergent social phenomena. **By focusing on various types of interactions, he explored the forms and consequences of social interactions.** Simmel's work on the forms of interaction is part of a broader theory that examines the relationships between individuals and society. **He viewed society as a collection of countless minor syntheses created through interactions among individuals**, which account for the richness and complexity of social life. **These interactions are the building blocks of society, shaping its dynamics and structure.**

Topic 134: Levels And Areas Of Concerns

Simmel's work on social reality encompasses four levels of concern, each building upon the previous one. The **first level** focuses on microscopic assumptions about the psychological aspects of social life, followed by the **second level** which examines sociological components of interpersonal relationships. The **third level** delves into the structure and changes in the social and cultural "spirit" at a macroscopic level. These higher levels replace immediate interacting forces with higher supra-individual formations, such as individuals versus society. The **fourth level** of concern explores ultimate metaphysical principles of life.

Simmel's exploration of multiple levels of social reality is evident in his **delineation of three distinct problem "areas" in sociology in "The Problem Areas of Sociology."** The **first area**, "pure" sociology, combines psychological variables with forms of interactions, focusing on the forms and types of people engaged in interactions. The forms include subordination, superordination, exchange, conflict, and sociability, while the types range from "competitor" and "coquette" to "miser," "spendthrift," "stranger," and "adventurer."

In the intermediate level, Simmel's "general" sociology examines the social and cultural products of human history, emphasizing group dynamics, societal structures, and cultural histories. Finally, in Simmel's "philosophical" sociology, he delves into his views on the fundamental nature and inevitable destiny of humankind. Throughout this chapter, we will explore these levels and

sociologies, noting how Simmel often integrates them into a broader totality rather than keeping them separate.

Topic 135: Dialectical thinking

Simmel's way of dealing with the interrelationships among **three basic levels of social reality** (leaving out his fourth, metaphysical, level) gave his sociology a dialectical character reminiscent of Marx's sociology dialectical is concerned with both conflicts and contradictions. Simmel's sociology was concerned with relationships/interaction. For Simmel everything interacts in some way with everything else. **He was attuned to dualisms, conflicts, and contradictions.** He understands the world in terms of conflicts and contrasts between opposed categories. We can understand his point by **taking example of fashion.** The example of fashion shows the contradictions in a variety of ways. Fashion is a form of social relationship that allows those who wish to conform to the demands of the group to do so. Fashion also provides the norm from individualists can deviate. Fashion involves a historical process as well at the initial stage, everyone accepts what is fashionable; Inevitably, individuals deviate from this; and Finally, in the process of deviation, they may adopt a whole new view of what is in fashion.

Fashion is dialectical as it is the success and spread of any given fashion lead to its eventual failure. The distinctiveness of something leads to its being considered fashionable. As large numbers of people come to accept it, it ceases to be distinctive and hence it loses its attractiveness. Another duality involves the role of the leader of a fashion movement. Such a person leads the group by adopting the fashion more strictly than he has to be innovative. Look at those who are out of fashion. Unfashionable view the fashionables as being imitators and themselves as mavericks or independents. Simmel argued that the latter are simply engaging in an inverse form of imitation. They avoid what is in fashion because they are afraid that they will lose their individuality. Such a fear is hardly a sign of great personal strength and independence. In fashion all leading antithetical tendencies are represented in one way or another. That is dialectical.

Individual (subjective) culture and objective culture is another example. Objective culture refers to those things that people produce (art, science, philosophy). **Individual (subjective) culture** is the capacity of the actor to produce, absorb, and control the elements of objective culture. The two cultures shape each other. For Simmel people are influenced, and even threatened, by social structures and by their cultural products. The problem is that objective culture comes to have a life of its own. It controls those who created them. Cultural products create contradictions with the actors who created them. Objective culture acquires fixed identities, a logic and lawfulness of its own. It creates a contradiction with the actors who created them because it controls their deviations. In Simmel's dialectic, man is always in danger of being slain by those objects of his own creation which have lost their organic human touch.

Lesson 36

Symbolic Interactionism-I
(Topic 136-139)**Topic 136-137: Social Interaction**

Simmel contributed to the understanding of **patterns of social interaction**, emphasizing the range of relations between individuals. Human life is governed by interactions, whether pleasant or unpleasant, at various levels. These interactions, akin to atoms of society, are only visible through psychological observation. **Simmel focused on interactions among conscious actors, exploring both seemingly insignificant and crucial interactions.** While he emphasized the significance of interaction in sociology, some overlook his insights into broader aspects of social reality. **He sometimes linked society with interaction, seeing it as the result of particular social interactions.**

Topic 137: Interaction: Forms and Types

Simmel focuses on the **structure of social interaction rather than its content.** He believes that the world is filled with countless events, actions, and interactions, which people organize by imposing patterns or forms on them. This helps individuals make sense of the complexity of reality by reducing it to a limited number of recognizable forms. **For example, the dynamics of superordination and subordination can be observed in various contexts such as the state, religious communities, conspiratorial groups, economic associations, art schools, and families.**

Donald Levine, a prominent contemporary scholar of Simmel's work, explains that Simmel's approach to formal interactional sociology involves selecting a specific phenomenon, analyzing its elements, and revealing the underlying form that gives it coherence. Additionally, Simmel explores the origins of these forms and their structural implications. **Levine emphasizes that forms represent the patterns of social associations among people.**

Social Geometry

In Simmel's formal sociology, one can observe his attempt to create a "geometry" of **social relations**, focusing on numbers and distance as key geometric coefficients. Simmel was particularly interested in the impact of **group size on interaction quality, as evident in his comparison of dyads and triads. He emphasized the significant difference between a dyad (two-person group) and a triad (three-person group).** The addition of a third member in a triad brings about a fundamental change, unlike increasing the group size beyond three.

In a dyad, there is no group structure beyond the two individuals involved, allowing for a high level of individuality for each member. On the other hand, **a triad** has the potential to develop an independent group structure, posing a threat to individuality as the group gains meaning beyond the individuals. The introduction of a third party in a triad opens up new social roles such as arbitrator or mediator, leading to power dynamics and competition within the group.

The transition from a dyad to a triad is crucial for the emergence of social structures that can dominate individuals, creating a dialectical relationship between individuals and society. While society enables individuality and autonomy, it also constrains them, leading to feelings of isolation and segmentation. This dynamic interaction between individuals and social structures shapes the complexity of human relationships.

Group Size

At a more general level, Simmel had an ambivalent attitude towards the **impact of group size. A small group or society can exert complete control over the individual, while increasing size and differentiation can weaken the bonds between individuals, leading to greater individual freedom.** Being involved in multiple groups allows individuals to express different aspects of their personality, enhancing individuality. However, large societies can pose challenges that threaten individuality. **In large groups, individuals may be influenced by simplistic ideas due to physical proximity, leading to suggestibility and mindless, emotional actions.**

Distance

Simmel's social geometry also explores the **concept of distance in social relationships.** The value

of something is influenced by its proximity to the individual. Objects that are easily accessible or too distant lose their value. The most valuable objects are those that are attainable but require effort to obtain. In his work "**The Stranger**," Simmel discusses how the distance between individuals affects their interactions. When someone is too close, they are no longer a stranger, and when they are too far, contact is lost. The distance of the stranger determines the unique interaction patterns and the level of unfamiliarity.

Social Types

We have already encountered one of Simmel's types, the stranger; others include the miser, the spendthrift, the adventurer, and the nobleman. To illustrate his mode of thinking in this area, **we will focus on one of his types, the poor.**

- **The Poor**

In Simmel's work, **the concept of poor is defined in terms of social relationships, where the poor are seen as those who receive aid or have the right to it.** Simmel believed that poverty is not solely about a lack of money, but rather about the reciprocal rights and obligations between those in need and those who give. The needy have the right to receive aid, which eases the burden of receiving help, while the giver has the duty to provide assistance. Simmel also argued that society benefits from helping the poor, as it prevents them from becoming a threat and helps make their contributions more productive. Poverty is a relative concept that can be felt across all social classes, as individuals may perceive themselves as poor in comparison to their peers.

Social Forms

Simmel examined various social forms, such as exchange, conflict, prostitution, and sociability, similar to social types. One of his key concepts is domination, which involves superordination and subordination.

- **Superordination and Subordination**

Superordination and subordination are interrelated. A leader does not seek to control others entirely but expects a response from subordinates, whether positive or negative. All interactions, including domination, rely on mutual relationships. **Subordination can occur to an individual, a group, or an external force, with relationships evolving in different ways in each scenario.**

Topic 138: Social Structures

Simmel focused on patterns of interaction in society rather than large-scale structures. He viewed society as a set of interactions among individuals, rather than a tangible entity or organism. Society is a network of interconnected individuals. **Simmel believed that society operates independently of individuals and follows its own laws, presenting individuals with historical imperatives.** Larger structures like the state, clan, family, city, or trade union emerge from interactions and can take on a life of their own, appearing as external forces to individuals. This dynamic can make individuals seem passive rather than active participants in society, creating a paradox.

Topic 139: Objective culture

In Simmel's view, **people create culture, but due to their ability to objectify social reality,** the cultural and social worlds develop lives of their own, which increasingly dominate the actors who originally created them. **Objective culture includes things produced by people such as art, science, and philosophy, while individual (subjective) culture refers to the capacity of individuals to interact with and control elements of objective culture.** These two cultures influence each other, with individuals retaining the ability to shape and reshape culture. However, over time, culture exerts a coercive influence on individuals.

Components of objective culture include tools, transportation, scientific products, technology, arts, language, religion, philosophy, legal systems, moral codes, and ideals. Objective culture expands with modernization, leading to a growth in scientific knowledge and an increase in the number of cultural components. **Simmel viewed this growth as a threat to individual culture, describing it as the "tragedy of culture."**

Simmel observed interactions in the **modern metropolis, which he considered the primary arena for the growth of objective culture and the decline of individual culture.** The prevalence of a money economy in the city has a significant impact on human relationships, emphasizing calculability and rationality over genuine connections. In contrast, small towns are characterized by greater emotionality and personal relationships.

Simmel also discussed the liberating aspects of modernity, highlighting the increased freedom individuals experience in the city compared to the constraints of small-town life. **He viewed exchange as a fundamental form of interaction, with all social exchanges involving elements of "profit and loss."** Simmel's microsociological analysis focused on the impact of money economy on social structures and the alienation of individuals in modern society.

Lesson 37

Charles H. Cooley
(Topic140-144)**Topic 140: Charles H. Cooley**
Introduction

Cooley was involved in developing symbolic interaction theory, particularly through his concept of the "**looking glass self.**" This theory posits that individuals form their identity based on the reflections they see in the reactions of others. These reactions serve as a mirror, influencing one's emotional responses and self-perception. **Cooley emphasized the significance of how others' approval or disapproval can lead to feelings of pride or shame. Self-identity is shaped through social interactions, as individuals interpret gestures and imagine how others perceive them.** This process, known as the looking glass self, involves individuals deriving self-images and attitudes based on others' feedback. The focus is on the relationship between one's self-concept and interactions within primary groups, such as family or close-knit social circles. These primary groups play a crucial role in shaping individuals' sense of self, fostering unity and mutual regard among members. By identifying strongly with these groups, **individuals expand their self-concept to include these relationships, distinguishing them from secondary groups characterized by more impersonal interactions.** Through primary groups, **individuals experience a sense of cohesion and shared identity, strengthening their bonds through intimate face-to-face relationships.**

Topic 141: Interaction and society

For Cooley, society functions as an **organic entity where social processes shape networks of reciprocal activity.** Society comprises various social forms, ranging from small groups to large institutions. Humans possess the capacity to attribute shared meanings to gestures, facilitating communication through constructed gestural communication. **This communication fosters relationships, interactions, and organizational structures. By interpreting gestures, individuals can understand each other's thoughts and attitudes, leading to the development of self.** The self plays a crucial role in forming and sustaining society through patterns of reciprocal communication and interaction.

Topic 142-143: Looking Glass Self

Cooley posits that humans possess the capacity for self-consciousness, which emerges through group interactions and enables individuals to organize themselves in society. The concept of self involves the ability to perceive and recognize oneself as an object, often influenced by the gestures of others. People form images of themselves based on reflections of their behavior in the eyes of others. By interpreting the gestures of others, individuals gain insight into how they are perceived and develop a sense of self-awareness.

Self-awareness evolves over an individual's life span, with young infants initially lacking the ability to see themselves as objects in the "looking glass." Through exposure to various social interactions, practice, and biological maturation, individuals gradually develop self-awareness and a stable sense of self. Cooley uses the metaphor of the "looking glass" to symbolize this process, emphasizing that self-perception is shaped by how one believes others perceive them.

The formation of self is influenced by interactions with others, as individuals internalize external perceptions to construct their self-concept, self-image, and self-consciousness. **Cooley identifies three aspects of consciousness: self-consciousness, social consciousness, and public consciousness, which collectively contribute to stable action and cooperative interaction within society.** These aspects serve as a foundation for social control and are essential for the development of a cohesive sense of self.

Topic 144: Primary groups

Cooley viewed the "**primary group**" as the **foundational unit of society**, characterized by small size, intimate relationships, face-to-face interactions, durability, and cooperation. These groups,

such as family and friendship circles, play a crucial role in shaping individuals' social nature and values. In primary groups, personal connections take precedence over goal-oriented interactions found in secondary groups. **The fusion of individual identities within a common purpose fosters a sense of self through shared activities and mutual support. The reflective interactions within primary groups are essential for self-development and maintenance.** By participating in organized face-to-face activities, individuals form a bridge between personal identity and societal norms. **Primary groups serve as a key agent of socialization, transmitting traditions, morals, and cultural values to individuals.** Interaction within these groups is vital for the formation of self-awareness and self-esteem. According to Cooley, primary groups are essential for both individual well-being and the stability of social institutions. G. H. Mead further elaborated on this concept in his theory.

Lesson 38

George H. Mead-I
(Topic 145-147)**Topic 145: George H. Mead: Introduction**

Mead is a key figure in symbolic interactionism, emphasizing the link between social interaction and individual mental processes. **He coined the term "social behaviorism" and his ideas influenced symbolic interaction theory.** Mead critiqued psychological behaviorism for neglecting the social and subjective aspects of behavior. He highlighted the role of interpretation in responses to stimuli, emphasizing that meanings are constructed through interaction. Communication involves gestures that symbolize intentions and trigger responses. Shared interpretations and expectations develop through interaction. Symbols, including words, convey shared meanings and shape interactions. **Gestures and symbols play a crucial role in communication, creating shared understandings and shaping social interactions.**

Topic 146: Symbolic Meaning And Behaviorism

The meaning of a symbol is derived from the definition of a gesture, which is not only the initial element of an action but also a sign of the entire action. **Gestures are internalized as significant symbols by group members, eliciting similar responses.** According to Mead, a symbol is a stimulus to which a response is predetermined, such as a threatening person being knocked down. Actions are based on interpretation, creating a stimulus-response situation aligned with the community's attitude. **The relationship between the stimulus and the attitude towards it signifies a significant symbol.** Self-interaction involves the internal dialogue of gestures within an individual's mind. Significant symbols are gestures that convey meaning and elicit responses from others. It is essential to communicate with others through symbols and understand how they interpret them, leading to observable behavior influenced by internal thinking within a social context.

Topic 147: Life As Ongoing Process: Mind, Self, And Society

Mead considered life as an ongoing process of adaptation to environmental conditions. Attributes of species are the result of the selection of their suitability for adaptation to conditions. This is pragmatism. Humans are "pragmatic" creatures. Humans use the available facilities for achieving adjustment to the world. There is variation in the environment and available facilities. Adjustment can be unique to any individual/group/community. Adjustments are based on rational thinking. Call it pragmatic behavior. The stimulus-response approach as well as the pleasure and pain principle is compatible with behaviorist notions of reinforcement. The unique attributes of humans emerge from the processes of adaptation and adjustment. Such attributes can be:

- (a) The capacity to use language i.e. symbols to designate objects in the environment.
- (b) Ability to talk to each other and to themselves.
- (c) Ability to view themselves as objects.
- (d) Capacity to reason.

The most distinctive attributes are mind, self, and society that emerge from the basic process of adaptation. Each individual of the human species is like the individuals of other species. What they are is the result of the common biological heritage of their species as well as their adjustment to a given environment. Mead considered mind and self as the two distinctive aspects of human personality. Society is maintained by mind and self and should be viewed as part of ongoing social processes.

Lesson 39

George H. Mead-II
(Topic 148-150)

Topic 148: Mind: Contribution of Interaction

Mind is defined by Mead as a process and not a thing. Mind is something functional, not substantive. It is an inner conversation with oneself (thinking). It arises and develops within the social process and is an integral part of that process. The social process precedes the mind. 'Mind' is the thinking ability that emerges out of social interaction. It arises and develops within the empirical matrix of interactions. **Gestures** are central to communication, which is necessary for interaction. Gesture acts as a stimulus for an adjusted response, i.e., "conversation of gestures" → communication and interaction. The "meaning" of a gesture is a stimulus. Shared meaning will signal the subsequent behavior of the other. It may be called an adjusted response to each other. It happens among living beings. Humans have the peculiar capacity to elicit the response they are seeking from others.

A distinctive quality of the mind is the ability of the individual to elicit not only a single response from the other but also the response of the community as a whole. **Thus, the thinking ability of an individual to give a response to a stimulus is termed as 'mind,' i.e., to do anything now means a certain organized response, and if one has that response within themselves,** they have what is termed as 'mind.' Mead also looks at the mind in another pragmatic way, i.e., the mind involves thought processes oriented toward problem-solving. The real world is full of problems, and it is the function of the mind to try to solve those problems and permit people to operate more effectively in the world.

Topic 149: Symbols and Mind

The act involves only one person, but the social act involves two or more persons. The gesture is the basic mechanism in the social act and in the social process. For Mead, 'gestures are movements of the first organism which act as specific stimuli calling forth the appropriate responses of the second organism.' Both lower animals and humans are capable of gestures. For example, growling of dogs; instinctive (automatic response). It may not involve a thought process. Call it a "conversation of gestures." **Mead calls such unconscious actions 'non-significant gestures.'** **Humans have the ability to employ "significant" gestures, i.e., thinking before action. Gestures can be physical and vocal. Gestures become symbols, which can be significant when made by humans.**

Gestures become significant symbols when they arouse in the individual who is making them the same kind of response they are supposed to elicit from those to whom the gestures are addressed. Significant symbols are necessary for true communication. **Physical gestures** can be significant symbols. They are not ideally suited to be significant symbols because people cannot easily see or hear their physical gestures. Vocal utterances are most likely to become significant symbols. The set of vocal gestures most likely to become significant symbols is language. **Significant symbols** have mutually agreed meaning, i.e., with language, the gestures and their meaning are communicated. For Mead, another function of significant symbols is that they make the mind, mental processes. Through significant symbols, especially language, human thinking is possible.

Thinking is "simply an internalized or implicit conversation of the individual with himself by means of such gestures." Thinking is the same as talking to other people. It amounts to talking to oneself. This is a behaviorist approach. Human capacity for language (communication by symbols) makes for the emergence of their unique capacities for mind and self. The capacity for language is necessary to have a mind. **The mind involves several behavioral capacities, such as;**

- i. To denote objects in the environment with significant symbols;
- ii. To use these symbols as a stimulus to one's response;
- iii. To read and interpret the gestures of others and use these as a stimulus for one's response;
- iv. To temporarily suspend or inhibit overt behavioral responses to one's own gestural denotations or those of others; and
- v. To 'imaginatively rehearse' alternative lines of conduct, visualize their consequences, and

select the response that will facilitate adjustment to the environment. The mind is an “internal conversation of gestures,” just like talking to oneself. The capacity for mind is not inborn. Interaction is a necessary prerequisite.

Topic 150: Role-Taking and Mind

The capacity of the **mind is not inborn**. It requires a certain **level of biological maturation**. The most important requirement is an individual's social interaction. The emergence of the mind is necessary for human survival. An individual, right from infancy, must adjust and adapt to the social environment. For adjustment and adaptation to a world of organized activity, the emergence of the mind is needed. **An infant's response to a stimulus is based on inborn basic reflexes**. The responses or actions are performed without conscious thinking. Such responses are neither efficient nor adaptive. **For example, a baby's cry (a response)** does not communicate what it wants. It cannot interpret the vocal and other gestures of people around it, leading to adjustment problems. Therefore, there is a 'selective pressure' for acquiring the ability to use and interpret significant gestures, resulting in adjustment to the environment. Using and interpreting significant gestures is a critical process.

The ability to use significant symbols means that the gestures emitted by others allow a person to read and interpret the dispositions of others. We can imitate the gestures and potential actions of others. **Mead called this process 'taking the role of the other' or role-taking. "Taking on" the role or perspective of others means putting oneself in the shoes of others (e.g., a child copying the mother)**. Taking on the role of others means putting oneself in someone else's shoes, allowing one to understand how someone else feels and thinks and to anticipate how that person will act. Inner conversation means that individuals are talking to themselves. Young children attain this ability only gradually. For Mead, the ability to think is the mind. Role-taking is critical to the emergence of the mind.

Lesson 40

George H. Mead-III
(Topic 151-153)**Topic 151: Self: Social Nature**

The capacity to view oneself as an object in the field of experience is a type of learned behavior. **Learning takes place through interaction with others.** The self is something that is developed; it is not present at birth. It arises in the process of social experience and activity. The self is not part of the body; it develops only as an individual interacts with others. **Interaction is experienced through the exchange of symbols, i.e., language. The process requires the capacity to use language and to take the role of others.** The social self emerges from a process in which an individual reads the gestures of others (their attitudes) and derives an image or picture of themselves as a certain type of object in a situation. **This process was labeled as the looking glass self by Cooley.** The image of self-acts as a stimulus calling for a certain response. The responses then act as a stimulus for others to respond. The emission of gestures enables one to take on the role of others and acts as a stimulus for others. It helps in making adjustments in the role in view of others' reactions and interpretations. Individuals do not experience directly but indirectly through reading the gestures of others from the standpoint of others in a social group. **This is called a 'generalized' standpoint of the group to which an individual belongs.** The individual becomes an object to oneself and accepts the attitude of others toward oneself in a particular context. There can be multiple situations, multiple contexts, multiple experiences, and multiple attitudes. The self is a product of social interaction and therefore has a social nature.

Topic 152: Self: "I" and "Me"

The self has **two parts**. One part operates as the subject, being active, creative, and spontaneous. Mead called this active part the "I" (subjective form of the personal pronoun). **The "I" is the self as the subject: the active, spontaneous, creative part of the self. The other part of the self works as an object: the way we imagine others see us. It is composed of others' attitudes internalized from our interactions. Mead called this objective side of the self the "me" (objective form of the personal pronoun).** All social experiences have both components. We initiate an action (I-phase or subject side of the self). We continue the action based on how others respond to us (the me-phase, or object side, of the self). The image of a person's behavior is what Mead termed as the me. The me represents the attitudes of others and the broader community. These attitudes influence an individual's retrospective interpretation of behavior. These are me images that are received by reading the gestures of specific others.

In contrast to the "me" is the "I," which is the actual emission of behavior. When a person speaks too loudly, this is the "I." When a person reacts to this loudness, the "me" phase of action is initiated. The "I" can only be known in experience (waiting for "me" images to know just what "I" did). The "me" is the expectations of others about the "I." The "I" and "me" represent the self as a constant process of behavior and self-image. People act to view themselves as objects, to assess the consequences of action, to interpret others' reactions, and to decide how to act in the future. **The "I" has a built-in mechanism of social control. The self is a process of adaptation to the environment.**

Topic 153: The Genesis of Self

Genesis of self refers to the emergence of self and self-conception in humans. The self is a social product, a type of behavior that arises from the human organism's efforts to adjust and adapt to its environment. The development of self is a process. In order for the self to form, an infant must acquire the ability to use significant symbols. This ability is crucial for;

- (a) Role-taking with others
- (b) Interpreting the gestures of others
- (c) Developing a self-image. The self also relies on the capacities of the mind. Individuals must be able to linguistically identify themselves as an object in their experiential field and organize others' responses towards themselves as an object. Therefore, the prerequisites for self-development include;

- (i) The use of significant symbols
- (ii) The capacity for role-taking
- (iii) The behavioral abilities of the mind.

Lesson 41

George H. Mead-III
(Topic 154-157)**Topic 154: Genesis of Self (Cont.)**

Mead visualized the development of self in three stages, each marked by an increased capacity to role-take with a wider audience. All **three stages** are discussed below:

1) Play stage: At this stage, there is a very limited capacity to role-take with a wider audience. The child can assume the perspective of only one or two others at a time, often through imaginary companions. The child may enact the role of a mother or assume the role of a baby.

2) Game stage: In this stage, the child can take on the role of multiple others engaged in ongoing and organized activities. In games, the child must assume the roles of other players, anticipate their actions, and coordinate with the team. The number and variety of such situations expand, and the child sees themselves as an object in relation to others, deriving images of themselves from the viewpoint of others.

3) Generalized other: In this stage, there is a "community of attitudes" among members of a collectivity. The individual views themselves in relation to this "community of attitudes" and adjusts accordingly. This is role-taking with the generalized other. For Mead, play and game present the initial stages in the development of self. In the final stage, the individual can generalize the varied attitudes of others, seeing and regulating their actions from a broader perspective. The generalized other reflects the norms, values, attitudes, and expectations of people "in general." In a complex society, there can be multiple generalized others, and individuals adjust to specific and generalized attitudes of others. At this stage, individuals possess a complete and unified self.

Topic 155-156: Society: Conception, Process, and Culture**Conception of Society**

Mead is widely known in sociology for his concept of the "Self," but much less for his concept of "Society." The two concepts are intimately connected in his thought. It is simply impossible to fully understand Mead's concept of Self without an appropriate understanding of his concept of Society. Society is the organism within which the self arises. Human society could not exist without minds and selves. Society presupposes the possession of minds and selves by its individual members. Yet, the mind and self cannot develop unless there is society. Individual members would not possess minds and selves if there were no society. **Mead used the term society in two senses:**

(a) Society refers to ongoing, organized activity among pluralities of individuals. The activity may be of a small group or of a total society.

(b) Society pertains to geopolitical units, such as nation-states (morphology).

For Mead, the term society primarily means the ongoing social process that precedes both the mind and the self. Given its importance in shaping the mind and self, society is clearly of central importance to Mead. Society, to Mead, represents the organized set of responses that are taken over by the individual in the form of the "me." In this sense, individuals carry society around with them, giving them the ability, through self-criticism, to control themselves.

The Process of Society

Mead recognizes the general nature of the processes underlying the maintenance of social order. It requires the identification of the relevant factors or variables that influence the accuracy of role-taking and the convergence of "generalized others." There are divergent "generalized others" in a socially differentiated society. They can be different situations, different roles, different sets of expectations, different "generalized others." It means a divergent community of attitudes. Role-taking with varieties of specific and "generalized others."

Coordination Issue

The coordination of action is made possible by the behavioral capacities of mind and self. Not only is society created by role-taking, but it can be changed by the same processes. A society may have a variety of actors, differentiated social situations, a community of attitudes, and the regulation of

actions. People do readjust. Society is maintained by virtue of humans' ability to role-take with each other and to assume the perspective of 'generalized others.' The structure and dynamics of society influence the number, salience, scope, and proximity of "generalized others." Humans readjust.

The Culture of Society

Mead never used the concept of culture in the modern sense of the term. Culture is a system of symbols by which human thought, perception, and action are mobilized and regulated. Humans regulate their conduct in terms of 'generalized others' who embody these communities of attitudes. "Generalized other" refers to those symbol systems of broader cultural systems that regulate perception, thought, and action. Mead's "generalized other" includes norms, values, beliefs, and other regulatory systems of symbols. Individuals with mind and self role-take with varieties of "generalized others." "**Generalized others**" regulate their conduct and coordinate their actions. Mead's conception of society emphasizes the basic nature of processes underlying ongoing social activity. He was not concerned with the details of social structure or components of culture. Regardless of the structure of society, the processes by which society is created, maintained, and changed are the same.

Topic 157: The Act: The Basic Unit of Behavior

The most basic unit of behavior is "the act." The behavior of an individual is nothing more than a series of acts. Acts may be enacted singularly but more often emitted simultaneously. In order to gain insight into the nature of human behavior, it is necessary to comprehend the constituents of behavior, i.e., the "acts."

Basic Assumptions

The basic assumptions are as follows:

- a. Acts are part of a larger life process of organisms adjusting to their environmental conditions.
- b. Human acts are unique due to their capacities for mind and self.
- c. What motivates humans to act?
- d. How does it operate? Or how does the behavior of human organisms with mind and self, operating within society, get initiated and directed?

Mead visualized the act as composed of four stages:

1. The impulse;
2. Perception;
3. Manipulation; and
4. Consummation.

The **four stages** are not entirely discrete, i.e., they blend into each other. Also, they constitute distinctive phases involving somewhat different behavioral capacities. Stages of a given act are not separable from each other or isolated from the stages of another act. Humans can simultaneously be involved in different stages of different acts. Acts vary in length, degree of overlap, consistency, intensity, and other similar states.

Lesson 42

George H. Mead-IV
(Topic 158-163)

Topic 158: Stages of Act: Impulse

There are **four stages** in the act. The stages are: **Impulse, Perception, Manipulation, and Consummation**. In the following paragraphs, each stage is discussed one by one.

1. Impulse: For Mead, an impulse represents a state of disequilibrium or tension between an organism and its environment. The two implicit propositions of impulse are:

- (a) The greater the degree of disequilibrium between an organism and its environment, the stronger the impulse, and the more likely behavior is to reflect this fact,
- (b) The longer an impulse persists, the more it will serve to initiate and guide behavior until it is consumed.

Sources of disequilibrium for an organism are as follows:

- Some impulses come from organic needs that are unfulfilled.
- Others come from interpersonal maladjustments.
- Still others come from self-inflicted reflections.
- Many are a combination of organic, interpersonal, and intra-psychic sources of tension.

The key point here is that impulses initiate efforts at their consummation, giving the behavior of an organism a general direction. Though a state of disequilibrium can be eliminated in many different ways, the specific direction of behavior will be determined by the conditions of the environment. For Mead, humans are not pushed and pulled around by impulses. On the contrary, an impulse is defined in terms of the degree of harmony with the environment. The precise ways it is consummated are influenced by the manner in which an organism is prepared to adjust to its environment. **Hunger, an organic drive, is seen as arising from behavioral adaptations to the environment. The types of foods considered edible, the way they are eaten, and when they can be eaten will be shaped by environmental forces as they impinge on actors with mind and self.** For Mead, impulse initiates behavior and gives it a general direction. The next stage of the act – perception – will determine what aspects of the environment are relevant for eliminating the impulse.

Topic 159: Stages of Act: Perception

Perception: Perception is the act of becoming aware through the senses. What people perceive in their environment is highly selective. One basis for **selective perception is impulse**. People become attuned to objects in their environment that are perceived as relevant to satisfying an impulse. The relevance of objects in eliminating a specific impulse depends on past socialization, self-conceptions, and expectations from others. **For example**, will a hungry person see a cow as a relevant food source? It depends on how they have been sensitized to potential food sources. The process of perception sensitizes an individual to certain objects in the environment, which then become stimuli for behavioral responses. It involves storing permissible responses to stimuli. **Perception is essentially the activation of potential responses to stimuli.** As the organism becomes aware of relevant objects, it also prepares to act in certain ways. Humans approach objects with hypotheses or ideas about how certain responses towards objects can eliminate their discomfort.

Topic 160: Manipulation

The emission of behaviors toward objects is termed manipulation. It is a process of handling in a skillful manner. Humans have a mind and self, therefore they can engage in covert as well as overt manipulation. **Humans can covertly imagine consequences of action toward objects for eliminating an impulse; can manipulate the world; and can imagine the consequences of various lines of action.** But what determines whether manipulation will be covert before it is overt? The key condition is what Mead saw as blockage. Blockage is a condition where the consummation of an impulse is inhibited or delayed. For example, look at breaking a pencil while writing. It creates an impulse or disequilibrium with the environment. It leads to efforts at manipulation. There can be two possible outcomes: one sees a pile of pencils readily available and covertly starts thinking about

finding a pencil. Blockage of the impulse generates conscious imagery, and manipulation becomes overt. When the impulse, perception, and overt manipulation stages of the act do not lead to consummation, thinking occurs and manipulation becomes covert.

We need to utilize the capacities of mind and self. In the case of blockage, an actor immediately starts covert thinking. Thinking is a behavioral adaptation of an organism experiencing disequilibrium with its environment and unable to perceive objects or manipulate behaviors in ways leading to the consummation of an impulse. In the process of thinking, a few things happen such as: an actor comes to perceive relevant objects; the actor may even role-take with the object if it is another individual or a group; self-image may be derived, and one may see self as yet another object; and various lines of conduct are imaginatively rehearsed.

The stage of manipulation involves behavior, feedback, readjustment of behavior, feedback, readjustment. The process continues until an impulse is eliminated. Call it 'cybernetic' having automatic control systems. It requires persistent motivation. Motivation is a process of constant adjustment and readjustment of behaviors to restore equilibrium with the environment. The assumption is that the more often an impulse is blocked, the more it grows in intensity, and the more it consumes the process of thinking and the phases of self.

Topic 161: Consummation

Consummation: Consummation denotes the completion of an act through the elimination of disequilibrium between an organism and its environment. **For any person, there are multiple impulses operating, each at various stages of consummation, and potential points of blockage.** Successful consummation of acts leads to the development of stable behavior patterns. It becomes guidelines for others. **For humans, perception involves seeing physical objects, oneself, others, and various generalized others as part of their environment.** Manipulation for humans with the capacities for mind and self involves overt behavior and covert deliberations. Covertly, individuals weigh alternatives and assess their consequences. Alternatives and consequences are assessed with reference to individuals' conception, the expectations of specific others, and various generalized others. Humans must live and survive in social groups. **Consummation for humans almost always revolves around adaptation to and cooperation with others in ongoing collective enterprises.** The point of blockage at any point determines the strength of a particular stage of the act. Intense impulses are typically those that have been blocked, thereby causing heightened perception. The heightened perception generates greater overt and covert manipulation. If blockage occurs, then perception is further heightened, as are impulses, and the same applies to manipulation. **If manipulation is unsuccessful, escalated covert manipulation ensues, thereby heightened perception and impulse. Humans initiate and direct their actions in an effort to achieve integration into ongoing social processes.**

Topic 162: George H. Mead Summarizing the Contributions

Mead's basic premise of behaviorism is that behaviors that facilitate the adjustment and adaptation of organisms to their environment will be retained. For any individual organism, its environment is society. **The young infant must adjust to society; develop its behavioral capacities for language, role-taking, mind, and self. For the mature individual, the continued use of the fundamental capacities is essential for ongoing adjustment and adaptation to society.** For Mead, the capacities for mind and self are behaviors. These capacities ensure that much of human action will be covert and involve role-taking, reflective thinking, self-criticism, and self-assessment. **Behavioral capacities for mind and self make humans distinctive. Only through interaction by actors with mind and self is society possible.** For a species not organized by instincts, as are ants and bees, the ability to role-take becomes crucial in such interactions. Humans have to learn their behaviors. **Impulses are both caused and constrained by the capacity to role-take as regulated by culture. Cultural constraints on impulses allow for the organization of species into society.** The behavioral abilities facilitate the adjustment and adaptation of the species as a whole to the environment. The acquisition of mind and self enables the individual to adapt to its social

environment. The flexible interactive abilities of individuals with mind and self facilitate the species' adaptation to the environment. **It helps in the creation, maintenance, and change of society.**

Topic 163: Concluding Remarks

The main focus of this perspective has been on discussions of the self, self-interaction, taking the role of others, interpretation, gestures, and symbolic meanings. The discussions in these major areas have emphasized studying processes of interaction between individuals. The methodology primarily used is inductive, qualitative, and geared toward micro-sociological analysis. The perspective is basically socio-psychological. **The results can be described as a “moving picture” rather than a still photograph of human behavior, providing a close-up picture.** This perspective places primary value on subjective meaning and on processes opposed to structure. Researchers take great pains to capture the **“world of the other”** as seen by that other and ask important sociological questions that cannot be answered by mainstream sociology. This perspective does not appear to be a **“mainstream” of sociology.** Nevertheless, many of its core concepts have been accepted. Some interactionists have developed concepts that connect the macro and structural demands of sociology. Symbolic interactionism can be seen as an alternative perspective providing theoretical tools missing in other perspectives. **It follows a distinctive approach that makes important contributions to sociology.** Symbolic interactionism has experienced resurgence recently.

Lesson 43

Symbolic Interactions: Some Basic Principles
(Topic164-165)**Topic 164: Symbolic Interactions: Some Basic Principles**

The number of basic principles of the symbolic interactionist perspective varies. Turner, Beeghley, and Powers have listed 25 basic principles of this perspective under six subheadings: principles of animal action, principles of animal interaction, principles of the emergence of the human mind, principles of the emergence of self, principles of human action and interaction, and principles of human social organization. According to Ritzer, some symbolic interactionists (Blumer, Manis and Meltzer, Rose, and Snow) have tried to enumerate seven basic principles of this perspective.

Ritzer discussed these principles under seven subheadings:

1. **Capacity for thought:** Human beings, unlike lower animals, are endowed with the capacity for thought.
2. **Thinking and interaction:** The capacity for thought is shaped by social interaction.
3. **Learning meanings and symbols:** In social interaction, people learn the meanings and symbols that allow them to exercise their distinctively human capacity for thought.
4. **Action and interaction:** Meanings and symbols allow people to carry out distinctively human action and interaction.
5. **Modification of meanings and action:** People can modify or alter the meanings and symbols they use in action and interaction based on their interpretation of the situation.
6. **Making choices:** People can make these modifications and alterations because, in part, of their ability to interact with themselves, which allows them to examine possible courses of action, assess their relative advantages and disadvantages, and then choose one.
7. **Groups and societies:** The intertwined patterns of action and interaction make up groups and societies.

Topic 165: Capacity For Thought & Thinking And Interaction

Capacity for Thought: The assumption of the human capacity for thought is one of the major contributions of early symbolic interactionists. The crucial assumption is that human beings possess the ability to think. This assumption differentiates symbolic interactionism from its behaviorist roots. The same assumption also provides the basis for the entire theoretical orientation of symbolic interactionism. Individuals in human society were not seen as units that are motivated by external/internal forces beyond their control, or within the confines of a more or less fixed structure. Here humans were viewed as reflective or interacting units which comprise the societal entity. The ability to think enables people to act reflectively. People must often construct and guide what they do, rather than just release it. The ability to think is embedded in the mind. For symbolic interactionists mind is not something physiological like the brain. Brain may be necessary for the emergence of mind but it does not inevitably produce mind. Here mind is a process that is itself part of the larger process of stimulus and response. The mind is related

to virtually every other aspect of symbolic interactionism, including socialization, meanings, symbols, the self, interaction, and even society.

Thinking and Interaction: People have a general capacity for thought that is shaped and refined through social interaction. The focus is on socialization as a specific form of social interaction. The human ability to think is developed during childhood socialization and further refined in adult socialization. This process helps to cultivate the ability to think and develop distinctively human ways of thinking. Humans adapt and shape information according to their own perspectives in this process. Interaction plays a crucial role in both developing and expressing the ability to think. All forms of interaction contribute to refining our thinking abilities. Additionally, thinking influences the interaction process as individuals must consider others and determine how to align their actions with those of others.

Lesson 44

Learning Meanings And Symbols
(Topic 166-167)**Topic 166: Learning Meanings And Symbols**

Symbolic interactionists tend to accord causal significance to social interaction. Meaning stems not from solitary mental processes but from interaction. People learn symbols as well as meanings in social interaction. People respond to signs unthinkingly but respond to symbols in a thoughtful manner. Signs stand for themselves (the gestures of angry dogs). Symbols are social objects used to represent whatever people agree they shall represent. Words, physical artifacts, and physical actions (e.g., the word boat, crescent, cross, a clenched fist) can all be symbols. Language is a vast system of symbols. Words are symbols because they are used to stand for things. Symbols in general and language in particular have a number of specific functions for the actor.

Functions Of Symbols

There are seven functions of symbols, which are discussed below:

- 1. Symbols enable people to deal with the material and social world** by allowing them to name, categorize, and remember the objects they encounter there. In this way, people can order a world that would otherwise be confusing.
- 2. Symbols improve people's ability to perceive the environment.** Instead of being flooded by a mass of indistinguishable stimuli, the actor can be alerted to some parts of the environment rather than others.
- 3. Symbols enhance the ability to think.** Language greatly expands this ability. Thinking, in these terms, can be conceived of as symbolic interaction with oneself.
- 4. Symbols greatly increase the ability to solve various problems.** Actors can think through symbolically a variety of alternative actions before actually taking one.
- 5. The use of symbols allows actors to transcend time, space, and even their own persons.** Through the use of symbols, actors can imagine what it was like to live in the past or what it might be like to live in the future. Actors can also empathize with others.
- 6. Symbols allow us to** imagine a metaphysical reality, such as heaven or hell.
- 7. Symbols enable people** to avoid being enslaved by their environment. They can be active rather than passive—that is, self-directed in what they do.

Topic 167: Action and interaction & Modification of meanings and symbols

Action and Interaction: Meanings and symbols play a crucial role in human action and interaction. The primary focus is on how meanings and symbols impact human behavior. Behavior can be categorized as covert or overt. Covert behavior involves the internal thought process, which includes symbols and meanings, while overt behavior refers to the actual actions performed by individuals. In most cases, human action involves a combination of both covert and overt behavior. Symbolic interactionists are particularly interested in covert behavior as it involves the use of symbols and meanings.

Meanings and symbols give human social action and interaction distinct characteristics. Social action occurs when individuals consider others in their actions, while social interaction involves the symbolic communication of meanings to others. Individuals interpret these symbols and base their responses on their understanding of them. In social interaction, actors engage in a process of mutual influence.

Modification of Meanings and Symbols: Individuals have the ability to modify or change the meanings and symbols they use in action and interaction based on their interpretation of the situation. Symbols and their meanings are created by humans and can be situation-specific. Humans have the capacity to create new symbols and alter the meanings associated with existing symbols. This process of modification and creation of symbols and meanings is ongoing.

Lesson 45

Making choices
(Topic 168-170)**Topic 168: Making choices**

People have the ability to make modifications and alterations by interacting with themselves and considering various courses of action. They evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of different options and make choices based on their assessments. **Humans possess the capacity to interpret meanings and symbols, enabling them to decide on their actions.** They are not bound to accept externally imposed meanings and symbols, as they can create new interpretations based on their own understanding of the situation. Symbolic interactionists believe that individuals have some level of autonomy and can make independent choices, shaping their lives with a unique style. **When individuals perceive situations as real, the consequences of these perceptions are also real.** While society often provides definitions of situations, individuals can also create their own interpretations, allowing them to change and adapt meanings and symbols.

Topic 169: Groups and Societies

The intertwined patterns of action and interaction form groups and societies. Symbolic interactionists are critical of the focus on macro structures by other sociologists. Blumer is at the forefront of those who criticize this "**sociological determinism,**" where social action is seen as a result of external forces rather than individuals interpreting their situations. Traditional sociologists tend to view actors as mindless robots influenced by societal structures, while symbolic interactionists believe actors actively define their situations. Blumer presents a different perspective on large-scale social structures, emphasizing the importance of actors and their actions in society.

Society is defined by human actions, with group life being a complex of ongoing activities. Collective action involves individuals aligning their actions and communicating with each other, leading to joint action. **Blumer acknowledges the emergence of large-scale structures from micro processes, highlighting the flexibility and repetitive nature of joint action guided by pre-established meanings.** While large-scale structures play a role in shaping human action, they do not determine it in symbolic interactionism. People act in situations, not within societal structures. Structures provide conditions and limitations for action, but individuals create and uphold rules through social processes in group life. **Blumer does not view culture and social structure as independent or coercive entities.**

Topic 170: Concluding Remarks

The single most important theory in symbolic interactionism is that of G. H. Mead. Substantively, Mead's theory accords primacy and priority to the social world. It is out of the social world that consciousness, the mind, the self, and so on, emerges. Symbolic interactionism has been criticized for a few things, i.e., **First**, it is criticized because the mainstream of symbolic interactionism has too readily given up on conventional scientific techniques. "Just because the contents of consciousness are qualitative, does not mean that their exterior expression cannot be coded, classified, even counted." Science and subjectivism are not mutually exclusive. **Secondly**, there is vagueness in essential Meadian concepts such as mind, self, I, and me. Basic concepts are confused and imprecise and therefore incapable of providing a firm basis for theory and research. It is difficult to operationalize the concepts. As a result, testable propositions cannot be generated. **Third**, Symbolic interactionism has a tendency to downplay or ignore large-scale social structures. The concept of social structure is necessary to deal with the incredible density and complexity of relations through which episodes of interaction are interconnected. It minimizes the facts of social structure and the impact of the macro-organizational features of society on behavior. **Fourth**, Symbolic interactionism is not sufficiently microscopic. It ignores the importance of factors such as the unconscious and emotions. It ignores psychological factors such as needs, motives, intentions, and aspirations. Psychological factors might impel the actor to act.

Symbolic interactionism has moved in a decidedly micro direction. This is in contrast to at least the

implications of the more integrative title of Mead's "Mind, Self, and Society." Symbolic interactionism has entered a new, "post-Blumerian" age. It is argued that Blumerian theory always had an interest in macro-level phenomena. There are ongoing efforts to synthesize symbolic interactionism with ideas derived from a number of other theories. This "new" symbolic interactionism has "cobbled a new theory from the shards of other theoretical approaches," both micro and macro, trying to redefine Mead's ideas.