

**MASTER OF ARTS
SOCIOLOGY
CENTRE FOR OPEN AND
DISTANCE LEARNING
(CODL)**



**MSO 201: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES
BLOCK II**

**CENTRE FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY (A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)
TEZPUR, ASSAM - 784028
INDIA**

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MSO 201: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES



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TEZPUR UNIVERSITY (A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)

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INDIA

MSO-201: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

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BLOCK II

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UNIT 8: CRITICAL THEORY

UNIT 9: FRANKFURT SCHOOL AND MASS CULTURE

UNIT 10: JURGEN HABERMAS: PUBLIC SPHERE

MODULE IV: CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORIES

UNIT 11: SOCIOLOGY OF PIERRE BOURDIEU

UNIT 12: FOUCAULT'S PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIETY

UNIT 13: ULRICH BECK'S VIEWS ON MODERNITY

UNIT 14: PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This Block comprises of Modules **III** and **IV** of MSO 201: Sociological Theories. **Module III** deals with the Frankfurt School. The module is divided into three units. **Unit 8** will introduce the learners to Critical Theory. The unit will discuss the various themes and the subject matter of Critical Theory. The establishment of the Frankfurt School of thought is further elaborated in **Unit 9** which focuses on the mass culture. **Unit 10** deals with an important critical theorist, Jurgen Habermas and his concept of the Public Sphere.

Module IV is about contemporary social theories. This module will cover thinkers like Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and Ulrich Beck. **Unit 11** explores the sociology of Bourdieu, focusing on his ideas and concepts of structure and agency, habitus and capital. **Unit 12**, on the other hand, will familiarise the learners with Foucault's perspective on society, focusing on the theoretical basis of his works and his concepts of discourse and knowledge/power. **Unit 13** deals with the major contributions of Ulrich Beck on Modernity, focusing on his concept of 'risk society'. **Unit 14** discusses public sociology.

MODULE III: FRANKFURT SCHOOL

UNIT 8: CRITICAL THEORY

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Objectives
- 8.3 Rise of Critical Theory
- 8.4 Themes of Critical Theory
 - 8.4.1 Weber's rationalism and Critical Theory
 - 8.4.2 Georg Simmel's Ideas and Critical Theory
- 8.5 Ideas of Critical Thinkers
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- 8.8 Recommended Readings and References

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Critical theory is considered the outcome of the multi-dimensional works of the thinkers of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. Critical theory has been originated in the philosophies of Kant and Hegel and in Marx's critique of capitalism. Marx's critique pointed out that capitalism exploited and alienated proletariat. Critical theorists also took the idea of rationality given by Weber and Freud's theories of character and desire to make an integrated theory of capitalism and its culture. The encyclopaedia of sociology writes:

They looked at sociology, political science, philosophy, art, literature and cultural studies including film theory and popular culture to fashion a multidisciplinary, multidimensional, dialectical social theory largely concerned with the alienation, domination and commodification and dehumanization in modern societies (Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology, 2007).

Theories are named as critical in the sense that it was a way of understanding realities by apprehension through critical reason; realities, which were not empirically given or reported (Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology, 2007). The thinkers, whose works are named as critical theory, were Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. Herbert Marcuse was a German-born philosopher, who fled from Nazi Germany to the United States in 1934. Max Horkheimer was the director of the University of Frankfurt's Institute for Social Research in the years 1930-1959, which later came to be known as Frankfurt School. Theodor W. Adorno was one of the directors of the Institute from 1953 and remained in the position until his death in 1969. Horkheimer and Adorno came back to Germany after the end of World War II but Marcuse remained there in the United States. In other words, critical theory was used as camouflage term for Frankfurt theorists, who fled from Nazi Germany to the United States in fear of being exposed as communists and Marxian thinkers (Fuchs, 2015).

8.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- Highlight the shortcomings of traditional Marxism;
- Explain the various themes of critical theory;
- Discuss the subject matter of critical theory.

8.3 RISE OF CRITICAL THEORY

In order to understand the critical theory, two factors must be taken into consideration, firstly the then state of Marxist theory and secondly, social conditions of Germany following World War I. Marxist theory retained its position in criticizing capitalism for its nature of the class conflict. Early twentieth century witnessed remarkable changes in the forms of new technologies of mass production, rapid transportation, electronic

communication, and others. Even nationalism and consumerism began to grow, which led to capitalism in a new phase. But Marxist theorists maintained the notion of critique of capitalism, alienation, acquiring surplus value through exploitation and ideologies, which actually disguised its actual operation. World War I was an industrial war which used modern weapons such as battleships, machine guns, tanks and even planes that led to the destruction of humanity and many empires. Weimer government of post-war Germany was relatively weak and not able to create a democratic society and at the same time pay huge reparations imposed by the Versailles Treaty. The social condition of that time was captured in the existential philosophy of Heidegger, the novels of Kafka and Mann, the art of Grosz and the music of Schoenberg (Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology, 2007).

In the mid-1920s some scholars like Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Erich Fromm came together to establish the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt University to examine the existing situation in its context. Their goal was to rethink the Marxian critique of capitalism in the socially and technologically changing world but with the help of Hegel's notion of the movement and promise of reason. Through these new ideas, they wanted to develop an interdisciplinary theory expected to overcome the boundaries of economics, philosophy, sociology and psychoanalysis. They took the step to revive the tradition of Kant's critiques of reason as actively engaging and constructing the world. Germany in 1920s was full of depression and unemployment, frequent conflicts between left and right and even bloody fights in the street. In 1933, when the Nazi party gained political power, the world faced most massive war and unprecedented genocide in its history.

In this context, the Frankfurt School began to investigate destruction and barbarism happened in the most culturally advanced societies in the world; and the thinkers were in sought of finding how and why a situation

like this happened. The research also revealed that how the 'sodomasochistic authoritarian', a certain character type, inclined to follow the powerful mass leader, who promised to bring back old days of the dignity of life and restoration of order in society; this occurs when they consistently face economic hardships and social uncertainty. There at that time the appeal of fascism and its propaganda developed, which was depended on three factors: a) the psychological gratification it gave to the individual b) a reactionary ideology that provided meaning in an increasingly heartless world and c) rituals and social organizations that offered a sense of community. Nazis even influences and dominated the mass media, film and radio for the purpose of spreading propaganda to mobilize the entire population. The ruling classes too supported Hitler against Bolshevism (Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology, 2007). The thinkers were concerned with fascist political propaganda undergoing in Germany at that time. They viewed that 'culture industry', which includes producers of books, films, music and television, served a political function by encouraging then politics of Nazi. The critical thinkers diverted from the traditional Marxian idea of regarding class conflict as the basis of social change. It has been argued that working classes embraced by bourgeois ideologies and captivated by consumer goods, were no more playing as agents of progressive social change. The critical thinkers did not consider the socialist revolution as inevitable or even desirable (Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology, 2007).

The critical thinkers were largely engaged in criticising the various aspect of social and intellectual life, but their ultimate goal was to reveal more accurately the nature of society.

8.4 THEMES OF CRITICAL THEORY

Critical theory has been strongly influenced by Hegel's notion of dialectics for the conciliation of socio-historical oppositions as well as by Marx's theory of economy and society and the limits of Hegel's

“bourgeois philosophy”. It actually provided us with new patterns of social emancipation strategies based on Marxian criticism of capitalist society. The critical theorists are most disturbed by the economic determinists, the mechanistic or mechanical, and Marxists. They do not say directly that economic determinists were wrong in focusing on the economic realm by they should have been concerned with other aspects of social life as well. Thus the critical theory wants to rectify this imbalance by focusing its attention on the cultural realm (Schroyer,1973:33). In addition to attacking other Marxian theories, the critical school critiqued societies, like the former Soviet Union, built ostensibly on Marxian theory. (Marcuse,1958).

Critical theorists also focus on philosophical underpinnings of scientific inquiry, especially positivism. Positivism is depicting the idea that a single scientific method is applicable to all fields of study. Positivists believe that knowledge is inherently neutral. They feel that they can keep human values out of their work. This notion is challenged by critical theory, they rather prefer to focus on human activity as well as on the ways in which such activity affects social structures. They do not accept the idea that the general laws of science can be applied without question to human action. The critiques lead to the view that positivism is inherently conservative, incapable of challenging the existing system. Positivism leads the actor and the social scientists to passivity.

Thus, positivism loses sight of the actors, reducing them to passive entities determined by “natural forces”. The critical theorists are dissatisfied with this notion and hence they declare positivism is inherently conservative, incapable of challenging the existing system. Critical theorists attacked Sociology for making the scientific method as end in itself. In addition, they criticised sociology for accepting the status quo. The critical theorists 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. Sociology does not seriously criticise society, nor does it seek to transcend the contemporary social structure. Because they ignore individual in most of the cases, they are most often seen as unable to say anything meaningful about political changes that could lead to a “just and human society” (Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, 1973: 46).

Most of the critical school’s work is aimed at critiquing modern society and a variety of its components. Whereas much of early Marxian theory aimed specifically at finding out the different sources of economic exploitation, the critical school shifted its orientation to the cultural level in light of what it considers the realities of modern capitalist society by looking at culture as a new form of domination in the realm of modern society. In this way, by retaining its interest in analysing domination, the critical school shifted the locus of domination in the modern world from economy to the cultural realm. According to them, the modern world is likely to be dominated by culture rather than economic elements and thus they focus on cultural repression of the individual in modern society.

Again critical theorists have provided significant criticism at what they call the “culture industry”, the rationalised, bureaucratised structures (for example the television networks) that control modern culture. Interest in the culture industry reflects their concern with the Marxian concept of “superstructure” rather than with the economic base. The culture industry producing what is conventionally called “mass culture”, is defined as the “administered, nonspontaneous, reified, phoney culture rather than the real thing” (Jay, 1973: 216). The critical theorists are worried of two things about the culture industry, first, they are concerned about its falseness. They think of it as a pre-packaged set of ideas mass produced and disseminated to the masses by the media. Second, the critical theorists are disturbed by its pacifying, repressive, and stupefying effect on people (Ritzer, 2011).

8.4.1 Weber's Rationalism and Critical Theory

Weber distinguished between two types of capitalism: capitalism as a general means of making profits occurs in various societies in a different time of history; and modern rational capitalism, this is the modern economic system of the West. In modern rational capitalism, economic activities are constantly measured to see the costs and benefits and the social and economic life of the people maintains an orderly way through the mechanisms of prediction and calculation of economic activities.

People in modern society enjoy and exercise their freedom from all forms of irrationalities created by religious beliefs and the traditional authority but Weber saw the two folded cost of this rationality. According to Weber, there was a source of meaning and understanding of life even in arbitrary activities or irrationality of religious beliefs. But rationality in modern society produces 'disenchantment of the world' and creates a culture, which rejected magic and mystery and this rationality seems to make life itself meaningless. Secondly, modern society is definitely free from dangers of control and domination under kings and aristocrat regimes but a new constraint in the form of reason or rationality has appeared as a danger. He argued that individuals enjoy less freedom under the rationally organized principles of modern society. These ideas of the meaninglessness of life and constraining force produces by rationality are the major themes that influenced the critical thinkers that are members of Frankfurt School (Sharrock, Hughes & Martin, 2003)

8.4.2 Georg Simmel's Ideas and Critical Theory

Critical thinkers also took the ideas of Georg Simmel's notion of the 'tragedy of culture'. For Simmel, the social life of human being depends on the production of culture and culture becomes external and public or objective area of social life; with this culture human being able to communicate and interact. So, culture actually represents the externalization or objectification of internal or subjective phenomena

because cultural objects are the products of human minds. Thus, cultural forms act as an objective force, which is actually the product of subjectivity and again these objects are subjectively internalized. Simmel considered language as constraining force. Language, the most essential and indispensable basis of human society can be coercive as it distorts and constraint not only utterances but also the innermost intention of human being. Language, a particular form of culture though creates by the human mind in its process of objectification act as a constraint on the way of thinking of human due to certain forces like concepts, ideas and modes of expression, which deny all alternatives and possibilities. Simmel pointed out that cultural product tends to alienate the people, which according to him 'tragedy of culture'. All cultural objects include gods, the state, language, the market and so on created by humans for their interest, which has gradually appeared as independent objects in existence and ultimately dominates their creators. However, alienation has remained one of the central themes for Simmel (Sharrock, Hughes & Martin, 2003).

Simmel discussed social and cultural phenomena in terms of "forms" and "contents" with a transient relationship :form becoming content, and vice versa, dependent on the context. Both Simmel and Weber's non positivist theory would inform the eclectic critical theory of Frankfurt School.

8.5 IDEAS OF CRITICAL THEORY

Members of Frankfurt School like Simmel sought to understand the parts of culture or elements of culture in relation to the totality of culture. Both Simmel and the Frankfurt School argued that the objective knowledge of society as a totality is not possible. The critical thinker's perspective of analysing social life clearly diverted from orthodox Marxism. The school expanded the Marxism's focus from activities of commodity production and exploitation to all aspects of contemporary culture, which they

believe as the source of analysing the nature of modern society. The thinkers rejected the idea that there can be one objective account of social change, which appeared in orthodox Marxism. They didn't accept the historical materialism as a 'grand narrative' for understanding the various stages of human society. Historical materialism provided a unified set of rules for change and development in society (Sharrock, Hughes & Martin, 2003).

Critical theory was not a different theory rather it wanted to offer a way of thinking. Adorno formulated the contrast between 'identity thinking' and 'non-identity thinking' in his dialectics inherited from Hegel. Identity thinking refers to the idea that the gap between thought and reality can be bridged and the mind can fully know the nature of reality. Non-identity thinking doesn't accept the fact that thought can fully grasp the reality. There are many aspects of reality, which may not exist presently but there is a possibility of appearing these aspects in another situation. The 'non-identity thinking' opposes the idea that unity of thought and reality can be attained through thought. The development of thought is linked to the development of social reality. Social reality itself remains in the contradictory state, so thought cannot be integrated and contradiction-free. Thus, theory alone cannot solve the problem of contradiction in social reality. There must be a philosophy to guide people in overcoming the contradiction that exists in reality (Sharrock, Hughes & Martin, 2003).

Horkheimer and Adorno in their book, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, published in 1942 made use of Weber's rationalization in understanding the effect of rationality in modern capitalist society. They pointed out that capitalism was maintained less by coercion and control but more by rational principles, which maintain all the affairs of the administration in a capitalist society. In Weberian terms rationality in capitalist society signifies progressive substitution of 'instrumental rationality' for 'value

rationality'. Though capitalism brought progress in society, liberation has remained limited for the business class and concentration only given on capital. Enlightenment, that offered by capitalism was justified by using one particular form of reason, means-ends rationality. The dialectic of enlightenment exposed the one-sidedness of the rationality in a capitalist society and argued that rationality in capitalist society brought progress but another side of it has also been ignored; it further strengthened the administrative regulation on individual lives. The reason and authority maintain a close link in modern capitalist society. The dialectic enlightenment portrayed reason as a servant of authority in modern capitalism. The change from traditional to modern society was not actually the liberation from domination rather it was a replacement of traditional authority with rational administrative authority. So domination still persists; just there was a shift from subjection to irrational traditional authority to subjection to organized administrative based authority. There is an impression that rationality enhanced the individual freedom but actually, it acts like a manipulative force for individuals because individuals depend on rationally organized authority and remained unaware regarding their potential to become truly autonomous (Sharrock, Hughes & Martin, 2003).

Thus, critical theory's major concerns are rationality, the cultural industry and the knowledge industry. And one other most important concern is their interest in ideology. By ideology, the critical thinkers mean the idea systems, often false and obfuscating, produced by societal elites. All these specific aspects of the superstructure and the critical school's orientation to them can be subsumed under the heading "critique of domination" (Agger, 1978; Schroyer, 1973). This interest in domination was at first stimulated by fascism in the 1930s and 1940s, but it has shifted to a concern with domination in capitalist society. The modern world has reached a state of unsurpassed domination of individuals. In fact, the control is so complete, that it no longer requires deliberate actions on the part of the leaders. The

control pervades all aspects of the cultural world and more important is internalised in the actor. In effect, actors have come to dominate themselves in the name of the larger social structure. Domination has reached such a complete stage that it no longer appears to be domination at all. Because domination is no longer perceived as personally damaging and alienating, it often seems as if the world is the way it is supposed to be.

Another critical school's concern at the cultural level is with what Habermas (1975) called legitimisation. These can be defined as systems of ideas generated by the political system, and theoretically by any other system, to support the existence of the system. They are designed to “mystify” the political system, to make it unclear exactly what is happening.

In addition to such cultural interest, critical school is also concerned with actors and their consciousness and what happens to them in the modern world. The consciousness of the masses came to be controlled by external forces (such as the cultural industry). As a result of which, the masses fail to develop revolutionary consciousness.

8.6 SUMMING UP

Critical theory was not a particular theory. Critical theory is actually the thinking of the scholars who were associated with the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. The works of these scholars are popularly known as Frankfurt School of thought. The scholars used Marxism as their starting point to undertake more relevant ideas in the post-Marxist period. Critical theory mainly focused on the capitalist culture but analysed it in a way different from orthodox Marxists. In short critical theory was diverted its attention from the economic determinism of Marxism to all the other socio-cultural aspects of modern society. Critical theory also took the idea of Weber's rationalism in order to

understand the nature of domination in modern capitalist society. The members of Frankfurt School argued that rationalization actually dominates people more than traditional principles.

8.7 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the ideas of Marxism for which the critical thinkers are ignored by orthodox Marxist.
2. How do the critical thinkers re-examine the Marxist idea of economic base of capitalist society?
3. Discuss the situation which mainly influenced the scholars of Frankfurt School to extend Marxism against its traditional way.
4. How do the critical thinkers extend the Marxist idea of alienation in the micro level that is individual's alienation in modern rational society?

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UNIT 9: FRANKFURT SCHOOL: MASS CULTURE

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Objectives
- 9.3 Frankfurt School of Thought
- 9.4 Mass Culture
 - 9.4.1 Mass Media and Mass Culture
- 9.5 Summing up
- 9.6 Questions
- 9.7 Recommended Readings and References

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The Frankfurt School refers to collective works of some scholars and intellectuals, who had a wide range of interests. These scholars came to be known as Frankfurt School because many of them were associated with the Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. The Institute founded in 1923 and members consist of mostly Jewish scholars, who exiled from Germany to the US in 1933 to get rid of the Nazi regime. These scholars later returned to Frankfurt in 1949. The founder of the institute was Felix Weil, son of a wealthy grain merchant. He was motivated by socialist ideals and it was found that socialist ideals are perfect for organizing economic life effectively. So he made his mind to regenerate Marxism in order to provide a basis for the revolutionary transformation of society. Weil wanted to establish a forum of debate to analyses the relationship between Marxism and practical political action free from the control and influence of both bourgeois academia and communist party. The institute undertook interdisciplinary research and took the idea of Marxism, the historical context of cultural meaning.

Carl Grunberg, a Marxist professor was the first director of the institute, who focused on Marxism and materialist conception of history. After his retirement, Max Horkheimer became the director and shifted the focus of the institute from labour history to theoretical and philosophical study. During Horkheimer's time, many scholars contributed to the work of the Frankfurt School and became members or associates of the institute. These scholars included economists such as Leo Lowenthal, who worked on the critique of bourgeois ideology and mass culture. Erich Fromm, a psychoanalyst mixed the Marxism and Freudian ideas and analysed how class influences people's psychic structure and political views. Fredrich Pollock, an economist who developed the analysis of 'state capitalism'. Apart from Max Horkheimer, two other scholars namely Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse contributed to the development of the Frankfurt School of thought (Sharrock, Hughes & Martin, 2003).

9.2 OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe the establishment of Frankfurt School of thought;
- Explain the themes of critical theory;
- Discuss mass culture and its nature in modern capitalist society.

9.3 FRANKFURT SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

The thought of the scholars associated with the Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt came to be known as critical theory. These scholars re-examined and revaluated the critique of capitalism by Marxists. They wanted to interpret the failure of Marxist's anticipation of a socialist society in different parts of the world. There are mainly four themes upon which critical theory or thought of Frankfurt thinker is based.

Critique of positivism: Horkheimer and Marcuse rejected the idea of considering sociology as a science and believe that positivism analyses human behaviour just like the matter of nature. Positivism is very deterministic in its study of society and human behaviour. Positivism treats people as things and tries to explain their behaviour on the basis of the cause-effect relationship. It legitimizes and promotes the domination and suppression of science. Technological, economic and political activities are legitimized with the help of scientific explanation and rationality. The ruling elites are using science to legitimize their control and domination over people. Science is not performing the role of presenting a philosophical debate about right and wrong decision on nuclear weapons, chemical pollutants or space research. Science just serves for its powerful users or decision makers to apply and exercise power no matter whether it is right or wrong for humanity. In contrast to positivism, Horkheimer propounded ‘dialectical theory’ to critically analyse the basis of reason and liberating force.

Positivism is opposed by the critical thinkers on various grounds. For one thing, positivism tends to reify the social world and see it as a natural process. The critical theory prefers to focus on human activity as well as on the ways in which such activity affects larger social structures. In short, positivism loses sight of the actors (Habermas,1971), reducing them to passive entities determined by “ natural forces”. Given their belief in the distinctiveness of the actor, the critical theorists would not accept the ideas that the general laws of science can be applied without question to human action. Positivism is assailed for being content to judge the adequacy of means toward given ends and for not making a similar judgement about ends. Thus, the critiques lead to the view that positivism is inherently conservative, incapable of challenging the existing system.

New form of domination in advanced societies: Members of Frankfurt School considered that individuals in modern society are more constrained by the forces like techno-rationality, and techno-rationality is the basis of modern social systems such as capitalistic or communist and democratic or totalitarian. The science and technology seems to be progressive and liberating for individuals but actually, it creates a different form of constraint that is rationality. Like Weber, Horkheimer and Marcuse were doubtful over people's ability to understand the actual potential to resist such domination. Marcuse in his book, 'One Dimensional Man' argued that the two main classes in capitalist societies have disappeared as effective historical agents. There is no class domination but domination by scientific and technological rationality; and working class is disintegrated and got rationalized by mass consumption and production process.

Thus, the critical theory is not only shaped by Marxian theory but also by Weberian theory, and on the basis of which they said that in modern society the repression produced by rationality has replaced economic exploitation as the dominant social problem. The critical school has clearly adopted Weber's differentiation between formal rationality and substantive rationality: or what the critical theorists think of as a reason. For them, formal rationality is concerned unreflectively with the question of the most effective means for achieving any given purpose. (Tar, 1977). This is viewed as "technocratic thinking", in which the objective is to serve the forces of domination, not to emancipate people from domination. The goal is simply to find the most efficient means to whatever ends are defined as important by those in power. Technocratic thinking is contrasted to reason, which is in the minds of critical theorists, the hope for society. Reason involves the assessment of means in terms of the ultimate human values of justice, peace, and happiness. (Ritzer, 2011)

Analysis of culture industry: Modern capitalist society is characterized by mass culture, which reduced the individuals to the members of mass. In the 20th century capitalist society, culture industries were the most significant developments that emerged. Horkheimer and Adorno conceived the repressive role of culture industry over individual's life and individuals are not aware of their potential. Culture industry created the capitalist rationality, pseudo-individualism, standardization and commodification. It is written about the culture industry:

"The culture industry had a major part to play in encouraging this 'adjustment' of individuals to a situation which did not satisfy their 'real' needs, but left them, nonetheless, feeling content with- from the School's point of view- grossly inadequate substitutes for real human satisfaction" (Slattery, 1991). So it was critical thinker's criticism of culture in modern society by coining the term 'culture industry'. There are rationalized and bureaucratized structures that control modern culture. Ritzer writes:

"The culture industry, producing what is conventionally called "mass culture," is defined as the "administered . . . nonspontaneous, reified, phony culture rather than the real thing".

The critical thinkers were very much concerned about the culture industry for two reasons. Firstly, for its falseness, what critical thinkers considered it as a pre-packaged set of ideas, produced to disseminate to the masses by the media. Secondly, for its pacifying, repressive, and stupefying effect on people (Ritzer, 2011).

The decline of Individuality in modern society: Horkheimer and Adorno were very pessimistic about the actual liberty of the individual. Modern society is very much regularized by rationality and ultimately individual's autonomy gets compromised. Adorno in his study, *The Authoritarian Personality*, analysed the personality traits that helped to raise fascism, aggressive rationalism and racial prejudice. This

personality was characterised by rigidity and stereotypical and superstitious thinking and blind in action. This type of personality is apt for submission to any authority.

One main positive focus of critical theory is an interest in dialectics. At the most general level, a dialectical general approach means a focus on the social totality. No partial aspect of social life and no isolated phenomenon may be comprehended unless it is related to the historical whole, to the social structure conceived as a global entity. (Connerton, 1976:12). This approach involves the rejection of a focus on any specific aspect of social life, especially the economic system, outside of its broader context. This approach also means a concern with the interrelation of the various levels of social reality, most importantly, individual consciousness, the cultural superstructure, and the economic structure. The critical theorists also think on this line and are also oriented to think about the future, but following Marx's lead they refuse to be utopian: rather they focus on criticising the changing contemporary society (Alway, 1995). However, instead of directing their attention to society's economic structure as Marx had done, they concentrate on its cultural superstructure. Their dialectical approach commits them to work in the real world. In this way, we arrive at another aspect of the concerns of the critical thinkers, the liberation of humankind (Marcuse, 1964:222).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. Name three scholars associated with the Frankfurt school of thought.

2. What are the four main themes upon which critical theory is based?

9.4 MASS CULTURE

The technological, economic and political changes transformed the society into urban industrial, in which new popular culture captured the urban masses. A market economy with mass production and consumption emerged and simultaneously, the commercialization of leisure activities began to grow. Mass culture accelerated in the 20th century due to the development of popular magazines, radio, cinema, sound recordings, advertising and television began to stimulate intellectual discourses. However, the criticism of mass culture began to develop by 1930s with the critical analysis from socialist ideology by the scholars of Frankfurt School. These scholars experienced numbers of events, which placed obstacles and challenged the idea of establishing a rational and humane social order. The capitulation of working classes to the militaristic nationalism of the First World War, the failure of post-war revolutionary activity in Germany, the degeneration of the Russian revolution into bureaucracy and repression and the rise of fascism were considered as the failure of socialist theory and practice. Further capitalism in the Western world gradually evolved into a stabilized and organized economic institution. Thus, the failure of socialist ideology and the stability of capitalism made the members of Frankfurt School reevaluate and revise the Marxism. Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and others of Frankfurt School pointed out that commercial culture and mass media are the major institution of ideological domination and control in capitalist society. The most prominent ideas regarding mass culture are found in Horkheimer and Adorno's essay, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" and Adorno's work,

“Culture Industry Reconsidered” (Blanke, http://www.progressivelibrariansguild.org/PL/PL06_07/030.pdf).

Mass culture projects the idea that it fulfils the requirement of enlightenment in capitalist society. It shows how people are free from domination and individualized. It also put forward the advantage of ‘free market capitalism’, which made the individual free from the state’s control, individuals have become free consumer to make choices and made individual as free and sovereign. But Frankfurt School pointed out that an individual’s choice is restricted and superficial in modern society (Sharrock, Hughes & Martin, 2003). Adorno coined the term culture industry instead of mass culture to reveal the nature of mass culture in modern capitalist society.

According to Adorno, mass culture is used to undermine the masses and aims to serve the ruling classes. Adorno conceived and regarded mass culture as an ideology, i.e. it functions as an ideology or a part of an ideology. It has two characteristics: fraudulence and manipulateness. The former refers to the disguised nature of mass culture in convincing the mass regarding the usefulness of the cultural objects and ideology never imposed on mass rather it made them accept willingly. Manipulateness refers to the purpose of mass culture to maintain the existing social, economic and political order. Culture industry engages masses in leisure activities or amusements to relive them off from stressful tasks and exhaustion in rationalized and mechanized system. Culture industry provides the entertainment to masses in free time and they become unable to think about their exploitation in their free time. Gradually masses lose their ability to think critically. So, mass culture works as ‘social cement’ in building and maintaining the capitalist system (Zhen, 2016).

Stop and Read:

Culture Industry

At the time of their movement from Nazi Germany to the United States, members of the Frankfurt School experienced the rise of mass culture includes media culture involving film, popular music, radio, television, and other. In the United States, they found that media production was a particular form of commercial entertainment under the control of large and popular corporate houses. Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno developed the idea of "culture industry" to highlight the industrialization and commercialization of culture under capitalist relations of production. The critical theorists interpreted the culture in capitalist society in the context of industrial production; the features of culture industries are similar to the mass production of other commodities with the help of commodification, standardization, and massification. However, the culture industries had been playing a specific function that is providing ideological legitimation of the existing capitalist societies and life of the masses in it. The Frankfurt school aimed to understand the technology and culture and the way technology was becoming a major force of production and formative mode of social organization and control.

Herbert Marcuse in his article, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," argued that *"technology in the contemporary era constitutes an entire mode of organizing and perpetuating (or changing) social relationships, a manifestation of prevalent thought and behaviour patterns, an instrument for control and domination"*. The technological mass culture moulded individuals towards

conforming the dominant patterns of thought and behaviour, which acted as powerful instruments of social control and domination. (Kellner, accessed from <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/>).

9.4.1 Mass Media and Mass Culture

Earlier there was a distinction between high culture and folk culture, i.e. the culture of elite and culture of common folk. With the development of industrialization and technology, mass media prospered and gradually moulded the mass or common people. Common people or masses began to be the mass customer of mass-produced cultural products and got satisfied with falling-price. The development of mass media and objects of mass culture led to the practice of debates among intellectuals regarding the mass society, which has been affected by mass media and mass culture. Media determinism believes that mass media changes everything in society and even some scholars viewed that media technology alone determines the changes rather than contents of media. Marshall McLuhan stated that medium is the message, which means media technology determines culture, not the contents.

In early 19th century, Matthew Arnold, a cultural theorist in Britain argued that *“by consuming media products, people could become refined or cultured”*. Arnold’s argument implied that media functions to educate the masses and failed to point out the entertainment aspect of media. For him, media referred to the high culture media from Western Europe such as painting, ballet, opera and the symphony. In the 20th century, mass media reached the inner aspects of society and people got alienated and isolated from their traditional cultural life. Theodore Adorno argued that *“mass-produced cultural products of low quality replaced high culture and traditional folk culture”* (Zhen, 2016). According to Frankfurt School, mass media in a capitalist society is commercialized like other

commodities and there is little difference between commercialized media and other commodities. Mass media resembles with other commodities because both are the objects of making profit and maximization of profit in the capitalist society. Due to this fact, mass media have to be dependent on capital for their operation and they ensure the capital through sponsorship from various enterprises and corporate houses. In this context, the independence of mass media is conceived as an illusion for common people. Adorno and Horkheimer stated in their book, *The Dialectics of the Enlightenment* that mass media are responsible for the progress of capitalism as a mike for the governments.

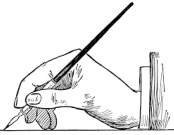
According to the Frankfurt School, the nature of mass media is hegemonic and hegemony functions more effectively in maintaining the stability of capitalist culture and society though it is non-violent (Zhen, 2016). There are four reasons listed by Frankfurt School behind the hegemonic power and influence of media. Hegemonic mass media is used by the message makers in the process of communication, who are the privileged elite class and masses are just powerless passive message receiver (Zhen, 2016).

- a) Mass media make the masses perplex about the difference between reality and art. The masses often unable to differentiate and develops illusion instead of a sensible understanding of reality and art (Zhen, 2016).
- b) Masses usually lose their ability of free thinking due to the influence and control of mass media. Mass media even influence the political and economic aspects of society and turns these into the cultural domain, which leads to control the individual consciousness. Adorno argued that *the mass concepts are a manipulated internalization of the 'orders' from mass media*. Marcuse had the view that mass media eradicate the intellectual

and human diversity and ultimately mould the “*one-dimensional man*” (Zhen, 2016).

- c) The masses act unconsciously according to the direction of ruling elites under the control of mass media because mass media preaches the culture of capitalism. In Frankfurt School’s view, mass media leads to the “end of individuality” because desires, thoughts and behaviours of the masses have been homogenized due to the dissemination of mass media (Zhen, 2016).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	<p>1. Who coined the term ‘culture industry’?</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>2. Why does Adorno regard mass culture as an ideology?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>3. Who wrote the book <i>The Dialectics of the Enlightenment</i>?</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>4. What do you mean by the statement, “medium is the message”?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>

9.5 SUMMING UP

The Frankfurt School was a school of thought of those scholars, who were exiled from Germany to the US. The scholars had a wide range of interests and their collective thoughts came to be known as Frankfurt School because many of them were associated with the Institute of Social

Research at the University of Frankfurt. The scholars included Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and other. Their thoughts have been popularly known as critical theory. Critical theorists coined their study with the Marxian critique of capitalism but pointed out the failure of socialist theory in modern capitalist society. Frankfurt School thought was mostly inclined towards Hegelian philosophy than orthodox Marxism. They coined the idea of the culture industry in course of their analysis of capitalism in the United States and subsequently in other societies. For them, culture industry functions as means of legitimization of capitalist domination and hegemony. Members of the Frankfurt School also highlighted the mass media in order to understand the influence of mass culture on masses. Mass media has been considered a weapon of capitalists and political elites to maintain their power and domination. Mass culture actually manipulates the masses regarding their choice of the objects of culture and traditions.

9.6 QUESTIONS

1. What is Frankfurt School of thought?
2. What conditions made the members of Frankfurt School interpret Marxism out of its conventional method?
3. Write a note on mass media.
4. How did culture industry develop in capitalist society?
5. What is the influence of culture industry over the masses in the modern capitalist society?
6. Mass media and mass culture legitimize the hegemony of capitalism. Explain the statement.

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UNIT 10: JURGEN HABERMAS: PUBLIC SPHERE

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Objectives
- 10.3 Basis of Habermas' Theories
- 10.4 Public and Public Sphere
- 10.5 Development of Public Sphere
- 10.6 Public Sphere: A Discussion
- 10.7 Summing Up
- 10.8 Questions
- 10.9 Recommended Readings and References

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Jurgen Habermas belongs to the second generation intellectuals of Frankfurt School. His works are considered as neo-conflict theory, which has not been established as a distinct theory but it is applied to the analysis of Marxian legacy in any sociological study. Habermas was concerned with reformulating Marxian theory in the light of post-modern society. For this, he followed his predecessors from Frankfurt School. Habermas was carrying forward the Frankfurt School thought or critical theory. He was a research assistant of Adorno in Post-war Germany. Habermas shared much of the Frankfurt thinker's tradition of philosophy. The main focus of Frankfurt School was on establishing the interrelation between the appearance of reason and the dominance of techno-scientific rationalization. For them, rationalization was used to eradicate the social barbarism and mass exploitation of people under Nazism and Fascism in Europe and to degenerate the Russian revolution into Stalinism. The societal background of the writings of Frankfurt

School was thus the great depression, Nazism and Soviet Communism which affected their writings in the later period. Habermas developed the different theoretical and sociological perspective to analyse the same context. His political idea was different from the leftist or communist ideology of then Frankfurt Scholars; in post-war Germany Habermas opposed the idea of emerging democracy and constitutionalism as well as student protests and new social movements spreading over Europe and United States during the 1960s. Habermas attempted to reformulate social theory by focusing on language in general and communication in particular. He made the language as the central focus of his social theory like other European scholars of the post-war period like Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida. But his analysis of language and central concern for language was quite different from them which gave the critical theory a new direction. He thus presented an analysis of language as a means to understand the power of rationality in everyday life. The key themes of his social theory are language, communication and rationality (Elliott, 2009). Habermas's analysis of everyday life and the public sphere of life is the main highlight of this chapter.

10.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- Analyse Habermas' study of public sphere;
- Explain his fundamental ideas;
- Discuss the impact of modern welfare state and capitalism on public sphere;
- Analyse the transformation of public sphere.

10.3 BASIS OF HABERMAS' THEORIES

Habermas wanted to present a reconstruction of historical materialism. He took Marx's basic ideas in his study though he was a bit different in

his approach from Marx. Habermas stated that Marx failed to distinguish between analytically distinct components of species-being; one is work, which he regarded as purposive-rational action and other is social interaction or communicative action. Habermas pointed out that Marx ignored the communicative action and emphasized only on work or labour. He says: "I take as my starting point the fundamental distinction between work and interaction" (Ritzer, 2011). Habermas divided the purposive-rational action into instrumental action and strategic action. When an individual act rationally to attain a goal by employing calculative means, it is called instrumental action. On the other hand, coordinated purposive-rational action of two or more individuals to reach a goal is called strategic action. But Habermas was interested in communicative action. Ritzer put Habermas's view on communicative action:

"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 success; they pursue their individual goals under the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions". The objective of purposive-rational action is to achieve goal but the objective of communicative action is to achieve communicative understanding (Ritzer, 2011).

Thus, according to Habermas in communicative action, the actors are not engaged in some pre-planned strategies on how to carry out their communication. It is not strategic as well as not oriented towards becoming the winner, means it is not success oriented or we can say that the actor is not pre-decided that he must be the winner at the end of the discussion. Rather he will gain an understanding and will harmonise his plan on what to say or what not to say on the basis of the common situation that will arise during their discussion. Communicative action is


not oriented to defeat the other, rather it aims at reaching into a point of common understanding.

Habermas also took the Weberian idea of rationalization. For both Marx and Weber, rationalization of purposive-rational action has created the problem in modern society. Habermas stated the need of rationalization of communicative action, which can make communication free from domination. Thus rationalization of communicative action for Habermas refers emancipation that is *removing restrictions on communication* (Ritzer, 2011).

Thus, Habermas's key point of departure from Marx is to agree that communicative action, not purposive-rational action (work), is the most distinctive and most pervasive human phenomenon. It (not work) is that foundation of all socio-cultural life as well as all the human sciences. Whereas Marx was led to focus on work, Habermas is led to focus on communication.

One of the prominent works of Habermas was the analysis of the public sphere. In his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas contradicted with the bourgeois public sphere, which has been manifested as space of exhibiting liberal ideals. Habermas took the critical reconstructive method of formal pragmatics in order to develop a more secure basis of the normative conception of the public sphere.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	<p>1. Name a book written by Habermas.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>2. What do you mean by instrumental action and strategic action?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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10.4 PUBLIC AND PUBLIC SPHERE

The words 'public' and 'public sphere' has multiple simultaneous meanings in their usage. These words have originated through various historical phases. At one point in time, these words got mixed due to their use in a bourgeois society that is industrially advanced and social – welfare state. In Habermas' words, ordinary language (bureaucratic and mass media jargon) and even the sciences like Jurisprudence, Political science and Sociology are seemed not capable of replacing traditional categories like, "public" and "private", "public sphere" and "public opinion" with any precise term. The word 'public' is used for events and occasions happens openly and allows access to all. But the term 'public building' does not refer to the building of general access rather it means house of state institutions. Habermas says "the state is the public authority".

State's attribute of being public is due to the duty of promoting common good and welfare of its members. The word 'public' again gives another meaning when we say public reception. It is the display of representation, whose publicity contains public recognition. There is not much affinity of above-mentioned usages with the expressions like, 'public opinion', 'an outraged' or 'informed public', 'publicity', 'publish' and 'publicize'. Habermas writes: *"The subject of this publicity is the public as carrier of public opinion; its function as a critical judge is precisely what makes the public character of proceedings—in court, for instance—meaningful"*. Mass media has changed the meaning of publicity. Actually, publicity has been the function of public opinion but now it has become an attribute of whatever attracts public opinion. Habermas writes: *"The public sphere itself appears as a specific domain_ the public domain versus the private"*. He pointed out that in many cases, the public appears as a particular aspect of public opinion against authorities.

According to the circumstances, either the organs of the state or the media like press may become 'public organs' (Habermas, 1989).

Thus, Habermas defined the public sphere as a virtual or imaginary community which does not necessarily exist in any identifiable space. In its ideal form, the 'public sphere is "made up of private people gathered together as public and articulating the needs of society with the state."' Though acts of assembly and dialogue, the public sphere generates opinions and attitudes which serve to affirm or challenge, therefore, to guide the affairs of state. In ideal terms, the public sphere is the source of public opinion needed to legitimate authority in any functioning democracy' (Habermas, 1989).

10.5 DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC SPHERE

The sociological distinction between the public sphere and private life has been the prime focus and fundamental theme of Habermas's social theory from the very beginning of his works. Habermas's most acclaimed work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society* presented the historical study of the emergence of a different kind of 'public opinion'. The core interests of Habermas reflected in this study were a public sphere and institutional structures, bourgeois society and social transformation. Habermas in his study highlighted the notion of the public sphere in the life of the polis in classical Greece. In Greece, public domain formed as a dialogical arena, a place where individuals used to involve in public discourse and debate over common issues of interest.

According to Habermas, bourgeois public sphere was raised from a diverse forum of public discussion like newspapers, weekly journals and clubs, which were prevalent in the cities of early modern Europe. The educated elites used newspapers and journals to express their ideas, engaged in debate and discussions on the political authority and the state.

The social basis of this public domain was originated from the debate and discussion over the ideas and ideologies in the coffee houses, lodges and literary salons of early 18th century Europe and these led to the development of critical debate in the later period. It was pointed out that the industrially advanced and democratic societies manifested gradual extinction of critical aspects of the public sphere. Commercialization of media has been seen by Habermas as a source of change of bourgeois public sphere as a forum for criticizing policies and decision-making process. The public sphere has been diminishing due to the rapid expansion of capitalism and mass consumption of capitalist culture. The bureaucratic capitalist society has been causing the erosion of everyday life and reducing the public sphere and even influenced the broader cultural tradition (Elliott, 2009). Anthony Elliott writes:

As Habermas concludes, 'today the conversation itself is administered'. The privatized reception of media communication is such that it may be pointless to speak of robust public sphere at all, which in turn lies at the core of the urgency of Habermas' attempt to reconstruct critical social theory (Elliott, 2009).

10.6 PUBLIC SPHERE: A DISCUSSION

Habermas in his study of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* published in 1962, presented the contradiction of various forms of an active, participatory bourgeois public sphere in the era of liberal democracy. According to him, with a privatized form of politics in a bureaucratic industrial society, the media and elites controlled the public sphere. His book focused on two important themes, analysis of the historical genesis of the bourgeois public sphere and an account of the structural change of the public sphere in the changing society of contemporary era. He says that due to the rise of state capitalism, culture industries and corporate houses were developed. In this changed society of the contemporary era, the public sphere has been taken over by big

economic and governmental organizations and peoples are just turned to passive consumers of goods, services, political administration, and spectacles. Habermas gave the idea, "bourgeois public sphere" based on the analysis of changes and development that happened in Britain, France, and Germany in the late 18th and 19th century, and then he analysed its degeneration in the 20th century.

In Habermas's view, the bourgeois public sphere started to appear around 1700. Bourgeois public sphere was considered by Habermas as:

"Mediation between the private concerns of individuals in their familial, economic, and social life contrasted to the demands and concerns of social and public life. This involved mediation of the contradiction between bourgeois and citizen, to use terms developed by Hegel and the early Marx, overcoming private interests and opinions to discover common interests and to reach societal consensus".

The public sphere consisted of organs of information and political debate such as newspapers and journals, as well as institutions of political discussion such as parliaments, political clubs, literary salons, public assemblies, pubs and coffee houses, meeting halls, and other public spaces where the socio-political discussion took place.

It has described that the public sphere is a space of institutions and practices between the private interests of everyday life in civil society and the realm of state power. The "bourgeois public sphere" consisted of social spaces where individuals gathered to discuss their common public affairs and to organize against arbitrary and oppressive forms of social and public power. The public sphere can be seen as "a theatre in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk and a realm of social life in which public opinion can be formed" (Asen,1999).

The principles of public sphere constitute an open discussion on collective and general issues, which use discursive argumentation to ensure the interests of the common people and public. In this sense, the public sphere requires freedom of speech, assembly, press, participation in political debate and decision making. Habermas stated that after the revolution occurred for the establishment of democracy, the public sphere got institutionalized in constitutional orders. This institutionalization of public sphere ensured the political rights and led to the establishment of the judicial system, which had the aim of maintaining mediation between individuals or groups or between individuals and groups and the state.

Habermas argued that a “re-feudalization” of the public sphere began occurring in the late 19th century. The transformation caused the disappearance of the gap between private interests and political interests. The corporate houses emerged as a powerful agency to manipulate and control the media and state. It was the political function of private interests. The state emerged as controlling agency, as it began to influence and interfere in the private domain and everyday life of the people. Thus, it has resulted into creating a difference between state and civil society, where the gap between public and private sphere was eroded. The citizens became mere consumers when public sphere began to decline and concern for common interests was undermined by private gratification. According to Habermas, public opinion in the bourgeois public sphere was formed by political debate and consensus, whereas, public opinion in the degraded public sphere of welfare state guided by capitalism is determined by political, economic and media elites. Kellner stated the Habermas’s description about the transformation of the public sphere:

A transition from the liberal public sphere which originated in the Enlightenment and the American and French Revolution to a media-dominated public sphere in the current era of what he calls "welfare state

capitalism and mass democracy" (Kellner Douglas, [http:// www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/](http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/)).

The ideology of the public sphere theory is that the government's laws and policies should be steered by the public sphere and that the only legitimate governments are those that listen to the public sphere. Habermas said that the future success of democratic governance rests on the capacity of the citizens on how far they can explore more and more opportunities to engage themselves in enlightened debates.

10.7 SUMMING UP

Habermas was a later thinker of Frankfurt School, which gave a new theoretical approach to understand modern capitalist society. Habermas was influenced by both Marx and Weber. But he focused primarily on communicative action, which according to Habermas was ignored by Marx. Habermas also analysed the rationalization of communicative action. The study on the public sphere was noted in his book, 'The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere'. In his discussion on the public sphere, Habermas carried out an analysis of historical transition of the public sphere. He highlighted that the bourgeoisie public sphere allowed people to debate and discuss over various common and collective issues. Habermas further described how the change of capitalism and state in contemporary time influenced the public sphere. The role of media was captured by Habermas as a very powerful controlling agency in modern capitalist society.

10.8 QUESTIONS

1. How does Habermas distinguish his ideas from orthodox Marxism?
2. Discuss the emergence and development of public sphere according to Habermas.
3. How did public sphere change in modern society?

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MODULE IV: CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORIES

UNIT 11: SOCIOLOGY OF PIERRE BOURDIEU

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Objectives
- 11.3 Theoretical Basis of Bourdieu
- 11.4 Habitus
- 11.5 Field
- 11.6 Bourdieu's Idea of Capital
- 11.7 Summing Up
- 11.8 Questions
- 11.9 Recommended Readings and References

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Pierre Bourdieu was one of the remarkable and influential figures in French social theory. His wide-ranging work was very significant because of its theoretical outlook and ethnographic basis. The most significant aspect of his work was the attempts to adapt classical theoretical perspectives to empirical study in contemporary society. Bourdieu was influenced by Levi-Strauss's work, *The Elementary Structure of Kinship* and his confrontation with Sartre in the post-war French. Sartre emphasized on the individual and the power and creativity of the individual, while, Levi-Strauss emphasized on the power of structures and for him, the structure is independent in the sense that it exists outside the consciousness of agents or individuals. Bourdieu considered this contradiction as antithetical poles of a basic opposition between subjectivism and objectivism, which has been one of the most crucial issues of social theory for a long time. For him, this opposition between subjectivism and objectivism is the prime obstacle of making a proper and suitable theory of society. Another intellectual source of

Bourdieu's work was the classical social theory in general and Marx, Durkheim and Weber in particular. He developed a systematic theory of symbolic power and its relation to economic and political power with the help of Weberian idea of charisma and legitimacy. Bourdieu also followed Durkheim in emphasizing the social as well as the cognitive function of "collective representation" and "primitive classification". But he considered these as a function of domination and Durkheim conceived them as the function of "logic and social integration". Bourdieu was influenced by Marx too. Marx's themes, which was used by Bourdieu are class as the unit of analysis, the practical activity involved in the production and reproduction of social life and the notion that social being determines consciousness.

Bourdieu focused on the dialectical relation between objectivism and subjectivism. For him, both the blocks in sociology are one-sided and ignored the inevitable relation of both structure and agency. So his works focused on overcoming such contradiction. We have highlighted his theoretical base, which is considered neither towards structuralists nor towards interactionists but more inclined towards structuralism. But his perspective of structuralism is different from linguistic or anthropological and Marxist structuralism. He propounded concepts like habitus and field to present his own perspective of Sociology (Brubaker, 1985).

11.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the Bourdieu's idea of structure and agency;
- Explain the theoretical formulation in Bourdieu's sociology;
- Analyse habitus as a mediating factor between objectivists and subjectivists;
- Analyse field and capital as important conceptual and theoretical contribution of Bourdieu in contemporary society.

11.3 THEORETICAL BASIS OF BOURDIEU

The theoretical works of Bourdieu are derived from his effort of overcoming the unnecessary division between individual and society. Bourdieu included Durkheim and his study of social facts, Saussure's structuralism, structural Marxism and Levi-Strauss in the category of objective sociology. On the other hand, the phenomenology of Schutz, symbolic interactionism of Blumer and Garfinkel's ethnomethodology are considered by Bourdieu as a propagator of subjectivism in sociology. It is noted that objectivists merely focused on objective structures and undermined the process of social construction. Objectivists ignore the individual's capability to perceive, think and act in order to construct the society. Similarly, subjectivists placed focus on individuals' way of thinking, an individual's capacity to perceive and change the course of action. They ignore the objective structures, which regulates the process of action in society. Bourdieu wanted to overcome the contradiction between objectivism and subjectivism and focused on practice, which according to him is the result of the dialectical relationship between structure and agency. In order to formulate his own perspective, Bourdieu gave the ideas of constructivist structuralism, "structuralist constructivism" or "genetic structuralism". He defined genetic structuralism for the reason:

"The analysis of objective structures_ those of different fields_ is inseparable from the analysis of the genesis, within biological individuals, of the mental structures which are to some extent the product of the incorporation of social structures; inseparable, too, from the analysis of the genesis of these social structures themselves: the social space, and of the groups that occupy it, are the products of historical struggles (in which agents participate in accordance with their position in the social space and with the mental structures through which they apprehend this space)" (Ritzer, 2011: 518).

Bourdieu too advocated for the perspective of structuralism but it was different from the structuralism of Saussure, Levi-Strauss and Structural

Marxism. Structuralists are concerned with structures in language and culture, while Bourdieu focused on the structure as it exists in the social world itself. Though Bourdieu intended to bridge structuralism and constructivism, there is actually more inclination towards structuralism in his works, because of which he has been regarded as post-structuralist. Unlike phenomenologists and symbolic interactionists, Bourdieu's constructivism ignores subjectivity and intentionality.

In his sociology, Bourdieu attempted to deal with the individual's way of perception and construction of the social world on the basis of their position in social space. It is noted that *"perception and construction that take place in the social world are both animated and constrained by structures"*. Bourdieu was interested in the *"relationship between social structures and mental structures"*. The Bourdieu's theoretical orientation lies in his concepts of habitus and field and their dialectical relationship to each other (Ritzer, 2011).

11.4 HABITUS

Habitus is the most important theoretical contribution of Bourdieu in contemporary sociology. It mainly attempted to make the bridge between structuralism and interactionism like Anthony Giddens. According to Bourdieu Habitus is internalized over the time due to the interaction of individual's unlimited desires and the structural constraints, which places limitation to individual's free and open action. Habitus gets its shape out of the influence of past events and perception on current practices and structures.

Habitus is "a socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures" that produces certain behavioural patterns and the norms or tendencies underpinning this behaviour" (Martikke, 2017). Thus, habitus is the ingrained habits that help the individual to develop his skills or

dispositions, with the help of which s/he perceives the social world around them.

The present behaviour pattern of individuals and the norms they follow are formulated and constructed by their past experiences of the material condition of existence over the period of time and this pattern also determines future action. Individuals maintain the behavioural pattern according to the existing norms, which ultimately reproduce the existing social order. One important feature of habitus is that individuals are not conscious about it. The behaviour pattern for individuals appears as natural and self-evident. Bourdieu argued that- *as much as our actions appear to be motivated by considerations about the future; they are actually, via habitus, “determined by the past conditions which have produced the principle of their production”* (Martikke, 2017).

Habitus is the ‘mental or cognitive structures’ through which people deal with the social world. Individuals can perceive, understand, appreciate and assess the social world because of the series of internalized things they enriched over the period of time. Through these internalized things people act, perform, perceive and assess the society. Ritzer writes: *“habitus is internalized, embodied social structures”*. *“They are something like a common sense”* (Ritzer, 2011). An individual acquires habitus, which is the result of the long-term occupation of a position in the social world. Every individual does not have the same habitus because individuals occupy a different position in the social world. People develop habitus through imitation and in the process of socialisation they have encountered different experiences and opportunities which helped them to get acquainted with habitus. People share their dispositions with those of having similar background such as class, religion, nationality and so on and in the process of developing habitus they create a group of likeminded which represents the group culture, personal history, the body and the mind, Thus it is the habitus, which shapes the present social actions of the individual.

Thus, habitus varies in the positions of the social world. In the case of a particular occupation of a position derived by many individuals, habitus tends to have a similar impact and that can be called as collective phenomena. So it is habitus that allows people to make sense out of their social world. But the existence of numbers of habitus indicates that social structure is not able to constrain all the individuals uniformly. It is argued that the habitus produces the social world and the habitus is the product of the social world. Habitus is a “structuring structures”, which means that the social world becomes structured or arranged because of habitus. It is also regarded as “structured structure”, which means that the social world makes the habitus. Bourdieu described habitus as the “dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality”.

Thus, Bourdieu was successful in coming out of the contradiction between subjectivism and objectivism with the help of the concept_ habitus. Habitus does not determine individual thought and action though it constrains them by means of instructing what individual should think to do and what should not think and do. So, it is the lack of determinism, which distinguished Bourdieu’s theoretical perspective from that of mainstream structuralists. Habitus provides principles for individuals to perform the right action in society and thereby restraining them from unaccepted actions. Individuals can choose and use their strategies of action due to habitus. Bourdieu pointed out that “people are not fools”. People are not even rational fully rather they have practical sense and they act in a reasonable manner. Ritzer mentioned that *there is logic to what people do; it is the “logic of practice”*. Individuals are not conscious about the habitus and its operation but it manifests itself in the practical activities such as the way of eating, walking, talking etc. (Ritzer, 2011).

11.5 FIELD

According to Bourdieu objective structures constitutes fields. A field refers to a configuration of relations between positions. Society is formed as a field and consists of other important fields, which are inseparable. The field is a network of relationships among the objective positions within it. Individuals are not conscious about the relations among these positions. The positions are occupied either by agents or institutions and constrained by the structure of the field. “The field is also a field of struggles”. In other words, it can be said that the field is a type of competitive marketplace in which various kinds of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) are employed and deployed. The most important field is the field of power (or politics). Within the political field, there exists the hierarchy of power relation, which determines other fields. The position of agents in the field is determined by the amount and relative weight of the capital they possess. Bourdieu also applied military sense to describe the field; it is defined as an arena of “strategic emplacements, fortresses to be defended and captured in a field of struggles” (Ritzer, 2011).

According to Bourdieu, those who occupy the positions within the field use different strategies. It is quoted by Ritzer:

However, strategies do not refer *“to the purposive and pre-planned pursuit of calculated goals.....but to the active deployment of objectively oriented ‘lines of action’ that obey regularities and form coherent and socially intelligible patterns, even though they do not follow conscious rules or aim at the premeditated goals posited by a strategist”* (Ritzer, 2011, p-523). *It is argued that individuals use strategies to safeguard or improve their position within the field* (Ritzer, 2011). *In short, a field for Bourdieu is a “relatively autonomous domain of activity that responds to rules of functioning and institutions that are specific to it and which define the relations among the agents”* (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015).

There exist various fields and each field maintains specific rules. For instance, the political field has rules to maintain a close relationship with the people who are not the part of the field because agents in the political field get the legitimacy from the people, who make the representatives for the political field. The scientific field is very specific to those people who are involved in it. This field is distinctive due to the fact that the competition among agents is very specialized and only they can judge the value of works of their competitors. The economic field is distinguished by the fact that behaviour of individuals is manifested and directed towards maximization of profits. The fields are basically autonomous in their activities and functions. The elite agents of the field are mainly responsible for the legitimate interpretations of practices and representation in course of autonomization of a field. The autonomization of fields is marked by the emergence of capitals.

The agents who hold the capital also constitute the field. The function of a field increases with its increasing autonomization. In case of greater autonomy of a field, there occurs a significant increase of production of agents, who have specialization in a particular area of activity by field and agents also produce fields. It is written: *“The more it functions in accordance with the interests inherent in the type of activity that characterizes it, the greater the separation from the laity and the more specific become the capital, the competences and the sense of the game”* (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015, p-7). For instance, politicians only speak about politics; writers only talk about literature and academics and so on.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. How is individual action regulated in a field?

2. Is the individual behaviour fully structured according to Bourdieu?

11.6 BOURDIEU'S IDEA OF CAPITAL

Bourdieu took Marx's idea of capitalism and framed his own conceptual and theoretical framework. His analysis of capital is different from that of Marx. In fact, he regarded capital is one of the important parts of the field. Bourdieu argued that "a capital does not exist except in relation to a field" (Calhoun, 2013). Capital presents itself in three forms on the basis of its function in the related field. These are economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. Economic capital includes one's wealth, property; cultural capital includes education, excellence in art and painting; and social capital involves social prestige, status, connections with people etc. In the above argument of Bourdieu, it is clearly stated that capital and field are inseparable. In this regard, we must look into the fact that very prominent lawyers and authors make the aim of converting their success into a better living standard for themselves as well for their children. For this, they need to convert their capital of specific field of a profession to economic capital (for a property), to social capital (for prestige and networking) and cultural capital (for education). The capital usually reproduced over the generations otherwise it may be lost (Calhoun, 2013).

According to Bourdieu, capital means resources, which structure capacity of individuals or groups for doing anything. Capital works as the subject of social struggles. Individuals and groups do struggle (competition and conflict) to accumulate various form of capital. There are different forms of capital such as social, symbolic, cultural and economic. For instance, one's known people are capital for him just like a bank account. Even some people built and maintain a good network

with people to possess social capital. Any capital can be converted into economic capital. Economic capital is very significant in modern societies. Other capitals are mostly related to economic capital due to the development of capitalism in modern society. For example, wealthy parents can buy education, a form of cultural capital in expensive universities for their children.

Bourdieu's conceptualisation of social capital is based on the recognition that capital is not only economic and that social exchanges are not purely self-interested and need to encompass 'capital and profit in all their forms' (Bourdieu, 1986). This conceptualisation is grounded in theories of social reproduction and symbolic power. His work also emphasises structural constraints and unequal access to institutional resources based on class, gender and race. He saw social capital as a property of individual rather than a collective property. It enables a person to exert power over others, who mobilises such capital. Again it is not uniformly available to those who provide efforts to acquire it by achieving positions of power and status and by developing goodwill (Bourdieu, 1986).

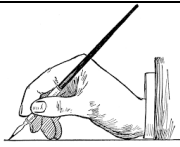
However, there are public institutions like schools or museum and cultural values, which operate to control the dominance of economic capital over others. In Karl Marx's term end of capitalism is the accumulation of wealth on the basis of converting human labour into commodities. But for Bourdieu, capitalism is a tendency in modern life that tends to dominate other capitals. Although people are tended to accumulate economic capital, there are values of possessing other capitals. Some people denounce the economic value and emphasize on social or cultural capitals. His concept of cultural capital refers to the collection of symbolic elements such as skills, tastes, postures, clothing sense, mannerism, fashion choices, material belongings, credentials etc., which one acquire through being a part of a particular social class. He again stated that sharing similar forms of cultural capital with others, e.g.

having the same taste in movies, attending the same club all these create a sense of collective identity and group position. This possession of cultural capital is also a source of social inequality, where certain forms of cultural capital are valued over the others and thus either help or hinder one's social mobility just as much as income or wealth (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, an artist may gain symbolic credit for demonstrating devotion purely to aesthetics and popularizing his work for sales. Inequalities have become an important element of a social life because of the growing importance of capital. Capital is important for both individual action and collective action (Calhoun, 2013).

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital comes in three forms, embodied, objectified and institutionalised. One's accent or dialect is an example of embodied cultural capital, while a luxury car or record collection are examples of cultural capital in its objectified state. In its institutionalised form, cultural capital refers to credentials and qualifications such as degrees or titles that symbolise cultural competence and authority.

There are two senses associated with the conversion of capital from one form to another. One is part of the intergenerational reproduction of capital. In order to ensure good education to their children, wealthy people may choose expensive private institutions. This is the way of converting economic capital into cultural capital (educational credentials). Again this cultural capital can pass on to other generations and reconvert into economic capital. In another example, we can say that athletes due to success in own sporting field possess the prestige and fame. This capital of athlete may convert into economic capital by the way of endorsing various industrial products. An athlete can also open own business for which he can use his celebrity status to attract customers (Calhoun, 2013).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. Give examples of social capital.

2. Write one example of conversion of social capital into economic capital.

11.7 SUMMING UP

- ✓ Bourdieu integrated structure and agency in his sociology just like Anthony Giddens.
- ✓ He differentiated objectivists and subjectivists in order to show the division in sociological theories.
- ✓ He was not objectivists but little inclined towards structuralism. But his structuralism was different from that of linguistic structuralism.
- ✓ Bourdieu focused on individual action by using the concept of habitus. Habitus is the primary focus of his sociology.
- ✓ Habitus is the regular and pattern behaviour of the individuals, which individual undertakes in present time with the help of past experiences and it even guides them for future action.
- ✓ The field is another important concept of Bourdieu's sociology. Bourdieu argued that human society constitutes of multiple fields. Individual's behaviour is organized and structured in the field by its rules and regulations. For example, there are economic, political, scientific, literary fields etc. to structure society as a whole field.

- ✓ Each field has specific roles and specializations for its agents and rules to regulate the agents. Fields are autonomous in their operation.
- ✓ Capital is also an important concept of Bourdieu's sociology. He argued that capital and field are interrelated and inseparable.
- ✓ There are various forms of capital such as economic capital, cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital.
- ✓ Capitals are convertible that one capital may convert itself into another form. In this case, economic capital is most significant in modern societies because of the tendency of the people to convert their cultural and even social capital to economic capital.

11.8 QUESTIONS

Short Questions:

1. Who are subjectivists and objectivists in sociology?
2. Apart from Bourdieu, name another prominent sociologist who criticized both structuralism and interactionism?
3. What is Habitus?

Essay type questions:

1. Discuss how habitus guides individuals to act in a pattern way and how individuals also produce habitus over the period of time.
2. Discuss the various fields in society and how they determine the variations of individual behaviour.
3. How does capital convert from one form to another form? Explain with suitable examples.

11.9 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 12: FOUCAULT'S PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIETY

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Theoretical Basis of Foucault's works
- 12.3 Discourse
- 12.4 Power and Knowledge
- 12.5 Summing Up
- 12.6 Questions
- 12.7 Recommended Readings and References

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Michel Foucault's perspective on society is very difficult to grasp due to its multi-variant outlook and application through his works. He was considered as structuralist and even post-structuralist in contemporary sociology. He used the concept of discourse to understand the power relations in modern society. His idea of discourse is different from the Marxist term ideology. For the Marxists, ideology always maintains repression but existing discourse may be resisted according to Foucault. He examined the nexus between knowledge and power in a different way than the Marxists did. Knowledge and power are inseparable from each other. With the development of society, new knowledge emerged in various areas and power is operational within knowledge. In the first part, we will focus on the theoretical basis of Foucault's works in sociology. Then we will try to give a brief overview of the concept of discourse. We will also focus on Foucault's perspective of knowledge/power in modern society.

12.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss Foucault as a contemporary theorist;
- Analyse the theoretical basis of his works;
- Explain his concepts of discourse and knowledge/power.

12.3 THEORETICAL BASIS OF FOUCAULT'S WORK

Michael Foucault was the most prominent and impactful French intellectual, who appeared as structuralist in sociological theories. But Foucault rejected his direct association with structuralism. However, his early works such as *The Birth of the Clinic*, *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* manifested the application of structuralism. Foucault's analysis of the origins of modern medicine, psychiatry and others on the basis of language and discourse indicted his inclination towards structuralism. He focused on the prospect of a scientific method called archaeology or genealogy, which can perceive the unconscious process of social change. Foucault with the help of this method tried to discover unforeseen processes governing the structure of social things. The aim was to uncover "*a positive unconscious of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of what is scientific*" (Elliott, 2009, p-70).

Foucault wanted to use structuralism to the rules of social formation in order to reveal this unconscious of knowledge; discourses for him are layered in this social formation. Foucault in his works *The order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* planned to analyse the production of modern reason and knowledge by excavating the past. He opposed certain postulated concepts, ideas and structures, which usually works to legitimize western knowledge and philosophy such as extensive belief in scientific advancement and trust in man-made progress and development. In order to carry out this opposition, Foucault attempted to

analyse critically the ways of shaping and organizing knowledge production over the period of time by the bodies of texts, doctrines and discourses. Foucault wanted to reread the authors, narrations and disciplines of human sciences in term of the rules of knowledge. According to Foucault, knowledge has become the absolute ground of power in human sciences. Foucault's archaeological analysis addresses "*the general space of knowledge and the mode of being of things that appear in it*" (Elliott, 2009: 70-71).

The works of Michael Foucault extensively covered the understanding of the relationship between social structures and institutions and the individual. His prominent works such as *The History of Sexuality*, *Power/Knowledge*, *The Birth of the Clinic* and *Discipline and Punish* primarily focused on the analysis of the effects of various institutions or groups and the people's role in complying or opposing those effects. The central idea behind his apprehension towards institution and groups is power. He has a critical notion about power, what according to him something possesses by a group or an institution and it also works to constrain and oppress. Actors use power as an instrument of coercion, and even away from the discreet structures in which those actors operate, toward the idea that 'power is everywhere' diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1991; Rabinow, 1991).

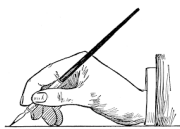
Power makes us what we are. His idea of power is quite different from the earlier definition of power which is conceived as something concentrated at the hands of a limited powerful people, rather Foucault's power 'is diffused rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them' (Gaventa, 2003: 1).

In this way, Foucault wanted to change the understanding of power from the view of power as repression of powerless to the view of examining the way power operates within everyday relation people and institution. He had not viewed power in a negative sense, as constraining and oppressing, rather power (oppressive and constraining mechanism) for him may create a new form of behaviour, so it can be productive. Unlike classical Marxists, Foucault dealt less with oppression rather with revealing the resistance of power. There emerged critical debate among critical theorists and political theorists over the issues that Foucault has not clearly stated the mechanism for resisting power relations. But Foucault's idea got very favourable support from a number of feminists and other critical theorists, who have seen a new way of thinking about power relation between men and women instead of understanding in a conventional way that focuses on the role of the state, ideology or patriarchy (Mills, 2003: 33-34).

Foucault's idea that the body and sexuality are cultural constructs rather than natural phenomena has made a significant contribution to the feminist critique of essentialism. Instead of focusing on the centralised sources of power concentrated in the agencies such as the economy or the state, he emphasised more on micro level power relations. He argued that modern power operates in a capillary fashion throughout society, and it is channelized through everyday practices which sustain and reproduce power relations. Thus power becomes operationalised in society through everyday practices of personal relations and it is also experienced at the most intimate levels of experience in the institutions of marriage, motherhood and compulsory heterosexuality, in the 'private' relations between the sexes and in the everyday rituals and regimens that govern women's relationships to themselves and their bodies (Sawicki, 1998:93).

Foucault wanted to analyse the view of the institution as oppressive. The Marxists take the state as the central theme in political analysis. Foucault rejected this centrality of state but it had greatly influenced and had an effect on his works. He argued that *“theorists often assume a solidity and permanence to the State and institutions which leads them to focus less on the potential for change, the fragility of the maintenance of power”*. Foucault did not simply ignore the analysis of state, rather he focused on the analysis of relations of power and analysis beyond the limits of state. He argued in his article, ‘Truth and Power’ that *“the state for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations”* (Mills, 2003: 48). The relation between people and particularly between parents and children, lovers, employers and employees are power relations.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. Why does Foucault not consider himself as a structuralist?

2. What is micro politics of power according to Foucault?

12.4 DISCOURSE

Discourse is one of the most important and popular terms in Foucault's works. He used it in different ways. Foucault used the term discourse in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *The Order of Discourse* to refer to 'the general domain of all statements', sometimes as an individualizable group of statements and sometimes as regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements. The term 'general domain of

all statements' used by Foucault to mean 'discourse' as all utterances and statements, which have been made and have meanings and effects. The term 'individualizable group of statements' used to refer discourse as groups of utterances such as the discourse of femininity or racism. He also used the term discourse to refer to 'regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements, i.e. abstract rules and structures produce particular utterances and statements (Mills, 2003: 53). Foucault's discourse is different from Marxist term ideology. The notion of discourse is more complex because of his ideas on power and resistance.

"In the History of Sexuality, Vol. I, Foucault argued that discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (Mills, 2003: 54-55).

Thus, Foucault's 'discourse' denotes a historically contingent social system that produces knowledge and meaning. According to him, discourse is distinctly material in effect, producing what he calls 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak'. Discourse is thus a way of organising knowledge that structures the constitution of social and global relations through the collective understanding of the discursive logic and people accept the discourse as a social fact. For Foucault, the logic produced by discourse is also structurally related to the structure of knowledge arises during any historical period. These discourses are produced by the effects of power within a social order and this power formulates certain rules and regulations and also creates categories in society and thus define the criteria for making knowledge legitimate within the discursive orders. In

this way, discourse itself makes its own construction and capacity to produce knowledge.

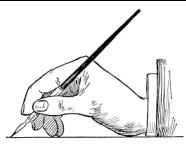
The point of difference of Foucault with that of Marxist is that Marxism considered ideology as a negative and constraining force that is a set of false beliefs about something; Whereas, Foucault argued that discourse is both the means of oppression and resistance. According to Foucault, discourse does not translate reality into language rather it should be seen as a system that structures the way of perception of reality. It is something, which constrains the perception of the people about reality. For example, human beings understand their body through discursive mediation. Discourse determines our perception regarding the size of our body that is dictating a perfect form. Discourse related to the relationship between mental and physical well-being interprets feelings of tiredness as indicative of stress. Foucault has not ignored the existence of physical objects in the world and not argued that there is nothing but discourse. But he stated that individuals can understand the physical world or material objects and can experience these only through discourse and hence he called discourse as material in effect because it structures the thinking. Individuals in the process of thinking about the world, categorize and interpret experience and events according to the structures and because of this pattern of interpretation structures get an orderly and normal form and ultimately creates difficulty in questioning it.

Foucault argued that discursive practices are characterized by a *“delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories”* (Mills, 2003: 57). Individuals when speak tend to give focus on a specific subject, then seek the authority within them to say something and also define the ways of thinking about the subject. One cannot go out of these discursive constraints, otherwise, one will be

considered as mad or incomprehensible by others. In his analysis of discourse, Foucault stated how it is regulated:

'in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality' (Mills, 2003: 57).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	<p>1. Find out the discourse in conventional way of delivering a lecture in a function.</p>
<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>	
<p>2. Can the existing discourse be resisted according to Foucault? Specify.</p>	
<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>	

12.5 POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

In the works such as *The Order of Things* (1970) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault wants to focus on the more abstract institutional processes at work which establish something as a fact or as knowledge.

The traditional view of knowledge, particularly scientific knowledge shows the knowledge as the product of some very creative and innovative geniuses, for example, Einstein and Pasteur. These scientists were able

to introduce a new perspective and formulate new theories and these theories and perspectives are scientific knowledge in modern society. Similarly, philosophical ideas of individual thinkers, such as Hegel and Wittgenstein, gradually changed the course of intellectual endeavour. Foucault wanted to produce a much more anonymous, institutionalized and rule-governed model of knowledge-production. Foucault didn't focus on the history of knowledge and ideas and the sources to thinkers of Western culture.

He rather decided to 'determine, in its diverse dimensions, what the mode of existence of discourses (their rules of formation, with their conditions, their dependencies, their transformations) must have been in Europe since the 17th century, in order that the knowledge which is ours today could come to exist, and more particularly, that knowledge which has taken as its domain this curious object which is man' (Mills, 2003, p-68).

Thus, he was focused on the mechanisms of the production of knowledge. In his essay 'Prison talk', Foucault stated that, *'it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power'*. His discussion of knowledge and power emphasizes the fact that knowledge is an indispensable part of struggles over power and it also noted that those who produce knowledge make claim for power. The imbalances of power relations between groups of people or between institutions/states further lead to the production of knowledge. He is concerned with how people govern themselves and others through the production of knowledge. Among other things he sees knowledge generating power by constituting people as subjects and then governing the subjects with the knowledge. He is thus interested in knowing the techniques, the technologies that are derived from knowledge and how they are used by various institutions to exert power over the people.

According to Foucault, when the disparity in power relations among various industrial classes and between men and women in Western countries being institutionalized, information about women and working class would be available and more books related to women and working-class usually becomes trending in libraries and less about men and middle class. There are many books about the problems of Black people available but not about white people. According to Foucault, knowledge is not just a pure search after 'truth' rather power operates in the processing of information. Any information becomes fact only through the process of ratification by those in positions of authority (Mills, 2003).

Foucault argued that both knowledge and power operate mutually and they are not external to each other. The existence of Knowledge cannot be imagined without the effects of coercion and power is depended on procedures, instruments, means, and objectives which can be validated in more or less coherent systems of knowledge. Thus there needs to be the study of the nexus between knowledge and power rather than a separate study of both. Thus for Foucault, power and knowledge cannot be seen as independent entities rather they are inextricably related. Knowledge is always an exercise of power and power is always a function of knowledge. We need to analyse the link between knowledge and power to explore the reason behind acceptability of certain "regime of truth" at a given time in history. Foucault referred his idea of power/knowledge throughout his writings but it occupies a prominent place in *Discipline and Punish*. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault tried to discuss how the execution of power has changed between the 18th and 19th century. He put forward the change from corporal to disciplinary Punishment at the end of the 18th century and also showed how the discovery of human body began to emerge as an object of power and knowledge (Messner & Jordan).

Foucault attempted to show how the nature of punishment changed from harsh and physical pain to psychological suffering, loss of liberty, reform and rehabilitation. The basis of judgement changed to see the motive behind crime committed instead of the type of crime committed. New branches of study related to punishment emerged as criminology, jurisprudence, criminal psychology, etc. There emerged professional controls and disciplines due to the growth of professional power. He identified three forms of disciplinary power:

Hierarchical observation: It is exercised by those who hold authority or those who are considered as experts in respective fields. For example, doctors in clinic, prison wardens in jail, judges in court and so on.

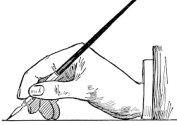
Normative judgement: This is a shift from arbitrary judgement to a system of rational, objective and systematic rules and regulations.

Examination of patients or subjects: By using professional instruments, methods and diagnosis patients or subjects are examined or treated or judged in modern society (Slattery, 2003).

For Foucault, power is not always negative rather it can be positive, liberating and encouraging. He argued that power is not a one-way relationship because power can be resisted by means of challenging authority, patient by asking for a second opinion or seeking alternative treatment, prisoner by appealing in higher court through his lawyer and so on. "Power is, therefore, underpins modern society and discourse is the means by which power is created, debated, controlled and distributed" (Slattery, 2003). Those who hold power exercises control over the content of the debate filed of knowledge and so on. The modern institutions like universities and colleges replaced the domination of religion and church. The scientific and modern rational education is now acceptable and looks as progressive for human freedom and liberty in contemporary society (Slattery, 2003). Thus it is important to note that Foucault understood and explained power /knowledge relationship as productive as well as constraining. Power/knowledge not only limits

what we can do but also opens up new ways of acting and thinking about ourselves.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	<p>1. How is Foucault's concept of power different from that of the Marxian concept of power?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
	<p>2. What is the main focus of <i>Discipline and Punish</i>?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>

12.6 SUMMING UP

- ✓ Foucault's perspective in sociology is considered as structuralism and some considered it as post-structuralism.
- ✓ Foucault was concerned about the archaeology of knowledge and genealogy of power.
- ✓ Foucault was concerned about power but primarily micro-politics of power.
- ✓ He attempted to understand power relation in all the social relations in society.
- ✓ Foucault's discourse is the most important concept used in his works. The term discourse used by Foucault to understand the power relations in social relations in society.
- ✓ With the help of discourses, power is channelized and institutionalised in relationships, which is expressed in society through the use of languages and social practices.

- ✓ Knowledge is the most important arena in society, which according to Foucault produces in course of progress in society.
- ✓ Knowledge produces discourse, which exercises power to control people in society.

12.7 QUESTIONS

Short Questions

1. Why is Michel Foucault considered as a structuralist?
2. Institution is coercive. Explain.
3. Trace the discourse in the communication between a boss and an employee.

Essay type

1. Discuss how discourse is coercive and oppressive in the freedom and liberty of the individuals.
2. Analyze the interplay between knowledge and power in contemporary society.

12.8 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 13: ULRICH BECK'S VIEWS ON MODERNITY

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Introduction

13.2 Objectives

13.3 Ulrich Beck: A contemporary Theorist in Sociology

13.4 Risk Society

13.4.1 Phases of Risks

13.4.2 Control of Man over Nature in Contemporary Society

13.5 Cosmopolitanization

13.6 Summing Up

13.7 Questions

13.8 Recommended Readings and References

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Ulrich Beck is considered as the prophet of a new modernity. He is the most prominent German sociologist who carried out tremendous studies on contemporary society by looking into the various historical phases. Beck has been known for his work, *Risk Society*. He particularly focused on the disastrous impact of modernity today, what he considered as a risk society. It was Beck, who regarded contemporary society as second modernity or risk society. In risk society, individuals are the victims of consequences of progressive technological development. Science and Technology offered the world very suitable means of development but these had unintended consequences over humanity. Nuclear technology developed to boost the energy in the modern world, which gradually rose as a source of disastrous nuclear weapons. Beck emphasizes the unmanageable risks in contemporary society. He also focused on the technological development and progress on individuals; that is how individualization took away the collective values and how individuals

have become the victims of isolation. In the last part we have highlighted his idea of globalization and the subsequent process of Cosmopolitanization.

13.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss Ulrich Beck as an ambassador of the perspective on new modernity;
- Explain Beck's Risk Society;
- Examine the consequences of unmanageable risks in contemporary society on individuals and socio-cultural life of the people.

13.3 ULRICH BECK: A CONTEMPORARY THEORIST IN SOCIOLOGY

Ulrich Beck became a prominent theorist of modernity in contemporary time with the publication of the book, *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, which was translated into English as, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. This book exhibited the important contribution of Beck in social theory. His work appeared at the time when humanity was suffering from environmental destruction and in a condition of shock due to scientific failure. The people realized their inability to handle the consequences of risks and failures, which is predicted by specialists and researchers. Beck in his work, considered the situation as a 'world out of control', characterized by "manufactured uncertainties", a world where the mistrust between science and agency exists and so appeared the need of a new scientific policy. Beck argued that *science, in particular the natural sciences and engineering, could not guarantee "zero risk" when laboratory results were applied to industry, that is, when they were taken out of the laboratory. This required, in his own words a "technological moralization"* (Bosco and Giulio, 2015).

Beck's another highly acknowledged work, *World Risk Society*, published in 1998, which was an attempt to renew the critical tradition of social theory and particularly the theory of modernization. In *Risk Society*, Beck mainly brought into light the environmental issues to sociology and he wanted to make the sociology open to other areas of study such as geography, anthropology, ethnology, international relations, international law and political theory. "Beck criticized the ultra-specialized rationality of the sciences". He also questioned the applicability of classical sociology in understanding contemporary society (Bosco and Giulio, 2015).

Beck was the most prominent public voice in the debate over environmental protection, nuclear power and the future of the European Union. In order to understand the new modernity, Beck introduced certain concepts such as risk society and individualization, cosmopolitanization, sub-politics and democratization of science and challenge to the 'Zombie Categories' of modern sociology. He wanted to give a theory about the present contemporary society like other contemporary theorists like Saskia Sassen (1991), Zygmunt Bauman (2000), Bruno Latour (1993) and Manuel Castells (1996).

Stop and Read Biography of Ulrich Beck

Ulrich Beck was born in the Pomeranian province of Poland in 1944. He was the son of a nurse and a German naval officer. His family had to flee westwards due to the consequence of the new political rumblings and demarcations that were being drawn throughout and across Europe at the time in 1945. The family settled in a new home in Hanover, where Ulrich Beck grew up and spent his childhood. Beck served military for two years in 1966 and then moved to Freiburg and enrolled in law school. Before he gave up his practice of law and interest in fiction writing, Beck was called a poet of modernization because of his thoughtful writings and use of

metaphors on then current conditions. Beck then turned towards philosophy. His main interest was German idealism and his preferred philosophers were Kant and Fichte. He also followed additional courses in psychology, social studies and sociology. He joined at the University of Münster. But due to some circumstance, he shifted at Bamberg in 1981 and stayed there until 1992 and then got a professorship of sociology at his old university in Munich. During his period as a professor in Munich, Ulrich Beck was head of the large research project on reflexive modernization called SFB 536, which started in 1999 and continued until 2009. This project financed by the German Research Council and other research foundations. The project got popular due to continuous participation from a large number of researchers from both German and foreign universities. Ulrich Beck was Principal Investigator of the European Research Council (ERC) project: Methodological Cosmopolitanism—In the Laboratory of Climate Change. Beck was also associated with the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), serving as British Journal of Sociology Visiting Centennial Professor. (Sorensen & Christiansen, [file:///C:/Users/Asus%201/Downloads/9783319049892-c2%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Asus%201/Downloads/9783319049892-c2%20(1).pdf)).

13.4 RISK SOCIETY

Ulrich Beck argued that the greatest challenges of the contemporary age are to manage the multiple side effects of the success of modernity. He focused on the risks in contemporary age such as pollution, genetically modified food and nuclear disaster as well as climate change, terrorism and the global financial system. Ulrich Beck in his studies focused on the social, cultural and material construction of risk. Risks according to the Beck are the result of a set of decisions, the transformation of the world as a laboratory for scientific experiment and application process. The process of driving towards the emergence of modern progress has

possibilities of creating unintended or unimaginable consequences. The consequences are climate change; internet-based global terrorism and the unpredictable impact of nuclear accidents. So the prime concern of new modern life has been to deal with unintended consequences of progress. Beck says, *“Our society has become a laboratory where there is absolutely nobody in charge”* (Woodman, Threadgold & Possamai-Inesedy, 2015: 1119). Beck regarded risk society as an immature new modernity. For him, *it is not ‘post-modern’, world of ‘playing with the pieces’* (Woodman, Threadgold & Possamai-Inesedy, 2015: 1120). In other words, Beck called this modernity as reflexive or second modernity, which is characterized by contradiction, ambiguity and non-linear change. First modernity was defined by Beck as:

Modernity characterized by complex but highly ordered process of institutional boundary-making based on an either/or logic: the state or the market, family or not family, leisure or work, values or facts, war or peace, either us or them (Woodman, Threadgold & Possamai-Inesedy, 2015, p-1120).

There were uncertainties even in first modernity but these were either ignored systematically or considered as resolvable. It does not indicate that modernity is disappeared, rather modernity becomes increasingly problematic. Beck considered science both a problem and solution. In fact, modernity produced nuclear power, which produced nuclear power station and consequently produced the disaster such as Chernobyl accident. Beck pointed out that risks of contemporary time threaten the damage, which becomes difficult to repair. The damages such as nuclear or chemical accidents cannot be monitored fully or monitoring cannot include all the possible consequences. For Beck, science and technology have to handle these failures and consequences or threats in the present age (Woodman, Threadgold & Possamai-Inesedy, 2015).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. According to Ulrich Beck modernity is replaced by_____.

2. Between whom contradiction exists in contemporary society?

3. Why is science in contemporary society unpredictable?

13.4.1 Phases of Risks

Ulrich Beck's work, *Risk Society* puts forward two important propositions about the nature of risk in contemporary society. Firstly, Beck postulated that composition of risk has evolved inherently. Secondly, the growing hazardous risks have generated catastrophic consequences for the planet. Beck analyzed risk within the wider framework of historical narrative in his works, 'Risk Society' and 'Reflexive Modernization'. He identified three broad historical epochs: pre-industrial society (traditional society), 'industrial society' (first modernity) and 'risk society' (second modernity). In order to make a distinctive line or contrasting line between different periods, ideal or standardized forms of risks are described. Beck mentioned the distinction between natural hazards and manufactured risks for the purpose of differentiating historical periods. Pre-industrial period experienced the risk like natural hazards such as drought, famine and plague. This type of risk that is natural hazards was in consciousness as attributive of external forces such as Gods, demons or nature (Mythen, 2004).

The period of industrial modernity roughly encompassed the first two-thirds of the 20th century, which was characterized by the growing

blending of natural hazards and men made hazards like smoking, drinking and occupation injury. In this stage, distinct knowledge exists for regulating both natural and men made hazards. The application and practices of health and welfare system, environmental agencies and insurance companies are the instances of the knowledge system. Finally, in the risk society, the prevalence of environmental risks such as air pollution, chemical warfare and biotechnology was a note by Beck. These disastrous risks originated from industrial or techno-scientific activities that eventually dominate the social and cultural experience. For Beck, the risk society can be described as:

'A phase of development of modern society in which the social, political, ecological and individual risks are created by the momentum of innovation increasingly allude the control and protective institutions of industrial society' (Mythen, 2004: 16).

And the hazards produced by a risk society are not confined to a particular country or geographical area alone. Due to the impact of globalization, these risks affect all countries and all social classes. They have global rather than personal consequences for a particular country.

13.4.2 Control of Man over Nature in Contemporary Society

In the post-modern society, man has accumulated extensive power over nature and even intended to control nature. Man's controlling of nature created various disastrous risks. Man acquired the knowledge of science and ultimately it generated the nuclear energy, which eventually becomes the source of nuclear weapons of mass destruction. Fossil fuels are the most useful for mankind but because of exploitation of miss-utilization of these, the world has been facing the threat of global warming. The more control of man over nature results in the generation of more risks for humanity. This contradiction between man and nature also reflected in the social structures of contemporary society. Individuals are used to be protected by the Church, the community, family and even the class

structure in modern society. But in post-modern society, individuals are becoming freer, isolated and protection less. Therefore, the problems are now dealing with a psychological problem rather than social or political problems (Slattery, 2003).

Beck pointed out the inherent shift in the relationship between individual and society in contemporary time. A new mode of socialization emerged in society to teach the new members of society about the possible risks of the future. He stated that the aim in class-based societies was the pursuit of wealth and happiness, whereas, risk society has the goal to simply survive. In risk society, ruins produced by risks are now affecting all societies, communities and classes. All are trapped in potential risks of HIV, BSE and biological warfare. It has been argued that people must have to be self-reflective, self-disciplined and self-controlled in order to survive. It means that individuals have to learn how to control their own lives and lifestyles. They also have to learn how to evaluate and manage the risk for their survival. In the present society, it is an individual's decision about the lifestyle, personal habits and personal mores that determine the future. For example, decisions about smoking determine the elimination or spread of cancer; similarly, sexual habits determine the elimination or spread of HIV (Slattery, 2003). The risk society, as he argued, is not limited to environmental and health risks alone, rather it includes a series of interrelated changes taking place within the contemporary society such as, shifting employment pattern, loss of jobs and heightened job insecurity, declining influence of tradition and customs and religion and erosion of traditional family patterns and finally people's urge to seek for democratization of personal relations.

Activity

Development of communication technology like the internet has made human life progressive but at the same time created much

more opportunities for terrorists and smugglers to carry out their destructive actions.

Find out any such example in contemporary society, which has both positive and negative sides.

The Breakdown of Social Insurance

Ulrich Beck pointed out that the unmanageable quality of manufactured risk has been seriously affecting the social institution related to health and security. Beck argued that the rate of technological development is very high and that in result leading to the elevation of environmental risk. It is stated that “*the scope and prevalence of damaging side effects presents problem for public institutions responsible for insuring against risk*” (Mythen, 2004: 20). The destructive and hazardous risks of risk society contrasted with the kind and institutionally manageable risks of the simple industrial stage. In the early and mid-parts of the 20th century, the risks and dangers produced by modernization were manageable through the system of causality, liability and insurance. In 19th century demand of the citizens regarding management and compensation of risks created by technological development was institutionalized through the development of the ‘safety state’. Beck maintained that the welfare systems were gradually developing within nation states and these welfare systems had two common goals: One is the exercise of welfare systems as an antidote to the inevitable problems produced by rapid technological, economic and social change. Other is the formal welfare state, which offered various measures of safety and security needs to the citizens. So there emerged organized systems that developed in health and welfare, the economy, law and insurance. The risk management systems of that time were relatively secure and safe but that was not fixed. Society passed through transitional phases from simple industrial to risk society, as a result, the risk management systems gradually began to transform (Mythen, 2004: 20-21). Beck's argument mentioned here:

In the break into the risk society proper, manufactured risks swell and multiply, revoking existing principles of liability:

“In all the brilliance of their perfection, nuclear power plants have suspended the principle of insurance not only in the economic, but also in the medical, psychological and cultural sense. The residual risk society has become an uninsured society, with protection diminishing as the danger grows” (Mythen, 2004: 21).

13.5 COSMOPOLITANIZATION

Beck focused on the identity and contemporary social structures in terms of ‘Cosmopolitanization’. We have to relate Cosmopolitanization to globalization. Globalization is characterized by diminishing boundaries of nation-state borders and elimination of the distinction between global and local. Financial flows, consumer goods, toxins, cultures, and even identities diffuse across borders, physical or virtual, transforming both interconnections across borders but also within them. The present nation-state cannot control these flows, for example, international media reports on human rights are unable to be controlled and imposed. It is these flows that provide the foundation for Cosmopolitanization (Woodman, Threadgold & Possamai-Inesedy, 2015). Cosmopolitanization is an everyday experience, which is forceful and making insecurity in present society. Beck mentioned that *“both refugees and those protesting their arrival in places like Australia and Europe are facing an ‘enforced’ Cosmopolitanization, even if they would prefer a local and parochial existence”*.

Individuals in risk society may be in together due to their shared insecurity and this is creating new possibility for establishing communities across borders to face the widespread process of extinction caused by risks. Climate threats, nuclear accidents, terrorist attacks and financial disasters have made a global community who are dealing with these violent, destructive obsessions at present. Cosmopolitanization is

responsible to drive cosmopolitanism, a conscious openness and acceptance of the value of the world and its diversity. However, Cosmopolitanization also creates new material, symbolic and psychological incentives to re-establish divisions; to build gated spaces, to respond to growing insecurity by extending existing affluence against others' claims for the right to the same options and possibilities. Beck anticipated for a more cosmopolitan world and advocated a cosmopolitan and reflexive perspective in sociology that recognizes the transnational character of structures, families and identities. But Beck argued that globalization created a new wave of forced Cosmopolitanization, which may lead to a new politics (Woodman, Threadgold & Possamai-Inesedy, 2015).

13.6 SUMMING UP

- Beck considered contemporary society as a risk society. He argued that modernity is replaced by risk society or second modernity.
- Beck argued that progress and development in contemporary society have been affecting human society and becoming more uncontrollable.
- He stated that risks in the present time are unmanageable. Because of unmanageable nature of risks, human beings have been suffering huge disasters.
- Individuals are becoming isolated and collective value has been declining.
- Globalization has been forcing people to be in the cosmopolitan environment actually. Globalization for Beck leading towards cosmopolitanism in society even if people are not willing.

13.7 QUESTIONS

Short Questions:

1. What are the three epochs of the history of society according to Ulrich Beck?
2. What is the difference between modernity and risk society?

Descriptive questions:

1. Discuss the consequences of uncontrolled and unmanageable modernity in the contemporary period.
2. How does Beck portray the risk of technological and scientific development in present society?

13.8 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 14: PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Introduction
14.2 Objectives
14.3 Concept of Public Sociology
14.4 Identity Problem of Sociology
14.5 Burawoy: Sociology's Problem of Public Relations
14.6 Public Sociology and Universal Human Rights
14.7 Summing Up
14.8 Questions
14.9 Recommended Readings and References

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Public sociology as a distinct sector has got its recognition in sociology since Michael Burawoy's use of the concept 'Public Sociology' as the theme of his presidential address at ASA in 2004. This initiation of 'Public Sociology' as distinct sector is followed by a good amount of discussion in several books and a number of symposia and special issues in leading journals all over the world. It was a concern to Burawoy and others that sociology has not been visible to the public. It is either because of sociology's identity problem or the inability of sociologists to produce public-oriented works. In this unit, we will try to highlight the concept of 'Public Sociology'. We will also mention the classification of publics according to Burawoy. The identity problem of sociology and its problem of public relation are also highlighted in this chapter.

14.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the concept of Public Sociology;
- Analyse the different categories of public;
- Discuss Burawoy's concern over sociology's problem of public relations;
- Analyse human rights and sociological understanding of it.

14.3 CONCEPT OF PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

Burawoy meant the concept of 'public sociology' as forms of communication between sociologists and people outside of sociology, 'extra-academic publics' (Kalleberg, 2005). Nature of public sociology has several varieties but here we will confine to the primary one that is any sociological writing or other product created by sociologists, which obtains the attention of the public or a part of it. Sociological writings include books, articles or even paragraphs reporting a new idea or finding. Other products refer to the products created by the various forms of communications such as radio, television, websites, search engines and social media. The sociological products must be presented in clear and simple language. This is helpful for the public as well as presenters, who are not sociologists. The communication of presenters to the public becomes easy if the product is public-oriented. Though the public has the last word, sociologists must enable them to undertake necessary and desirable research and writings. The possibility of doing research in public sociology depends on its usefulness for the public. It is argued that "Moreover, we have the right to present what we believe the public needs to know, especially since the public has the right to ignore us" (Gans, 2015).

Who Constitute the Public?

The public is usually considered as a general public, who constitute of the non-sociologist population although many specific publics are also included in public. In fact, sociologists hardly have any knowledge about their specific publics. But it is the hope that sociologists will carry out research to identify the public, which they need. There are four major publics: two consists of students, and the other two consists of people who completed their schooling. The first public is constituted of college students, who are studying sociology courses. They are mostly

involuntary publics and generally doing assigned readings, although some instructors may assign readings that have already become popular with the non-student public. The second public consists of other college students, who are assigned sociological articles or books in one or more of the courses they are taking. Size of this public may be limited due to the fixed number of students and courses in these two areas. It may even become a significant proportion of the non-student public for sociology in later years. There are again various non-student public who are categorized into class, age, gender and race, but the publisher and other presenters also classify the audience on the basis of the interests on sociological works. To analyse the public further, the distinction between the better and less educated general public must be discussed. The better-educated public consists mainly, but not exclusively, of people who have graduated from reasonably selective colleges. These better-educated peoples include readers of elite news media, the so-called general class magazines, such as The New Yorker, The Atlantic, Harper's and the political journals of opinion, as well as more narrowly targeted publications. This public is also important for other media such as public television, documentaries, books and art movies as well as various websites and social media. The less educated public includes rest of the population also called a mass audience.

Sociologists find it very hard to reach this mass audience because they often lack the skill of writing and creating content for this set of the public. As a result, sociology reaches to this public through journalistic summaries. It has remained just ambiguous about what sociological topics are interested in these two publics without qualitative research. There is an assumption that most people in both public will be primarily interested in sociology, which affects them directly or is personally relevant or useful to their well-being and their everyday lives. These publics may also be interested in sociology that helps them understand significant current events, especially dramatic and traumatic ones such

as wars, disasters and economic crises and also what sociologists call social problems. Audience researchers in the digital media can count how many people click on an item and how much time they spend with it and then get an estimate of the proper size of the public who accepts the products. On the other hand, a significant proportion of public interest in sociology is generated by dramatic events, changing conditions and new problems as well as controversies that arise in the larger society. In fact, it is often perceived that sociology becomes public due to the dramatic events in society. For example, studies in family sociology may attract public because change and trouble in the family are very common and that turn family sociology as public sociology (Gans, 2015).

Who are Presenters of Sociology to Publics?

Public sociology could not be possible without the presenters. In the process of turning sociology into public sociology, attracting the presenters is very important because they sell these to the public. Sociologists must also understand the way in which presenters make contact with their publics and why presenters try to present the sociological product as public sociology. Presenters also keep contact with the sociologists, who are reputed and famous. This is because the products of these sociologists will be accepted by the public. There are several varieties of Presenters: firstly teachers, who assign sociological readings and other digital products to attract the general public. Secondly, journalists and their editors, as well as columnists, writers, book reviewers and others, present sociology to the public. Individual journalist's writing of stories about a sociological study or other work makes it visible to other journalists. But the number is important to make sociology the public sociology. If the other journalists take interest in the same story and then report it, chance is there to attract their audiences and consequently, sociology becomes public sociology. The third type of presenters is a book publisher, both print and e-book, especially firms which mainly publish so-called trade books. Academic presses, when

find one of their books is highly popular in term of selling can turn it into a trade book, or sell the paperback edition to a trade book publisher. The fourth set of presenters can be found in the world of electronic media which still attract comparatively huge audiences even if fewer than in the pre-digital past. The fifth type of presenters is emerging in the world of social media, such as Facebook and its competitors (Gans, 2015).

14.4 IDENTITY PROBLEM OF SOCIOLOGY

According to Michael Burawoy, for sociology to flourish, it needs to be a strong public discipline. He said “*sociology has an unconvincing presentation of self, and is wracked by a marked inability to establish and manage a coherent and public face*” (Boyns and Fletcher, 2005: 5). Sociology has remained invisible to the public and concealed or overshadowed by other social science disciplines such as psychology, economics, and political science. In this circumstance, the emergence of public sociology has raised the issue of public invisibility of sociology. However, the debate emerged over the question of whether or not sociology is ready to become public. The public sociology had very doubtful reception from sociologists. It is stated that “*sociology does not simply have a problem of public relations; sociology itself has an identity crisis*” (Boyns and Fletcher, 2005: 6). But many sociologists got surprised over the question that sociology has a problem of public relations. It is written by Boyns and Fletcher (2005: 6):

The recent attempts to disembowel sociology departments at American universities (Wood, 1998, 1999) only serve to underscore the tenuous legitimacy held by sociology in the academic and public consciousness. We are typically and frequently confronted with the question, “Sociology? (pause) Huh. (pause) What’s that? What exactly do you study? Is it something like psychology?”

These questions can be managed easily but public misconceptions about sociology are seriously giving trouble to sociologists. Often, sociology is

combined by the layman (and even by some academics) with psychology, social philosophy, social work, criminology, social activism, urban studies, public administration, journalism, and even with socialism. The most serious concern regarding the problem of the relations of sociology is our identity with the discipline that is we do not seem to know who we are. There exists confusion over the questions: *“Are we scientists or activists, ideologists or empiricists, symbolic interactionists or functionalists, positivists or postmodernists, philosophers or theorists, teachers or researchers, qualitative or quantitative, micro or macro? The trouble is that in an eclectic way we are a bricolage of all of these elements”* (Boyns and Fletcher, 2005: 6).

It is argued that this polymorphism or union of diverse perspectives tend to cause loosing of disciplinary coherence of sociology. Due to this manifold nature of sociology, it has been appearing as wide-ranging and forming a segmented series of sub-disciplines that have broken into factions and fragments and these segmented sub-disciplines are responsible for creating a competition for obtaining hegemonic status in the discipline as well as for acquiring public attention. Burawoy’s public sociology tried to provide solutions to this problem by resolving sociology’s identity struggles and issue of public appearance.

14.5 BURAWOY: SOCIOLOGY’S PROBLEM OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Burawoy’s advocacy for public sociology raises a question: why is it perceived that sociology needs an institutionalized public sociology? *“Burawoy’s answer is tied to an issue raised by Turner and Turner (1990) in their historical examination of the institutionalization of sociology. While there has been more than one period in sociology’s history where it was viewed as an important and necessary science in the*

public sphere, sociology's contemporary level of influence is suffering"
(Boyns and Fletcher, 2005: 7).

It is stated that sociology has been facing detachment from the public consciousness. This is the reason behind emergence of public sociology. However, it is said that the appearance of public sociology has undoubtedly directed the scope and prospect of sociology towards the larger public. Burawoy argued that one of the main sources of sociology's failure to engender social contributions and achieve societal prominence is its lack of public standing and interface. Burawoy presented a renovated vision of sociology that embodies four "faces"—professional, critical, policy, and public. Burawoy's idea of public sociology mainly aims to inform and influence the greater public. Public sociology is not only for providing sociological knowledge to the wider society but also aimed to be directed toward the establishment of meaningful public conversations toward the advancement of the social good. According to Burawoy public sociology has two distinct but complementary manifestations: traditional and organic public sociologies. On the one hand, traditional public sociology is based upon an accidental or providential engagement with the public. Sociologists associated with traditional public sociology do not intentionally address the public but develop important and insightful products during their activities that come to acquire significant public attention. Organic public sociology is based upon an intentional and conscious public engagement. Here the sociologists work in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local and often counter public. Sociologists are associated with this primarily produced sociological insights related to the public sphere and work together with the public for the solution of problems. Traditional and organic public sociologies are not antithetical but complementary. Each informs the other.

Table 1

	Burawoy's Model of Public Sociology	
	Academic Audience	Extra-academic audience
Instrumental Knowledge	Professional Sociology	Policy Sociology
Reflexive Knowledge	Critical Sociology	Public Sociology

Source: (Boyns and Fletcher, 2005:9).

According to Burawoy, all these forms of sociology are elements of a composite whole. Professional sociology is often critical; critical sociology is found in policy sociology; policy sociology is embedded in the professional path; all three are the different aspects of the public, and so on with many other combinations. In fact, public sociology is not only a *type* of sociology but also a dimension of any one of the other forms of sociology. According to Burawoy, professional sociology is that form of sociology, which is organized by theoretically guided empirical research activities and it primarily focuses on the scientific investigation of social reality. To Burawoy, the conversations and debates among sociologists in academic journals, classrooms, conference rooms, and behind closed doors are examples of professional sociology. *“In his approach, professional sociology is the sine qua non of sociology itself (Burawoy,*

2005c: 10) *providing the foundation for all other dimensions of sociological practice*” (Boyns and Fletcher, 2005: 9).

Critical sociology is another form of sociology that is self-reflexive, providing the basis of sociology’s self-examination and critique. It acts as a self-monitoring mechanism for sociology. Policy sociology is that performance of sociology given by sociologists, who are hired by any organizations or state machinery to frame any policy. In short, policy sociology is sociological work that are undertaken under the guidance of an agreement, oriented toward the pragmatic investigation of specific clients’ requests. Burawoy’s model of the sociology is a combination of four forms of sociology. According to him, sociologists should work in the way of interdependent and dialectic fashion, together providing the support and coherency to the discipline as a whole (Boyns and Fletcher, 2005: 9).

14.5.1 Public Sociology and Universal Human Rights

It is noted from Burawoy’s argument that “*field of international human rights will not contribute to any fundamental changes in professional sociology, but professional sociologists can contribute to the study of human rights*” (Howard-Hassmann, 2009: 360). The scholars of mostly political science rather than sociology are basically involved in quantitative work on human rights, which merely measures the achievement of human rights. For professional sociology, human rights are usually a dependent variable. Sociologists usually deal with questions like, how human rights are achieved and protected, how citizens view human rights and how human rights are ensured or gained by marginalized social groups. Sociology can also contribute to the understanding of how human rights are realized, rather than violated. Professional sociology, then, has much to offer the academic study of human rights but it has become the subject matter of fields of law, philosophy, and international relations.

Critical sociology is also relevant to understanding human rights. Sociologists like other social scientists can be critical of the societies on the basis of a common standard of achievement given by international law of human rights. Burawoy wanted to focus only on criticism within the profession, and moreover by pronouncing himself a Marxist. The common standard of human rights is applied to all political regimes, including Marxist, socialist, fascist, liberal, and social democratic (Howard-Hassmann, 2009: 361).

14.6 SUMMING UP

- Public sociology mainly focuses on the acceptance and consumption of sociological writings by the public.
- It is observed that sociology has been invisible to the public. Sociology can focus on many burning issues of the present world.
- Burawoy pointed out the problem of the sociologists who do not know their own identity within the discipline.
- There is a confusion over the sociological outlook on any issue with other social science perspectives.
- Many times sociology gets overshadowed by other social science disciplines.
- Sociology needs to focus on the theoretical application in social issues.
- There must be sociological works which can attract the different categories of public including academic and non-academic.

14.7 QUESTIONS

Short Questions:

1. What is public sociology?

2. Who constitute the public for sociology?
3. What are the different types of public?
4. Name the presenters of sociological works to public.

Descriptive Questions:

1. Discuss sociology's problem of public relations.
2. Discuss Burawoy's idea of public sociology.

14.8 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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