



METHODS OF SOCIOLOGICAL ENQUIRY

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY**

EXPERT COMMITTEE

Prof. Roma Chatterjee
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Delhi School of Economics,
University of Delhi, Delhi

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Mumbai

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Director
School of Social Sciences
IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof. Debal K. Singharoy
Discipline of Sociology,
School of Social Sciences
IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof. T. Kapoor
Discipline of Sociology,
School of Social Sciences
IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof. N. Mathur
Discipline of Sociology,
School of Social Sciences
IGNOU, New Delhi

Dr. Rabindra Kumar
Discipline of Sociology,
School of Social Sciences
IGNOU, New Delhi

Dr. Archana Singh
Discipline of Sociology,
School of Social Sciences
IGNOU, New Delhi

Dr. B. Kiranmayi
Discipline of Sociology,
School of Social Sciences
IGNOU, New Delhi

Dr. R. Vashum
Discipline of Sociology,
School of Social Sciences
IGNOU, New Delhi

COURSE COORDINATOR

Prof. Debal K. Singharoy
Discipline of Sociology,
School of Social Sciences
IGNOU, New Delhi

COURSE EDITOR

Prof. Abhijit Dasgupta
Department of Sociology,
Delhi School of Economics,
University of Delhi, Delhi

ACADEMIC CONSULTANT

Dr. Vinod Kumar Yadav
Discipline of Sociology,
School of Social Sciences
IGNOU, New Delhi

COURSE WRITERS

Unit 1 Research in Social Sciences

Dr. Binu Sundas,
Miranda House,
Delhi University, Delhi

Unit 2 Theory and Research

Dr. Binu Sundas,
Miranda House,
Delhi University, Delhi

Unit 3 Objectivity in Social Sciences

Dr. Binu Sundas,
Miranda House, Delhi University,
Delhi

Unit 4 Reflexivity

Dr. Binu Sundas,
Miranda House, Delhi University,
Delhi

Unit 5 Historical Method

Dr. Reema Bhatia,
Miranda House, Delhi University,
Delhi

Unit 6 Comparative Method

Dr. Reema Bhatia,
Miranda House, Delhi University,
Delhi

Unit 7 Ethnomethodology

Suraj Kumar Singh

Unit 8 Feminist Perspectives for Research

Dr. Reema Bhatia,
Miranda House, Delhi University,
Delhi

Unit 9 Quantitative Method of Enquiry

Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri, (Dep'tt. of
Sociology) School of Social
Sciences,
Netaji Subhas Open University,
West Bengal.

Unit 10 Qualitative Method

Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri,
(Dep'tt. of Sociology),
School of Social Sciences,
Netaji Subhas Open University,
West Bengal.

Unit 11 ICT in Social Research

Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri,
(Dep'tt. of Sociology),
School of Social Sciences,
Netaji Subhas Open University,
West Bengal.

PRINT PRODUCTION

Mr. Tilak Raj
Assistant Registrar (Pub.)
MPDD, IGNOU, New Delhi

Mr. Yashpal
Section Officer (Pub.)
MPDD, IGNOU, New Delhi

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

Social science research can be defined as the act of re-examining the social world with the goal of better understanding or explaining why or how people behave. This definition emphasises the rediscovery process that is always rooted in research. Therefore, the word 'research' can be interpreted as 'renewed search' or 're-examination'. Research in social sciences seeks to add to the existing knowledge about the reality. However, social research is not as simple as it seems and the doing of social research includes methods and tools and techniques of research, which helps us to draw causal relationships, inter-relationship between variables and testing of hypothesis. Research is not a work for an ordinary person but a specialized work that needs to be done by trained and qualified people, so that the inquiry, re-examination of the reality is done in a systematic manner, which therefore depends on the disciplinary orientation of the researcher. Social research involves learning something new about the social world. A researcher therefore, needs to think logically, follow rules and repeat steps over and over. S/he combines theories or ideas with facts in a systematic way and uses his or her imagination and creativity. Hence **Unit 1** discusses what is social research, what are the alternatives to social research, the sociological imagination in social research, perspectives on research and significance of qualitative and quantitative research in social sciences.

Unit 2 is on Theory and Research. Theory has an important role in research and it is indispensable for research. In the course of research theories are used by researchers in different manner. Different researchers need different theories. However, some theoretical underpinnings are always present in most social research. The influence of theory is found to be more profound in explanatory than in descriptive research. The relationship between theory and research becomes pertinent as it determines the framework and rationale for the research undertaken. Research plays an important role in advancing the theoretical knowledge either by adding to the existing knowledge or by falsifying the existing knowledge on a particular topic or by bringing into existence new knowledge on unexplored domains. Development of theory depends on research and research relies upon theories, as latter guides the former in terms of the data required. Therefore, research is the means for progress of theory and is the method used to gather data required for the theory. These issues are discussed in this unit.

Unit 3 is on objectivity in social sciences. The concern for objectivity in social science research in general and sociology in particular has been there since the discipline of sociology was conceptualized by Auguste Comte. As sociology is a subject which studies humans who have their own faculty to react to the external stimulus, unlike the matter in the natural sciences, it was found difficult by the founding fathers to establish sociology as the science of society at par with the natural sciences, owing to the methods and methodology. Objectivity therefore was a concern for all to establish sociology as a science. This unit has discussed at length Durkheim's Weber's and Popper's views on objectivity.

Unit 4 is on Reflexivity. Reflexivity is the process by which the researcher reflects upon the data collection and interpretation process. As part of the social research, reflexivity is the process by which the researcher reflects upon the data collection and interpretation process. After going through this unit you will be able to understand the meaning of reflexivity and how it is useful in social science

research. The unit will help you understand the meaning and significance of reflexivity with the help of the works of A. Gouldner, H. Garfinkel and P. Bourdieu.

In **Unit 5** several dimensions of historical method are discussed. The historical method, as the name implies, is a method which uses history to understand societies. The use of history helps us understand the way in which the past has impacted and influenced the present day societies. We will look at the use of historical method for explanations in sociology. In this unit you will learn how the use of the historical method has changed over a period of time. In the first few sections we will be dealing with the use of the historical method from the perspective of Radcliffe-Brown. Consequently, we will be looking at the method as it was used by the evolutionists and later by the ethnologists. In the later sections we will discuss the use of the historical method by the social anthropologists and later by scholars in the 20th century. In the concluding section we will examine the use of the historical method in India.

Unit 6 is on the Comparative Method. The objectives of this unit is to introduce you to the comparative method of research. You will be introduced to different ways in which comparative method has been used by different sociologists and social anthropologists. Further, this unit will also help you understand how statistically comparative method can be employed in doing cross cultural research. The unit will also introduce you to some of the problems of this method as pointed out by some social anthropologists.

In **Unit 7** is on Ethnomethodology. In this unit we will try to understand how society is studied through ethnomethodological approach. But first we will try to know what does ethnomethodology mean? What does it explain about how social life functions? Unless we grapple with these basic ideas of this approach, we would not be able to proceed with the discussion on this approach. Ethnomethodologists argue that nothing is sacred to be critiqued, and even the most basic concepts of classical sociology must be revisited. You be able to understand that ethnomethodology is not a theoretical rebuttal to classical sociological theory, rather it adopts the scientific vision to produce an account of how the objectivity of social facts are constructed through individuals as members of the society. Ethnomethodology, therefore, is an approach that takes seriously the implications of the routine observation of social activities.

Unit 8 is on **Feminist Perspectives for Research**. The emergence of the feminist methodology challenged this way of studying society. In the initial phases it emerged as a critique to the positivist epistemology¹ that prevailed in the social sciences. It questioned the way that gender had been largely ignored, studied and presented by the positivists. They argued that almost aspects of society include a gendered perspective. The proponents of the feminist methodology argued for a methodology that made the gendered aspects of society visible. The debates over feminist research range from arguing about the epistemology to the methods used. There is no single method of research. The chapter looks at the way that feminist methodologies has changed and evolved over a period of time. All these issues are discussed at length in this unit.

In **Unit 9** is on Quantitative Method. In quantitative research, the presumed assumptions are tested by setting up a tentative statement or hypothesis that is either supported or nullified. The test is done through data collected, which finally decides the fate of the hypothesis. One of the most commonly used design is the

experimental one where behaviors or attitudes of the respondents are adjudged both before and after the experiment. An objective measurement with a high quality of reliability and validity is designed to collect the data. Finally, the information is analysed by using statistical procedures and hypothesis testing. To learn the history and traditions of qualitative research. This unit will acquaint you with the theories and paradigms of quantitative research, types of quantitative research, various world-views and perspectives related to quantitative research, develop acquaintance with the research strategies of quantitative research.

Unit 10 is on Qualitative Method. Qualitative research investigates those dimensions of life which are not suitable for quantitative or objective analysis. It is a field of enquiry in its own right, one which refuses to tread the line of others. Qualitative research is therefore the assemblage of a set of complicated concepts and operations which owe their allegiance to various sources and lineages. It is concerned with various theoretical visions and therefore are apt in using various methods and techniques of data collection. To learn the history and traditions of qualitative research. This unit has tried to acquaint oneself with the theories and paradigms and research strategies of qualitative research, methods of data collection and analysis in qualitative research and to develop a world view of the art, politics, practices and ethics of data interpretation and evaluation in qualitative research.

Unit 11 is on ICT in Social Research. ICT or Information and Communication Technologies or ICT refers to such technologies that provide us access to the vast body of knowledge through telecommunications. This may include a wide range of communication technologies like the internet, wireless networks, cellular phones, and of, course other modes of communications. Undoubtedly, information and communication technologies had gifted our society with an extensive range of dynamic communication modalities which enabled our people to communicate in real-time especially with others¹ inhabiting far-off countries through such technologies as instant messaging, voice over IP, Video Conferencing and teleconferences. Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram allow users across the globe to establish contacts with one another frequently and with considerable warmth and comfort. We can say that ICT serves as the base of modern computation which in turn had engineered the most modern form of virtual communication and dialogue. Though it is quite difficult to find one universal definition for ICT, we generally take the coinage to mean all those apparatus, devices, network-related configurations, applications and system rubrics that grossly account for individuals and government or corporate bodies, that work in unison as stakeholders to interact themselves or to enable interaction in a digitized world.

UNIT 1 RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCES*

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Alternatives to Social Research
 - 1.2.1 Common Sense
 - 1.2.2 Personal Experiences
 - 1.2.3 Premature Closure
 - 1.2.4 Halo Effect
- 1.3 Sociological Imagination in Social Research
- 1.4 Durkheim and his Prescription for Sociological Research
- 1.5 Qualitative and Quantitative Research
 - 1.5.1 Qualitative Research
 - 1.5.2 The Intellectual Underpinnings of Qualitative Research
 - 1.5.3 Phenomenology
 - 1.5.4 Symbolic Interactionism
 - 1.5.5 Characteristics of Qualitative Research
 - 1.5.5.1 Nature of Quantitative Research
 - 1.5.5.2 The Positivist Position
 - 1.5.5.3 Some Preoccupations of Quantitative Research
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able understand:

- What is Social Research?
- What are the alternatives to Social Research?
- The Sociological Imagination in Social Research;
- Durkheim and his perspectives on research; and
- Qualitative and Quantitative Research.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

All human beings are some type of researchers who give meaning to, interpret and predict their social world. This work of researching and theorising about society encompasses an infinite number of topics. Some of us may be concerned with the election taking place in the social surrounding, while others may be concerned with drug addiction and violence in the society, some in the problem of unemployment, and some in the farmer's suicides that are taking place in the country, while some may be concerned with their personal lives, some may be concerned with the climate change taking place. We may as a whole be concerned with both the micro and the macro issues that are happening in our village and to those happening at the global level. We are interested in understanding and

* Dr. Binu Sundas, Miranda House, Delhi University, Delhi

explaining our everyday experiences. This basic sense of curiosity is the foundation of social science research.

Human beings are not receptors of ideas but react to it accordingly. Because of this nature of human beings, the social reality, which is always changing, poses many questions to the human race to understand, interpret give meaning and predict to this changing social reality. Because of this dynamic character of both the human beings and the social reality, research in social sciences holds a special place. In such a situation research becomes an important tool in understanding the reality and the causes that are leading to changes as well as resisting changes. Therefore, social research is a systematised effort to gain new knowledge. Social research helps us in adding new knowledge by supporting or disagreeing with the existing forms of knowledge.

Various definition of social science research has been put forward by scholars. Some of the important definitions of social research are as follows.

Social science research can be defined as the act of re-examining the social world with the goal of better understanding or explaining why or how people behave. This definition emphasises the rediscovery process that is always rooted in research. Therefore, the word 'research' can be interpreted as 'renewed search' or 're-examination'

P.V. Young defines social research as "the systematic method of discovering the new facts or verifying the old facts, their sequences, inter relationship, causal explanations and the natural laws which govern them." Stephenson defines social research as "a manipulation of things concepts or symbols for the purpose of generalizing to extend correct and verifying knowledge, whether that knowledge aids in the construction of a theory or in the practice of an art." Social research is also defined as comprising of defining and redefining problems; formulating hypothesis or suggesting solutions; collecting organising and evaluating data, making deduction and making conclusions; and at last carefully testing the conclusions to determine whether they fit the formulated hypothesis.

From the definitions discussed above it is clear that research in social sciences seeks to add to the existing knowledge about the reality. However, social research is not as simple as it seems and the doing of social research includes methods and tools and techniques of research, which helps us to draw causal relationships, inter-relationship between variables and testing of hypothesis. From the definitions it is also clear that the research is not a work for an ordinary person but a specialized work that needs to be done by trained and qualified people, so that the inquiry, re-examination of the reality is done in a systematic manner, which therefore depends on the disciplinary orientation of the researcher.

Social research involves learning something new about the social world. A researcher therefore, needs to think logically, follow rules and repeat steps over and over. S/he combines theories or ideas with facts in a systematic way and uses his or her imagination and creativity.

1.2 ALTERNATIVES TO SOCIAL RESEARCH

Many things that we know today are learned through an alternative to social research. A great part of our knowledge is based on what our parents and others

have told us. You may also have knowledge based on personal experiences. An individual can acquire information/knowledge also through the use of common sense. Whereas, the social research is more structured, organized and systematic process, these alternatives are not. Some of the alternatives that we encounter in our daily lives are commonsense, media myths and personal experiences.

1.2.1 Common Sense

Sociology draws a great deal from commonsense as the former touches the everyday experiences of lay persons. As a result there is a tendency to use one in place of the other. Sociological knowledge tends to be general, if not universal, on the other hand commonsense knowledge is particular and localised (*Beteille* 2009). Commonsense is not only localised it is also unreflective since it does not question its own origin and presuppositions. Further, sociology also helps us to show that commonsense is highly variable. Sociology helps us to understand a society and this could be deepened and broadened by systematic comparison between one society with other whereas commonsense is not in a position to reach such an understanding. This becomes possible because sociology makes use of its tools and techniques for systematic investigation of the object while commonsense involves preconception, which is rejected by sociology. Commonsense easily constructs imaginary social arrangements which is utopian whereas sociology is anti utopian in its central preoccupation with the disjunction between ideal and reality in human societies. Sociology is also anti fatalistic in its orientation. it does not accept the particular constraints taken for granted by commonsense as eternal or immutable. It provides a clearer awareness than commonsense of the range of alternatives that have been or may be devised for the attainment of broadly the same ends. Sociology is further value neutral and free of all forms of biases and value judgements but commonsense is often a source of biases and errors.

Commonsense knowledge is the routine knowledge people have of their everyday world and activities. Different sociological approaches adopt different attitudes to commonsense knowledge. The concept is central to Alfred Schutz's phenomenological sociology, where it refers to organized and typified stocks of taken for granted knowledge upon which activities are based and that in the natural attitude are not questioned. For ethnomethodologists commonsense or tacit knowledge is a constant achievement in which people draw on implicit rules of how to carry on and which produce a sense of organisation and coherence. For symbolic interactionists and other interpretive sociologists there is a less rigorous analysis of commonsense knowledge, but the central aim of sociology is seen as explicating and elaborating people's conceptions of the social world.

However, some sociologists see commonsense knowledge as different from, if not opposed to, sociological understanding. For Durkheim sociology must break free of the prejudice of commonsense perceptions before it can produce scientific knowledge of the social world. For Marxists much commonsense knowledge is ideological or at least very limited in its understanding of the world. Therefore, to begin with we should see the difference between knowledge derived from commonsense and those having origin in sociological research and systematic methods.

1.2.2 Personal Experiences

Many things in this world are understood to be true on the basis of personal experiences and it is considered to be a legitimate source of knowledge. However, knowledge based on personal experiences can lead us astray. What is considered to be true may be the result of some form of distortion in judgement which leads to errors. Research avoids such errors but unfortunately many times such error prone personal experiences are accepted as the truth. Personal experiences may therefore lead to four types of errors. These errors are overgeneralization, selective observation, premature closure and halo effect.

Overgeneralization occurs when you have some evidence that you believe and then assume that it applies to many other situations. Sometime this may go far beyond what can be justified based on the data or empirical observation that one has.

Selective Observation occurs when an individual takes special notice of a small portion of the reality and generalize from them. Selective observation involves making observation in a way that it reinforces pre-existing thinking rather than observation in a neutral and balanced manner.

1.2.3 Premature Closure

It operates with and reinforces the first two errors. Premature closure occurs when the researcher feels that he has all the answers and do not need to listen, seek information or raise questions any longer. It means that the researcher makes a judgement, or ends the investigation before one has the amount or depth of evidence required by scientific standards.

1.2.4 Halo Effect

The halo effect states that we overgeneralize from what we believe to be highly positive or prestigious. It means that we allow the prior reputation of the person, places or things to colour ones evaluation rather than evaluating all in a neutral and equal manner.

1.3 SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

The sociological imagination is the sociological vision, a way at looking at the world that can see connections between the apparently private problems of the individual and important social issues. The sociological imagination requires us, above all, to 'think ourselves away' from the familiar routines of our daily lives in order to look at them anew. Sociological imagination argues for a humanist sociology connecting the social, personal and historical dimension of our lives and which is critical of abstracted empiricism and grand theory alike. Consider the simple act of drinking a cup of coffee. What could we find to say, from a sociological point of view, about such an apparently uninteresting piece of behaviour? An enormous amount. We could point out, first of all, that coffee is not just a refreshment. It has symbolic value as part of our day-ta-day social activities. Often the ritual associated with coffee-drinking is much more important than the simple act of consuming the drink. In all societies, drinking and eating

provide occasions for social interaction and the enactment of rituals - and these offer a rich subject matter for sociological study.

Adopting a sociological imagination allows us to see that many events which appear to concern only the individual actually reflect larger issues. Divorce, for instance, may be a very difficult process for someone who goes through it - what Mills calls a 'personal trouble'. But divorce is also a significant 'public issue' in many societies across the world. In Britain, over a third of all marriages ends in divorce within ten years. Therefore, the use of sociological imagination in social science research leads us to the larger picture. It allows us to generalize from experiences in everyday life.

1.4 DURKHEIM AND HIS PRESCRIPTION FOR SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Social science research is different from the natural science research. Durkheim advocated two basic procedures for establishing sociological proofs. The first procedure involved the examination of the cause and effect relationship between social phenomena. The second procedure was the method of concomitant variation. But the question was how do we examine this cause and effect relationship. Durkheim was of the opinion that a comparison could be made of those phenomena where both were simultaneously present and see whether the variations they display in these circumstances suggest that one depends upon the other. When the phenomena can be artificially created at the will of the observer the method is called experimental method. On the contrary, if the production of facts is not within our control and we can only bring them together in the way that they have been spontaneously produced. The method employed is called the indirect experiment or the comparative method.

For Durkheim sociological explanation rests exclusively in connecting a phenomenon to its cause or a cause to its effect. Since the social phenomena are beyond the control of the researcher and can escape the experimenter, comparative method, for Durkheim was the only method suitable for sociology. In this manner he rejected the historical method advocated by Comte. Further, Durkheim tried to establish the sociological proofs, rejected John Stuart Mill's declaration that even indirect experimentation is inapplicable to sociology. He in particular attacked Mill's postulate that the same effect can be the result from various causes. Therefore, if we wish to use the comparative method by conforming to the principle of causality to demonstrate the sociological proof we have to follow the following proposition '*A given effect has always a single corresponding cause*' (Durkheim 1958: 128).

However, Durkheim argued that not all forms of comparative method were equally applicable to the study of social facts. He, in order to illustrate this, critiqued the five canons of experimental inquiry contained in Mill's *System of Logic*. More specifically, Durkheim objected Mill's Method of Agreement, Method of Difference, Joint Method of Agreement and Difference and Method of Residue. The fifth canon of the concomitant variable was however not criticized by Durkheim.

Durkheim then proposed three methods by which such serial systematic variations might be formed. First when dealing with very general facts about which we

have extensive statistical data, the sociologist might limit his study to a single unique society. But a second method i.e. collecting facts from several societies of the same social type makes available a more extensive field of comparison. The sociologist could now confront the history of one society with another, to see if the same phenomenon evolves over time in response to the same conditions. But this method is applicable only to phenomena which have arisen during the existence of the societies in question and thus ignores that part of a society's social organisation which is inherited, ready made from earlier societies.

The Third method was the genetic method. The genetic method yields both an analysis and synthesis of the facts under study by showing how each component element of the phenomenon was successively added to the other, it reveals them in their dissociated state and by means of the broad field of comparison, the fundamental conditions on which the formation and association of these elements depend are determined. *'Consequently, one cannot explain a social fact on any complexity save on condition that one follows its entire development throughout all species'* (Durkheim, 1958:139). Durkheim warned in attempted to judge the direction of social evolution, the sociologist compares the state of a social fact during the decline of one society with its state during the early stages of its successor. Durkheim concluded, to arrive at a just comparison *'it will suffice to consider the societies compared at the same period of their development'* (Durkheim, 1958:140).

Therefore according to Durkheim the characteristics of social research is that it is independent of all preconceptions whether philosophical or practical and it is objective.

1.5 QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Researches in social science can be divided into two primary categories, the qualitative and the quantitative research.

1.5.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research in social sciences basically depends on observation and interaction in the field where the research is being conducted. The interaction with the subjects is done in the language of the subjects and this tradition of doing research owes a lot to anthropology. Anthropologists like Franz Boas, Evans-Pritchard have contributed immensely towards the development of this tradition of doing research. In sociology this way of doing research gained prominence under the guidance of Robert E. Park. He encouraged his students to observe in detail the diversity, heterogeneity and complexities of the city. Qualitative research is naturalistic, participatory and ethnographic in its approach.

Qualitative research employs a number of method of data collection but the most important is the participant observation, which entails the involvement of the researcher among those whom (s)he seeks to study with a view to generate a rounded in-depth account of the group, organisation etc. Qualitative research is an approach to the study of the social world which seeks to describe and analyse the culture behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of the those being studied. Along with the participant observation unstructured interview,

in which the researcher provides a minimal guidance and allows considerable latitude for interviewees, is also a favoured technique. Life history method, which entails the reconstruction of the lives of the one or more individuals is also another method used in qualitative research. The sources of data are varied and includes diaries and autobiographies, the two most important sources of for generating histories. Group discussion is another method used by qualitative approach. It is essentially a form of unstructured interview but involves more than one subject. This method is gaining importance gradually these days.

1.5.2 The Intellectual Underpinnings of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research derives from a different intellectual underpinnings than the quantitative research. The main intellectual undercurrents which tend to be viewed as providing qualitative research with its distinct epistemology are: phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, verstehen, naturalism and ethnogenics.

1.5.3 Phenomenology

Phenomenological perspectives in sociology reject many of the assumptions of positivism. It involves a systematic investigation of the consciousness which is considered to be the only phenomenon that we can be sure off. They argue that the subject matter of the social and natural sciences is fundamentally different. Therefore they assume that the methods and assumptions of the natural sciences are inappropriate to the study of man. They are of the opinion that natural sciences deal with matter and to understand it, it is enough to observe them from outside as they do not have consciousness, meaning and purpose which direct their behaviour. They react to external stimuli. Phenomenologists believes that unlike matter man has consciousness thoughts, feelings meanings, intentions, and an awareness of being. Because of this his actions are meaningful, he defines situations and gives meanings to his actions and those of others. As a result, he does not simply reacts to external stimuli, he does not simply behave but he acts. Man does not just react to fire, he acts upon it in terms of the meaning he gives to it. If action comes from the subjective meanings it follows that sociologists must discover those meaning in order to understand action. Sociologists cannot simply observe action from the outside and impose an external logic upon it. he must interpret the internal logic which directs the action of the actor. Max Weber was one of the first sociologists to outline this perspective.

1.5.4 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism advocates that meanings emerge through the process of interaction. It views social life as a process in which the individual interprets his environment and acts on the basis of this interpretation. There are two important concepts in this theory, the definition of the situation and the social self. The definition of the situation means that the idea that people's actions are shaped more by the subjective meaning given to their situation than by the purely objective aspects of the situation. individuals construct the meaning of the situation on the basis of their experiences, needs and wishes and also on the basis of the customs and beliefs of the social group. The social self is a process. Self is the result of the dialectic of I and me. Action and interaction is part of the process—we do not simply act but we act on the basis of how we define the situation and how we think others will view our actions. The theory has four key foci—

- 1) It focus on the ways in which human beings are distinctly ‘symbol manipulating animals.’ It is through symbols men are capable of producing culture and transmitting history.’
- 2) For the symbolic interactionist the social world is a dynamic and dialectical web, situations are always encountered with unstable outcomes and lives and their biographies are always in the process of shifting and becoming, never fixed and permanent.
- 3) Social world is always interactive i.e. humans are always connected to one another.
- 4) Symbolic interactionism looks beyond symbols, processes and interaction in order to determine underlying patterns or forms of social life.

The other intellectual underpinnings are versthenn, naturalism and ethnogenics.

1.5.5 Characteristics of Qualitative Research

A Subject’s Perspective: The most important characteristic of qualitative research is that it sees events, action, norms values etc. from the point of the people being studied. Therefore, it becomes important for the researcher to spend long time in the field.

Description: One of the very essential characteristic is to describe the social setting that is being studied in greater details. It helps to understand what is happening in a particular context and gives hint to realities. However, qualitative research goes beyond description and also tries to provide analyses of the environment they examine. Description gives a social context to view the events and situations being studied.

Context: Qualitative research entails that we understand social entities as a whole in their entirety. The implication of context is that the meanings people give to their own behaviour have to be seen in the context of the norms and values, beliefs and practices and underlying structure of the appropriate entity as well as the multiple perceptions that spread.

Dynamic Social Life: Qualitative research views social life as a process and not in static terms. It looks at social life as a series of events so tends to emphasis on changes. The emphasis on process is a response to the qualitative researcher’s concern to reflect the reality of everyday life which they tend to argue takes the forms of streams of interconnecting events.

Flexible and Lack of Structure: Qualitative research is open and unstructured and do not seem to decide what to study beforehand. Because of this, proponents of qualitative research argue that it allows them access to unexpected but important topics.

Theories and Concepts: Qualitative research reject the formulations of theories and concepts in advance at the beginning of their studies. It favours testing of theories and concepts in tandem with the fieldwork findings.

1.5.5.1 Nature of Quantitative Research

Quantitative research exhibits many qualities of natural sciences approach. Quantitative research is supported by natural science model which means that the logic and proceedings of the natural sciences are taken to provide an epistemological standard against which empirical research in social sciences are evaluated before it can be treated as valid knowledge. It is associated with a number of different methods of data collection. Social survey is one of the main methods of data collection. Most survey research is based on an underlying research design which is called correlational or cross-sectional. Surveys and experiment are the main methods of quantitative research but three others are also important.

- 1) Analysis of previously collected data like the official statistics. Durkheim's analysis of suicide statistics is often treated as an example of this tradition.
- 2) Structured observation, whereby the researcher records observation according to a predetermined schedule and quantifies the resulting data.
- 3) Content Analysis, the quantitative analysis of the communication content of media such as newspapers.

The epistemology upon which quantitative research is based on a set of preconditions, and mere presence of numbers is unlikely to be sufficient. Collection of practices and assumptions are part and parcel of quantitative research. It is important to follow the natural science approach because it provides sound basis against which knowledge can be judged. It is argued that the methods of natural science are applicable to the study of society. Therefore the precise nature of scientific method forms the basis of quantitative research.

1.5.5.2 The Positivist Position

Many of the founding fathers of sociology believed that sociology could be based on the principles and procedures of natural sciences. This is the basic premise of positivism. Auguste Comte believed that the application of the methods of the natural sciences would produce a positive science of society and this could reveal that the evolution of society followed the 'invariable laws'. It would show that the behaviour of man was governed by the principles of cause and effect which were just as invariable as the behaviour of matter, the subject of the natural sciences.

The positivist approach makes the following assumptions:

- 1) The behaviour of man, like the behaviour of matter can be objectively measured. Just as the behaviour of matter can be quantified by measures such as weights, temperature and pressure, methods of objective measurement can be devised for human behaviour.
- 2) Emphasises on the behaviour that can be directly observed. It argues that factors which are not directly observed such as meanings, feelings, and purpose are not particularly important and can be misleading. This emphasis on the observable behaviour is largely due to the belief that human behaviour can be explained in much the same ways as the behaviour of the matter.

Therefore, it means that those phenomena which are not observable directly or indirectly are considered to produce valid knowledge. This means that knowledge is derived through verified facts.

- 3) Knowledge derived through verified facts helps in theory building.
- 4) Positivism is also often taken to require a particular stance in relation to value. This can be understood in two ways. First, the scientist should eradicate all his values which may impair his objectivity and so undermine the validity of knowledge. Second is to draw a sharp distinction between scientific issues and statements on the one hand and normative ones on the other. Positivism denies the appropriateness of the sphere of the normative to its purview because normative statements cannot be verified in relation to experience.

1.5.5.3 Some Preoccupations of Quantitative Research

1) Concepts and their Measurements

Concepts provide central focus of research but they are loosely related to theoretical considerations. To test a causal processes a researcher needs to associate these concepts with one another. therefore the social world is broken into composite parts like the social class, race, racial prejudice, caste, caste discrimination, religion etc. Hypotheses are not derived from theories but from doing literature review relating to concepts. The positivist leanings of quantitative research strongly reveal that concepts have to be made observable that is measureable. It is also necessary that we have a definition of concepts so that it can be measured and a precise standard is developed to know its presence or absence. The measurement of concepts is done with the help of tools like questionnaire or structured observation.

2) Causality

Quantitative research is preoccupied with establishing the causal relationships between concepts. The use of independent and dependent variables shows the tendency to use causal imagination during investigation. The two main approaches used to generate causality is associated with the experimental and cross-sectional social survey research design. Internal validity helps to cancel all other alternative explanation related to the causal relation between variables.

3) Generalisation

The quantitative researcher is concerned to establish that the results of a particular research can be generalised beyond the confines of the research location. This preoccupation is manifest itself in a great deal of attention being paid to sampling issues and in particular the representativeness of the samples. Establishing generality leads the quantitative researcher to copying the methods and styles of natural science. With generality quantitative research draws nearer to the law like findings of the sciences because of this quantitative research is given less importance by qualitative researchers as they believe that establishing general laws in the study of society is utopian.

4) Replication

The replication of established finding is often taken to be a characteristic of the natural sciences. Replication can provide a means of checking the extent to which

findings are applicable to other contexts. Few quantitative researchers subscribe to a view that research can be value-free, therefore replication can act as a check on any excess use of value judgements. Quantitative researchers criticise qualitative researchers as qualitative researches are not suitable for replication. However, replications are rare in social sciences research.

5) Individualism

Quantitative research tends to treat the individual as the focus of empirical inquiry. This focus on individuals is derived because survey instruments are administered to individuals as discrete objects of inquiry. Their responses are then aggregated to form overall measures for the sample. This individualism in quantitative research arises due to its techniques of investigation which use the individual as the source of data, largely independently of other individuals.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have tried to discuss the nature of social research and its alternatives. We have focused on the use of sociological imagination and how it is useful in social research. We have also tried to understand Durkheim's perspective on social research. Most importantly we have discussed in details the two primary approaches to social research, qualitative and quantitative methods of doing social research and significance of positivism as a research method has been highlighted. In this section we have tried to bring to your attention the theoretical underpinnings of both these approaches.

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GLOSSARY

Verstehen: The term means to understand in German. Weber recognised two forms of understanding: 'direct observational understanding' of the subjective meaning of a given act and 'explanatory' or 'motivational' understanding in which the particular act has been placed in an understandable sequence of action, the understanding of which can be treated as an explanation of the actual course of behaviour.

Naturalism: The term can be understood in two different senses. First, it is understood as a term which describes the belief in the applicability of the natural science model to the study of social reality. Second, the term implies that the researcher should treat the phenomena being studied as naturally as possible and should to minimise the adulteration of the setting under investigation as far as possible.

Ethogenics: It is an approach which understands the episodes of social life. Episodes are sequences of interlocking acts by individuals.

Internal validity: it helps us to identify whether or not the instruments and procedures used in the research measured what they were supposed to measure.

Replication: Repeating a study in exactly the same format to check whether the same results are obtained every time it is conducted.

FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 THEORY AND RESEARCH*

Structure

2.0 Objectives

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2.2 What is a Theory?

2.2.1 The Elements of Theory

2.2.2 Theory and Ideology

2.2.3 The Way of Theorising

2.2.4 Focus of Theory

2.2.5 Range of Theorising

2.3 What is Research?

2.3.1 The Nature and Purpose of Research

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2.4 Relationship between Theory and Research

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2.8 References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to understand:

- Detailed description of theory,
- Purpose and procedures in research, and
- Relationship between theory and research.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Theory has an important role in research and it is indispensable for research. In the course of research theories are used by researchers in different manner. Different researchers need different theories. However, some theoretical underpinnings are always present in most social research. The influence of theory is found to be more profound in explanatory than in descriptive research. The relationship between theory and research becomes pertinent as it determines the framework and rationale for the research undertaken. Research plays an important role in advancing the theoretical knowledge either by adding to the existing knowledge or by falsifying the existing knowledge on a particular topic or by bringing into existence new knowledge on unexplored domains. Development of theory depends on research and research relies upon theories, as latter guides

* Dr. Binu Sundas, Miranda House, Delhi University, Delhi

the former in terms of the data required. Therefore, research is the means for progress of theory and is the method used to gather data required for the theory.

2.2 WHAT IS A THEORY?

A social theory is defined as a system of interconnected ideas that compresses and organises knowledge about the social world (*Neuman, 2007*). People are always creating new theories to talk about how the world works. People often use theories without making them explicit or labelling them as such. When an individual claim that lack of education causes poverty or that a decline in traditional moral values causes higher crime rates are expressing theories. Such theories of layman are less systematic, not formulated and hard to test with empirical evidence. Social theories are complicated when compared to layman's theory.

A theory is generally confused with speculation/hypothesis and thus remains speculation/hypothesis until it is proved. When the proof is made, theory becomes fact. Facts are thought to be definite, certain without questions and their meaning to be self evident. Theory refers to the relationships between facts or to the ordering of them in some meaningful way (*Goode & Hatt, 2006*). Theory serves to order and give meaning to facts. When facts are ordered, assembled and seen in a relationship they constitute a theory. Facts help to build theories, therefore theories are not speculation. The facts in a theory may be analysed logically and relationships other than those stated in a theory can be deduced. However, we cannot be sure of the correctness of such deduction. Such deduction can be termed as hypothesis. Hypothesis needs to be verified, when it is successfully verified it becomes part of a future theoretical construction. A theory and a hypothesis enjoys a very close relationship.

Almost all research involves some theory. However, the question is not about using theory rather how you should use it. Being explicit about the theory makes it easier to read someone else's work or to conduct the research. An awareness of how theory fits into the research process produces better designed, easier to understand and better conducted studies. Any research devoid of theoretical basis and based completely on empiricism is most of the time not accepted completely.

2.2.1 The Elements of Theory

The basic elements of building a theory are : 1) concepts 2) variables 3) statements, and 4) formats. Although there are diverse claims about what makes a theory these four elements are common to all of them.

a) Concepts

Theories are build from concepts. Concepts denotes phenomena. Concepts helps in isolating the feature of the world that are considered important at that instance. Concepts are structured form definitions. Definitions allows us to visualise the phenomenon that is denoted by the concept. It enables the researcher to see the same thing and to understand what it is that is being studied. Therefore, concepts used in building a theory tries to communicate the same meaning to all those who use them. In sociology, unlike in sciences, special symbols cannot be used to denote a concept, therefore the concept is defined as precisely as possible so

that it communicates the same meaning to all. Concepts of theory reveal abstractness.

b) Variables

The concept of scientific theory should denote the variable features of the world. To understand events requires that we visualise how variation in one phenomenon is related to variation in another. In the physical sciences, variables are the characteristics of thing which are physically manipulated. In social sciences it refers to attributes which are fixed for each thing but which are observed to be at different levels, amount or strength across samples and other aggregate groups. Variable measures a social construct like age, class etc in a way which renders it amenable to numerical analysis. The important feature of a variable is that it is capable of reflecting variations within population and is not a constant.

c) Statement and Formats

The concepts of a theory must be connected to each other and this connection between concepts is makes theoretical statement. These statements specify the way in which events represented by concepts are interrelated and at the same time, they provide an interpretation of how and why events should be connected to each other. When these theoretical statements are grouped together they constitute the theoretical formats¹.

2.2.2 Theory and Ideology

Confusion between theory and ideology arises because both explain similar events in the world and they can overlap in places. Theory is understood as essential for clarifying and building scientific knowledge while ideology is seen as hostile to science. However, both also have similarities. Theory and ideology both contain assumptions about the nature of the social world. They both focus on what is or is not important in it and contain a system of ideas or concepts and specify relations among the concepts (*Neuman, 2006*). Both explain why things are the way they are and what needs to be changed to alter conditions. An ideology is a quasi theory that lack critical features required to be a true scientific theory. It has fixed strong, and unquestioned assumptions. It is a belief system closed to contradictory evidence that use circular reasoning. Ideologies selectively present and interpret empirical evidence. They use personal experience or conviction that fall short of a scientific approach. It is difficult to test ideological principles or confront them with opposing evidence. It cannot acknowledge contradictory evidences.

The difference between ideology and theory is important as it has implications for how an individual conducts research. A researcher can never show an ideology to its followers. On the other hand a researcher is free to test a theory or its parts and show them to be false. Theory can be tested with empirical evidences and look at relevant evidences both that support and oppose the theory. Theories are always growing or developing to higher levels. Theories that fail to develop are replaced by other theories. Theories do not claim to have all the answers. A theory is composed of an assumption and concepts. Concepts vary from one another by their level of abstraction.

2.2.3 The Way of Theorising

Theorising can take place in two ways deductive and inductive. Theories can be tested and build from two directions. First from abstract thinking, connecting ideas and empirical evidences in a logical manner. Since it moves from the theoretical proposition to the concrete evidences it is also called the 'waterfall' approach. Second on the basis of empirical evidences, which is used to generalise and used to generate abstract ideas. Since this approach moves in the direction of abstract from the concrete it is also called the 'climbing the hill' approach.

2.2.4 Focus of Theory

Researchers construct, elaborate and test and verify substantive and formal theories. Substantive theory focuses on a particular content or topic area in social reality. For example it can be about family relations, delinquent behaviour or racial ethnic relations. Formal theory focuses on general processes or structures that operate across multiple topic areas. For example a formal theory might be about forming a social identity, engaging in conflict, or exercising power. The two focuses can intersect.

Each theoretical focus has its own strength. Substantive theory offers powerful explanations for a topic area because it is tailored to it and incorporates rich details from specific settings, process or events. Nonetheless, substantive theory is often difficult to generalize to different topic areas. Compared to formal theory substantive theory employs concepts at lower levels of abstraction and narrower scope, which makes it harder to connect across diverse topics and build general knowledge. Formal theory's strength is its ability to operate and build bridges across multiple topics, which advances more general knowledge. Its weakness is that it is less attached to specific settings and may require adjustments to be applied a particular issue or topic. Formal theories help researchers recognise an explain similar features that operate across several researchers find them easier to elaborate into more complex forms, compare and connect ideas from several theories and express the theory in a very logical or purely analytical form.

2.2.5 Range of Theorising

Theorising can be done in two ways, the deductive and the inductive technique. However, the theoretical statements vary by range. Range of theorising can be understood with the help of empirical generalisation, middle range theory and theoretical frameworks or systems. Empirical generalization is one such which is a narrow statement that mostly relies on concrete concepts and fits into a substantive theory. It is a descriptive statement about the relationship of facts that are believed to operate empirically. It is a narrow quasi-theoretical statement that expresses empirical patterns or describe empirical regularities using concepts that are not very abstract.

On the other hand, 'middle range theory' has a broader theoretical range and uses more abstract concepts in a substantive or formal theory. It is the range most frequently used to guide research studies. It is a social theory between general frameworks and empirical generalisation that has limited abstraction/ range and is in the form of empirically verifiable statements capable of being connected to observable phenomenon. Studies may elaborate or test parts of the

middle range theory, and accumulate empirical support for the theory and over time help the theory to advance as an explanation.

Theoretical Frameworks or Systems are the widest range and are at the opposite end of empirical generalization. It is more than a formal or substantive theory. It includes many specific formal and substantive theories that may share basic assumptions and general concepts in common. It is a very general theoretical system with assumptions, concepts and specific social theories. They are orientations to see and think about the social world. They provide assumptions, concepts and forms of explanations. Some frameworks are more oriented toward the micro (symbolic interactionism) level of analysis whereas others toward the macro (functionalism) level analysis. Studies rarely test or contrast entire frameworks.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What are the basic elements of theory?

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- 2) How does theory differ from ideology and what is its focus?

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2.3 WHAT IS RESEARCH?

Research can be understood in various manners. It can be understood to refer to a specialised pursuit of knowledge and also to a general everyday problem solving situation. All such uses of the word however, is characterized by logical approach to investigation to know more about something. However, there is a difference between research and non-research activity. Writers have defined research in various ways. Here are some examples:

Research is a systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical proposition about the presumed relations among natural phenomena (*Kerlinger, 1996*).

Research is a procedure by which we attempt to find systematically and with the support of demonstrable facts, the answer to a question or the resolution of a problem (*Leedy, 1989*).

Research is a systematic and objective analysis and recording of observations that may lead to the development of a theory (*Best, 1992*).

These definitions of research reveal the nature of research and highlights two important aspects. First research investigation requiring solutions to a problem as in natural science or creation of new knowledge. Second they explicitly recognise the systematic nature of the research process in which data are gathered recorded analysed and interpreted in an organised and systematic manner. Research must ultimately meet the norms of scientific methods; immediately, the task is so to express requirements that they may have more direct bearing on the analytical work which is capable of being done (*Merton, 1972*). Research activities therefore aims to be planned, systematic and reliable ways of finding out or deepening understanding. Research is a knowledge building process. It generates new knowledge, which can be used for different purposes. It is used to build theories, develop policies, support decisions making and solving problems. Social science research can be thus divided into two fundamental types related to its purpose. They are basic and applied research.

Basic research advances the fundamental knowledge about the social reality. it focuses on disproving or proving theories that explain how the social reality functions, what makes thing happen, why social relations exist the way they are existing and why society changes. Basic research is the source of new scientific information and perception about the world. Its most important audience is the scientific community. Basic research do not produce knowledge that has the capacity to solve practical problem for which it is criticised by many. The questions asked by basic research are impractical. It seldom helps practitioners directly with their everyday concerns. But it produces knowledge which affects the thinking and understanding due to which it is the source of most of the tools that applied researchers use.

Applied Research or action-oriented research addresses a specific concerns or offer solutions to a problem. It does not connect to a larger theory, develop a long-term general understanding or carry out a large scale investigation that might span years. Applied researchers rely on a quick small scale study that provides practical results that people can use in the short-term. Business organisation, government offices, political organisation and many others conduct applied research to use the results to make decisions. Therefore, applied researchers need to be careful to translate finding from scientific technical knowledge into aa language used by non-specialist decision makers. Applied research may adopt different orientation towards research methodology. Applied research may compromise on scientific rigor to get quick usable results.

Box 2.1: Types of Research

There are many specific types of applied research but the most important are of three types: the evaluation, action and social impact assessment.

- 1) **Evaluation Research:** It is the most widely used among the applied research. It is widely used in bureaucratic organisations, to find out whether a programme, a new way of doing something like a marketing campaign, a policy and so forth is effective or not. It uses several research techniques. If it can be used, the experimental technique is usually the most effective. Practitioners involved with a policy or programme may conduct evaluation

research for their own information or at the request of outside decision makers, who sometimes place limits on researchers by settings boundaries on what can be studied and determining the outcome of interest. Ethical and political conflict often arises in evaluation research. Two types of evaluative research are formative and summative. Formative evaluation is built in monitoring or continuous feedback on a programme used for programme management. Summative evaluation looks at final programme outcomes. Both are usually necessary.

- 2) **Action Research:** There are many forms of action research but most share common characteristics. Those who are being studied participate in the research process. It focuses on power with the aim of empowerment. It seeks to raise consciousness and awareness and is tied directly to political action. Action researchers try to equalise power relations between themselves and the subjects of research. They are value loaded and not value neutral. Action researchers assume that knowledge develops from experience, particularly the experience of socio-political action. They also assume that ordinary people can become aware of conditions and learn to take actions that can bring about improvement.
- 3) **Social Impact Assessment Research:** Its purpose is to estimate the likely consequences of a planned change. Such an assessment can be used for planning and making choices among alternative policies. Researchers conducting social impact assessment examine many outcomes and often work in an interdisciplinary research team. The impact on several areas can be measured or assessed.

Source: Neuman, 2007

2.3.1 The Nature and Purpose of Research

The purpose of research is to investigate about a particular subject that has significance for the researcher in order to discover a new subject or to verify the existing knowledge. The basic purpose of research is therefore to generate new knowledge. Research aims not only at merely describing a phenomenon and provide an explanation for them but goes beyond. Therefore the nature and purpose of research can be categorised as the following:

Exploration: Research explores the reality. By exploring we try to be familiar with the social issue or phenomenon. Exploration provides us with the insights into and an understanding of the problem confronting the researcher. If no one has written anything about a topic and you begin to work on it, then it is called an exploratory research. The goal of exploratory research is to formulate precise questions that future research can answer. It can be the first step in a sequence of studies. Exploratory research is also conducted to gather information to design and conduct more systematic and extensive study. Exploratory research should be creative open minded, and flexible and explore all sources of information. Exploratory research frequently use qualitative techniques for gathering data and they are less wedded to a specific theory or research questions.

Description: Descriptive research describes a situation or social settings. It begins with a well defined subject and conducts research to describe it accurately. Descriptive research focuses on how and who questions rather than explaining why something happens.

Explanation: Explanatory research tries to explain why something happened unlike the descriptive research. Some explanatory research develops a novel explanation and then provide empirical evidences to support the arguments. It is a research in which the primary purpose is to explain why events occur and to build elaborate, extend or test theory.

2.3.2 Procedures in a Research

There are a variety of ways to conduct a social science research. Each particular research will be unique in some ways because of the particular time and place in which it is conducted. However, the commonality is that all share the basic steps of conducting a research. They will all have a clearly stated research problem or the aim stated in terms of hypothesis. It will further have a research design to indicate how the data will be collected and analysed. Each project requires data collection, analysing data and interpreting data therefore the following stages in research can be discerned.

- 1) Choosing the research problem and stating the hypothesis
- 2) Formulating the research design
- 3) Collection of data
- 4) Coding and analysing data
- 5) Interpreting the results so as to be able to test the hypothesis

Each of these steps in research is dependent upon the others. you cannot analyse data without collecting it first. Research can therefore, be seen as a system of interdependent stages. The research process is best conceived as a circle. After completion of the study if the researcher feels that the study has been unsuccessful the researcher must return to the early stages of research to fulfil promise of the study. Analysis of data provides the researcher with knowledge useful for revising the hypothesis. Therefore, the researcher can reformulate the hypothesis but if he thinks that the hypothesis is well formulated then the researcher must do some more literature review and repeat the research.

When the research is completed it is advised to repeat the study exactly so as to demonstrate that the findings are not an accident or coincidence. When the study after repetition with different sample confirms the findings then it will support the contention that the hypothesis cannot be rejected. The exact repetition of a study is called replication. Therefore it becomes important to design the study in a manner that it can be replicated. However, very few studies in social sciences are replicated.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What is research? Discuss.

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2.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEORY AND RESEARCH

2.4.1 The Bearing of Theory on Research

The term sociological theory has been used to refer to the products of several related but distinct activities. The varieties of activities have significantly different bearings on empirical social research. Merton characterises six different types of activities which have been together said to comprise a theory. They are : 1) methodology, 2) general sociological orientations, 3) analysis of sociological concepts, 4) post factum sociological interpretations, 5) empirical generalisations in sociology, and 6) sociological theory.

2.4.2 Methodology

It is important to differentiate between sociological theory and methodology. Theories are substantive while methodology is the logic of scientific procedures. Methodology is not particularly bound up with sociological problems, therefore they are not sociological in character. Researchers must be well versed with the use of methodology. They must be aware of the research design of the investigation, the nature of deduction and the requirements of a theoretical system. They must be aware of the difference between knowing how to test a hypothesis and to know from where to formulate the hypothesis (the knowledge of theory to deduct the hypothesis). The focus has been on testing hypotheses therefore theory building has not been the primary task of sociologists (*Merton, 1972*). Since the focus has been on methodology, its purpose has been to guide and assess theoretical and empirical inquiries.

2.4.3 General Sociological Orientations

Such orientations only mention the types of variables which have been taken into consideration rather than specifying the causal relationships between the variables they provide the framework for empirical examination. The function of these orientations is to provide a general context for investigation and facilitate the process of arriving at hypothesis.

2.4.4 Analysis of Sociological Concepts

Concepts are definitions of what is to be observed, they are the variables between which empirical relationships are to be sought. The selection of correct concepts is very important for empirical inquiry. Research will not be fruitful if concepts which do not have relationships are selected. Therefore, conceptual clarification should clearly state the character of data that is included in the concept. Further, conceptual analysis resolves the contradiction in empirical findings and also maximises the comparability of the data to be included in research. Concepts define the situation and conceptual analysis helps to recognise to what the research is responding and which elements are being ignored. Similarly, the function of conceptual analysis is to organise observable categories of the social data with which empirical research is concerned.

2.4.5 Post Factum Sociological Interpretations

In social research the data are collected initially and then subjected to interpretations. In doing this interpretations happen only after the data is collected and the empirical testing of a pre-designated hypothesis does not happen, which a research should be doing. The explanations are consistent with the given set of observations and only those post factum hypotheses are selected which agree with these observations. This procedure is very flexible which obstructs nullification. Whatever the observation, new interpretation is always found to fit the facts.

2.4.6 Empirical Generalisation in Sociology

The objective of sociological theory is to arrive at social uniformities. However, there are two types of statements of sociological uniformities which differ significantly in their bearing on theory. The first is the isolated proposition summarising observed uniformities of relationship between two or more variables. The second is the scientific laws. The theoretical task and the orientation of empirical research toward theory, first begins when the bearing of former uniformities on a set of interrelated propositions is tentatively established. The notion of directed research implies that in part empirical inquiry is so organised that if and when empirical uniformities are discovered, they have direct consequences for theoretical system. In so far as the research is directed the rationale of findings is set forth before the finding are obtained.

2.5 SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

As has been mentioned above the second type of sociological generalisation is the scientific laws, and it is a statement of invariance derivable from a theory. The lack of such laws in sociology is the sign of the existing division of theory and empirical research. Despite sociology being rich in sociological theories and empirical research, there is still the absence of logical criteria of sociological theories. Drawing from Merton, to show the relations of empirical generalisations to theory and to view the functions of theory, it may be suitable to consider the example of Durkheim's study of suicide. It has been established that in a variety of population the Catholics have lower rate of suicide than the Protestants. This poses a theoretical problem, according to Merton, as this is only an empirical regularity which would become significant for theory only if it could be derived from a set of other propositions. If we restate this like:

- 1) Social cohesion provides psychic support to group members subjected to acute stresses and anxieties.
- 2) Suicide rates are functions of unrelieved anxieties and stresses to which persons are subjected.
- 3) Catholics have greater social cohesion than Protestants.
- 4) Therefore, lower suicide rates should be anticipated among Catholics than among Protestants (*Merton, 1972*).

This serves to locate the place of empirical generalisation in relation to theory and to illustrate the several functions of theory:

- 1) The theoretical importance is not present or absent in empirical generalisation but appears when the generalisation is conceptualised in abstraction of higher order which are embodied in more general statements of relationships.
- 2) The difference in suicide rate uniformities add confirmation to the set of proposition from which they are derived.
- 3) Reformulation of the empirical uniformities give rise to various consequences in the field of conduct quite different from that of suicidal behaviour. The conversion of empirical uniformities into theoretical statements increases the fruitfulness of research through the successive exploration of implications.
- 4) Theory provides a ground for predictions which is more valid than mere empirical extrapolation from previously observed trends.
- 5) If theory is to be productive, it must be sufficiently precise to be determinate. Precision is an integral element of the criterion of testability. Precision enhances the likelihood of approximating a crucial observation or experiment.

There is therefore a need for connecting theory and empirical research. The well thought-out empirical generalisation and post factum interpretations show the pattern of research which lacks theoretical orientations. The continuity between theory and empirical research can be achieved if empirical researches are theoretically oriented and theories are empirically confirmable. Therefore, in both the design and reporting of a research theoretical grounding of any hypothesis needs to be explicitly set forth. Attention should also be paid to the intervening variables which are not entailed in the formulation of the hypothesis and the bearing of these on the theory should be mentioned.

Post factum interpretation arises when new and unexpected relationships are discovered should be stated in a manner that the direction of future research becomes evident. This helps to control the introduction of unrelated interpretations.

2.6 THE BEARING OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Sociologists have been working with theory and fact. This has led to the belief that theory and fact must interact and they do interact. This interaction between theory and empirical research is a two way process and theories influence empirical research. Theory helps in initiating designs and presenting of empirical research. Empirical Research on the other hand helps in the development of social theories.

One of the important function of empirical research is to test and verify hypothesis, by confirming or refuting it. However, empirical research goes much beyond testing and verifying theory, it performs four major functions it initiates, it reformulates, it deflects and it clarifies theory. These functions helps in shaping and development of a theory.

- 1) Under certain conditions research findings give rise to theory. This may be called the serendipity component of the research. It is by chance getting a result which was not sought during the course of the research. Serendipity pattern refers to unanticipated, unexpected anomalous and strategic datum which leads to developing a new theory or for extending an existing theory. It is unanticipated because it occurs by chance while testing one hypothesis and has bearing on the theory. It is anomalous because it seems inconsistent with the existing theory or with other established facts. Therefore it pushes forward the research further. It is strategic because it has a bearing on the generalised theory. The serendipity pattern then involves the unanticipated, anomalous and strategic datum which exerts pressure upon the investigator for a new direction of inquiry which extends theory.
- 2) Empirical research invites the extension of theory when neglected facts are repeatedly observed. It therefore leads to the reformulation of the research as the new variable which till now had not been included in the conceptual framework is introduced in the scheme of analysis. These data are important but had not been included in the conceptual framework, and when it occurs frequently it necessitates its inclusion in the conceptual framework which requires the reformulation of the research. Empirical research therefore pressurises theory to be re-casted.
- 3) Empirical research also affects, not just a particular theory but also more general trends in the development of theory. This happens when new ways of doing research are invented which in turn tends to change the foci of theoretical interests to the growing points of research. A good theory relies on good facts and newly invented methods helps us to provide good facts. When new methods provides us with new data and facts it can encourage new hypothesis and other hypotheses may also be put to test with the help of these new research techniques. The creation of sociological statistics can be seen as the most direct impact of research procedures on theory. Early statistical data were not sociological and it was pre collected and not set in sociological categories important for theoretical system. Therefore sociologists had to do with makeshift data which had high chances of error, due to which theories could not make much progress.
- 4) Theorising deals with clarifying concepts. Research activated by interest in methodology pays attention to design research in a manner that it establishes a causal relationship between variables without actually analysing the variables. This is what characterises large part of theories today. When researches does not analyse the empirical variable in terms of conceptual elements then it does not add to the stock of social sciences theory. Research should not ignore conceptual as this enters into research in the form of indices of the variables under consideration. Index is the correlated pair of variables. The development of valid and observable indices becomes central to the use of concepts for the conduct of a research.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Discuss the interdependence of theory and research.

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2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit You have been introduced to the understanding of theory and research. Further the elements of theory has also been discussed and the difference between theory and ideology has been clarified. The unit further deals with the nature and purpose of research and also highlights the procedures of research. In order to clarify the inter-dependence of theory and empirical research the bearing of each on the other is also discussed in details. Further a glossary of key words is also added to clarify the terms.

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GLOSSARY

Ideology: A non-scientific quasi-theory, often based on political values or faith with assumptions, concepts relationships among concepts and explanations. it is a closed system that resists change, cannot be directly falsified with empirical data and makes normative claims.

Assumption: An untested starting point or belief in a theory that is necessary to build a theoretical explanation.

Concepts: An idea that is thought through, carefully defined and made explicit in a theory. It is a term derived from the reality and can be both concrete and abstract.

Deductive Theorising: An approach to developing or confirming a theory that begins with abstract concepts and theoretical relationships and works towards more concrete empirical evidence.

Inductive Theorising: An approach to developing or confirming a theory that begins with concrete empirical evidence and works towards more abstract concepts and theoretical relationships.

Empirical Generalisation: It is a narrow quasi-theoretical statement that expresses empirical patterns or describe empirical regularities using concepts that are not very abstract.

Middle Range Theory: It is a social theory between general frameworks and empirical generalisation that has limited abstraction/ range and is in the form of empirically verifiable statements capable of being connected to observable phenomenon.

Theoretical Framework: It is a very general theoretical system with assumptions, concepts and specific social theories.

Basic Research: It is a research designed to advance essential knowledge about how the world functions and build or test theoretical explanations.

Applied Research: It is a research designed to offer practical solutions to a concrete problem or address the immediate and specific needs of individuals.

FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3 OBJECTIVITY IN SOCIAL SCIENCES*

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Durkheim on Objectivity
 - 3.2.1 Social Facts
 - 3.2.2 The Study of Suicide
- 3.3 Weber on Objectivity
 - 3.3.1 Methodological Debates in Germany
 - 3.3.2 Weber and Dilthey
 - 3.3.3 Weber and Rickert
 - 3.3.4 Weber Views on Objectivity
 - 3.3.5 Value -Free Sociology
 - 3.3.6 Values and Science
 - 3.3.7 Ideal Types
- 3.4 Popper on Objectivity
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to understand:

- Durkheim's views on objectivity,
- Weber's views on objectivity, and
- Popper's views on objectivity.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

What is objectivity? In order to give an answer let us look at the background. The concern for objectivity in social science research in general and sociology in particular has been there since the discipline of sociology was conceptualised by Auguste Comte. As sociology is a subject which studies humans who have their own faculty to react to the external stimulus, unlike the matter in the natural sciences, it was found difficult by the founding fathers to establish sociology as the science of society at par with the natural sciences, owing to the methods and methodology. Objectivity therefore was a concern for all to establish sociology as a science.

Georg Simmel saw objectivity as the greatest achievement of Western cultural history (Ritzer: 2004). Objectivity in a layman language can be understood as the direction given to the researcher to be unbiased and open to criticism. It means that evidences and facts need to be verified dispassionately and conclusions need to be drawn on the basis of facts without any value judgement or preconceived notions, free of the individual's personal beliefs. Objectivity presupposes that

* Dr. Binu Sundas, Miranda House, Delhi University, Delhi

the reality can be understood objectively, and therefore it presumes it to be the goal of all scientific research. Objectivity in social research has its origin in positivism which propounds that researchers should remain distanced from what they study so findings depend on the nature of what was studied rather than on the personality, beliefs and values of the researcher. Objectivity is often considered as an ideal for scientific inquiry, as a good reason for valuing scientific knowledge, and as the basis of the authority of science in society.

Founding fathers especially Durkheim and Weber were committed to the idea of unity of science and believed that sociology required a collective method that would be universally applicable and was opposed to the methodological individualism in social analysis, meaning that sociology could not be based on the premise that took the individual as the starting point of the analysis. This aspect of positivism on the basis of which Durkheim brought the issue of objectivity is evident in his work *The Rules of Sociological Method* whereby he wanted to chalk out the methods of doing research and establishing sociology as science and also to differentiate sociology from other discipline such as psychology and biology.

3.2 DURKHEIM AND OBJECTIVITY

The term sociology was coined by Auguste Comte. The credit for giving a name to the discipline goes to Comte but Durkheim took upon himself to make sociology as an academic discipline in France. He also worked towards making sociology distinctively different from other disciplines. Comte in his pursuit to establish sociology at par with other natural sciences propounded the methods of natural sciences to do research in sociology but it was Durkheim who outlined the methodological aspects of sociology and in doing so also brought out and clarified the issue of objectivity.

3.2.1 Social Facts

Durkheim while trying to develop the subject matter of sociology and its method propounded that “All preconceptions must be eradicated”(Thompson, 2007;58). By this he meant that anything that was outside of science, in the domain of the layman, should be avoided. Unscientific layman concepts and categories allow them to bring into the study their prior values. Therefore, in *The Rules of Sociological Method*, Durkheim emphasised that there are certain facts in social life which cannot be explained by physical or psychological analysis and these were social facts. According to Durkheim, social facts have an objective reality that sociologists can study in a way similar to how other scientists, such as physicists, study the physical world. Social facts are objective and are capable of being perceived from outside. Social facts are understood only by sociological laws. There can be no psychological explanation of these facts. Sociology cannot be explained by the principle of utility or individual’s motivation. Its explanation can only be social. Durkheim took great pain in trying to rid sociology of preconceptions and to make sociology objective. In this endeavour, he put forward the first rule of sociological research. He observed, ‘Consider social facts as things’ (Durkheim, 1958;14) Durkheim defined social facts as :

A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not , capable of exercising on the individual an external constrain; or again, every way of acting which is general

throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestation (Durkheim, 1958;13).

The definition makes it clear that for Durkheim, a social fact is characterised by it being external to the individual, and constraining upon the individual and is independent of the individual and should be treated as things as per the first rule. These characteristics is important as understanding and establishing them would help in the objectivity of his methods. When a social fact is considered as a thing it can be directly observed and objectively measured. Although the social facts enter the consciousness of the individual they are external to the individuals. They are impressed upon them by society, they exist outside the individual and can therefore be studied objectively as external things. In Durkheim's view, society is not simply a collection of individuals, each acting independently in terms of his or her particular psychology or mental state. Instead members of society are directed by collective beliefs, values and laws, by social facts which have their own existence. In Durkheim's words, 'collective ways of acting or thinking have a reality outside the individuals'. Social facts therefore constrain the individuals to behave in particular ways. The explanation of human behaviour thus involves an examination of how that behaviour is shaped by social facts. Just as the behaviour of matter can be regarded as a reaction to external stimuli, so the behaviour of man can be seen as a response to the external constrains. Given this view of the nature of man and society, social facts can be analysed.

Durkheim argued that social realities existed in us as ideas as perceptions, thoughts and reflections are prior to the science. However, science is able to use them in a more methodological manner. It would be very difficult for humans to exist without having some form of idea about the environment in which he lives. Since these ideas are nearer to us we tend to substitute them for the reality. *"Instead of observing, describing and comparing things, we are content to focus our consciousness upon, to analyze, and to combine our ideas. Instead of a science concerned with realities, we produce no more than an ideological analysis."* (Durkheim, 1958;14). Such ideas do not become substitute for things. They will lead us to incorrect understanding of reality and by elaborating and accepting such ideas it will be difficult to discover any forms of laws of reality. If we come to discover laws of reality based on concepts and categories which are based on preconceptions then it will not help us understand the reality but will only prescribe what ought to be rather than what it is. It is therefore very important for the rejection of all concepts and categories which has not been scientifically established. In this process Durkheim is in disagreement with both Comte and Spencer saying that Comte takes ideas for the subject matter of sociology and Spencer does not define society but what he actually does is define the idea of society.

For Durkheim such understanding of realities would not give sociology its scientific laws and therefore said that 'social phenomena are things and ought to be treated as things' (Durkheim, 1958;27). These are unique data for the sociologists. Anything that is observable has the character of a thing. However, even if the phenomena do not possess the characteristic of the thing we have to consider and treat them as things. These things cannot be perceived or known directly, but only through the phenomenal reality expressing them. *"We must, therefore, consider social phenomena in themselves as distinct from the consciously formed representation of them in the mind; we must study them objectively as external things, for it is this character that they present to us"*

(Durkheim, 1958:28) and this rule is applicable to all social reality without any exception. By considering social phenomena as things, what we do, is not let the preconceived notions of reality come into play, but make adjustment so that the conception of the scientist is in accordance with the nature of the social phenomena.

In order to study a social phenomenon objectively a scientist must define the things he treats in order that his subject matter may be known. The definitions of the phenomena to be objective must take into consideration the natural characteristics of the phenomena and not the ideas of it. Therefore, the definition should include all the phenomena which displays such characteristics as these are not the reality but only a clue to establish the reality. *“The subject matter of every sociological study should comprise a group of phenomena defined in advance by certain common external characteristics, and all phenomena so defined should be included within this group”* (Durkheim, 1958:35). By doing this the sociologist is from the very beginning rooted in reality and has no preconceived ideas.

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is the nature of social facts?

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- 2) Why should social facts be treated as things?

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3.2.2 The Study of Suicide

Durkheim was of the opinion that his study of suicide supported his methodological views and argued that his study of suicide demonstrated that real laws are discoverable, and social phenomena obey laws in the same way as natural phenomena. Durkheim identified altruistic, egoistic and anomic suicide. These types of suicides were categorised on the basis of the level of integration an individual had with the society. Durkheim used detailed statistical records of suicide from number of European societies and showed that the rate of suicide was fairly constant over a period of years, that there were significant differences in the suicide rate between societies and between social groups within each society. From these observation, he argued that suicide rates should be regarded as social facts. Since the rates varied systematically between societies, it may be assumed

that they are socially determined. Thus Durkheim claimed that, 'each society is predisposed to contribute a definite quota of voluntary deaths.' The answer to this differing rates in suicide can be explained by analysing the society and not the individual. From an analysis of the relationship between suicide rates and a range of social facts. He by examining integration of individual within society pointed out the above mentioned types of suicides. Social integration was measured by the number and strength of a person's social relationship with others.

The study of suicide proved that the behaviour of the individual was a product of social facts rather than individual motives. Although suicide seemed to be a personal and private act, its causes lie in the nature of social groups, it is therefore a product of social forces which are external to and act upon the individual.

Box 3.1: Characteristics of Social Facts

Independence

Durkheim maintained that social facts can be dealt with more objectively if they are considered independently of their individual manifestation. Social life is dynamic, therefore the scientist does not have a constant reference point which is a prerequisite for objectivity. Collective habits, however, are expressed in individual acts and in definite forms such as legal codes, social statistics, and religious dogma. These definite forms constitute a standard for the scientist and serve as objective indices. Durkheim's most famous example of the indirect observation of social facts is found in his *The Division of Labour in Society*. In this study of social solidarity Durkheim found himself confronted with the moral phenomenon of social solidarity which is not conducive to exact observation. He, therefore, used an external fact that he believed symbolized the internal fact and studied the latter through the former. He picked law as the external indicator of social solidarity and justified this objective manifestation on the following grounds:

1) The greater the sentiment of social solidarity, the more will be the number, frequency and intensity of the diverse relations in the society. 2) The number of these social relations is necessarily proportional to the number of juridical rules which regulate them. 3) The general life of society cannot expand without its juridical life expanding at the same time and in the same proportion.

These assumptions of Durkheim, however, are not necessarily valid. First, many social relations are not regulated by law, but by customs, folkways, and mores. Often the mores are not in agreement with the laws. Durkheim said that it is an exceptional situation when mores and laws are in conflict and that mores are usually the basis for laws. This may be true, but any scientific method should be definite, and there should be no room or exceptions. Although there are several flaws in Durkheim's rules for observing social facts, his principle of studying social facts objectively helped to boost sociology as a positive science.

Externality

By externality, Durkheim meant that a social fact is an independent reality which forms a part of the objective environment. Social facts are not responsive to individual desires because they are completely exterior to the individual and not created by the individual. This conception of social facts

has put Durkheim in the category of a social realist. He has been accused of maintaining that society, its facts and products, exist outside and above individuals as a super entity. Durkheim, however, persistently denied believing in society as a transcendental and substantial entity. He asked his critics to spare him the humiliation of ever suspecting that his theories implied that a whole can be an existential reality apart from its parts. Durkheim merely meant that social facts have properties which are different from what they would have been if social phenomena had been developed separately by non-associated members of a group.

Constraint

Social facts are capable of exerting constraint over the individual. The individual feels constrained by the social facts that are external to him. Social facts do not conform to individual decision, but they actually mould individual desire and decision to some extent. This characteristic of a social fact is Durkheim's basis for his conception of collective forces in social life. Two types of constraint can be distinguished. One is the constraint imposed by the lack of choice and the other is the pressure to choose according to established notions of what ought to be the case. Morphological factors exercise the first kind of constraint, usually through the form and distribution of material resources. Institutions and collective representation, such as beliefs, norms and values are examples of the second kind of constraint.

3.3 WEBER ON OBJECTIVITY

3.3.1 Methodological Debates in Germany

The methodological debate that dominated the German academic environment, in the late nineteenth century, can be understood on the basis of two interrelated factors. First, there tended to be in Germany, a firm division between the natural sciences and cultural disciplines. This led to only the natural phenomena to be seen as open to theoretical analysis. This as a consequence led to the studies in natural and social phenomena developed in different ways. Second after the early works of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, non Marxist economic theory became stagnant, with the result that economics had great difficulty in trying to explain the workings of actual industrial economies as they existed in the nineteenth century. These problems could be dealt:

- 1) by developing better theories, and
- 2) by avoiding science altogether and to concentrate on the historical development of particular economic systems.

This led to the development of historical and theoretical economics which also had methodological issues dividing them. There were four issues which these two groups disagreed upon. Weber used these debates as his baseline to develop his own methodological orientation. He tried to bridge the gap between the two groups and the origin of his argument to the two schools of thought can be found in the works of Wilhelm Dilthey and Heinrich Rickert. It was these two people who provided the methodological tools for Weber to build his sociology.

The four issues on which the exponents of historical and theoretical economics disagreed were :

- 1) Theoretical economics involved the relative importance of deduction and induction. The historical economists blamed that the theoretical economists use of deductive methods was faulty, because their theories could not explain reality. Due to this the historical economists emphasised on the importance of observation and describing the patterns of human action.
- 2) the division between the two groups had to do with the universality and the relativity of the findings. Historical economists were of the opinion that the universal applicability of the economic laws as propounded by the theoretical economists was not correct. To this the theoreticians were of the opinion that theory is oriented towards that which is common and not towards which is exceptional. The theoreticians were of the opinion that economic theories could explain human behaviours that were common to all societies but admitted that not all human behaviour and action could be explained by economic theory.
- 3) There was mis-understanding regarding the level of rationality and irrationality in human behaviour. The historical economists were of the opinion that it was unrealistic on the part of the theoretical economists to believe that human beings were rational and motivated only by small self-interest in their economic behaviour. The theoretical economists argued that economic behaviour was only one aspect of human behaviour and the other social sciences should look into the other aspects of social life.
- 4) Finally the two groups had to deal with the issue pertaining to economics as ethical discipline on the one hand and as economics as science on the other. The historical economists saw it as the ethical discipline that could solve the problems faced by German society.

3.3.2 Weber and Dilthey

Dilthey argued that nature and human behaviour could be studied scientifically but they produced different kinds of knowledge, which was to be recognised (Turner, Beeghley, & Powers, 1995). Dilthey argued firstly that the two sciences have different subject matters and because of this researchers in each field obtain different kinds of knowledge. Natural sciences produces knowledge which is external meaning that physical phenomena are affected by one another in ways that can be seen and explained in terms of valid laws. In social sciences the knowledge that is produced is internal meaning that each person has an “inner nature” that must be comprehended in some way in order to explain events. Therefore, researchers in the sphere of nature and sphere of human behaviour should have different orientation to their subjects. In natural sciences it is enough to observe events and relationships but in social sciences researchers must go beyond mere observations and seek to understand each person’s “inner nature” in order to explain events and relationships and these explanations can vary based on the cultural background of the researchers.

For Weber, Dilthey was correct in noting that the social sciences could obtain different form of knowledge than the natural sciences. Further, Weber agreed with Dilthey that social science statements are different from and must be kept separate from value judgements of any sort. The most important part that Weber agreed was that social scientific knowledge is to understand (*verstehen*) the subjective meanings people attached to their actions.

Weber, however, pointed out that the problem of Dilthey's work lay in his emphasis on understanding each person's 'inner nature,' as if an objective social science could be founded on intuitive re-experiencing of others' desires and thoughts. Hence Weber developed a different way of emphasising the importance of *verstehen*. Weber emphasised the importance of understanding individual behaviour while at the same time he was able to assess the significance of historical events in an objective manner.

3.3.3 Weber and Rickert

Rickert was also concerned with the disjunction between the world of nature and the world of human activity that existed. Rickert was of the opinion that reality could be divided into unlimited number of objects for study and that these objects could in turn be broken down into unlimited number of parts, which meant that reality could never be completely understood as there would always be some other way of understanding or looking at it. The problem that arose was how could one then know anything about the reality. Rickert was of the opinion that human beings could formulate concepts of those aspects of reality which they thought were important. Concepts were thus the means by which humans could know the reality. Therefore, for Rickert, concept formulation was an important tool in knowing the reality objectively.

Rickert confronted the problem of how scholars select topics for study and at this point his emphasis on concept formation as the essence of science trapped him in a non-productive philosophical argument. Essentially, he asserted the researchers choice of topics is made in terms of "value relevance." However, this emphasis on value relevance implies a subjective rather than objective conception of knowledge, because the researchers are forced to rely on their own values in determining what topics are worth doing for research.

Weber agreed that reality is unlimited and human beings could know it in terms of the concepts used to select out significant part of the world for examination. Weber on the other hand thought that it did not matter why a scholar chose one topic over the other, because the selection of topics was determined by values. Therefore, Weber argued, what was more important was that the research process needed to be objective and this could be achieved when the data are clearly conceptualised and systematically analysed. These debates to a large extent shaped Weber's methodology and his concern for objectivity in social sciences.

3.3.4 Weber Views on Objectivity

Weber's methodology of social sciences began with a consideration of the overriding importance of objective sociology. He was of the opinion that no scientific analysis can include ethical values within it and be regarded as objective. During the time of Weber many did not believe that an objective sociology was possible as values were not separated from research process. Weber confronted

the problem of values by observing that sociological inquiry should be objective or *value-free*.

3.3.5 Value-Free Sociology

By value free sociology Weber meant that researchers' personal values and economic interests should not affect the process of social scientific analysis. If such factors affected the research process then the social action could not be represented as objective. Objective analysis were possible if sociologists use a rational method in which the research process is systematic that is 1) empirical data must be categorised in terms of clearly formulated concepts, 2) proper rules of evidence must be employed, and 3) only logical inference must be made.

With the help of his methodological orientation Weber implied that value-free sociology could not be a moral science and thereby distinguished between 'what ought to be' that is the sphere of values from 'what is' the sphere of science and that social science should focus only on the latter. He also implied that new science of sociology contributes to an ongoing historical process in which magic and other forms of inherited wisdom become less acceptable as means for explaining events. Weber referred to this change as the process of rationalisation.

3.3.6 Values and Science

Weber was aware that it would be difficult to separate values and science in practice but to distinguish helped in the highlighting the relevance of values before and after the research. Social scientists face a very practical problem how to choose the topic of research. Weber said that there was no scientific way of choosing a topic of doing research. However, the choice of topic comes before the research is undertaken. The only basis for the individual to choose a particular topic is values. But once a topic is chosen for study Weber advocates that the scientist must follow an objective research process. The situation is even more difficult when dealing with public policy issues. With regards to issues of public policy as well Weber was of the opinion that the selection of one goal rather than another and one strategy over the other ultimately depended on people's political values, their economic interests and so forth but it does not mean that social science are irrelevant to public policy and believed that sociologists could do their task objectively by categorising the data in terms of clearly formulated concepts following proper rules of evidence and making logical deductions. Weber rejected the search for general laws in favour of historical theories and opined that universal laws excluded important and unique historical events.

Though Weber projected the methods to make social sciences objective, he wanted to address the bigger empirical questions which existed during his time like the why capitalism originated in West and not somewhere else. He was aware that emphasis on the development of general theories would not allow for an examination of such issues. For him ideal types were the method for dealing with these issues.

3.3.7 Ideal Types

Weber believed that only the use of ideal types could lead to an interpretative understanding. Ideal typical concepts, according to Weber, helps to develop our skill of assertion in research. It is not a hypothesis but it offers guidance to the

construction of hypothesis. It is not a description of reality but it aims to give a clear means to describe the reality. Ideal types are created according to the reality. To create it, only those elements are selected from the reality which fit together in the most rational and suitable way.

“An ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discreet, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct.” (Weber, 1949:90).

The ideal type is a utopia. It is a mental construct which cannot be found to exist in reality. An ideal type is constructed by the abstraction and combination of an indefinite number of elements which although found in reality are rarely or never discovered in this specific form. With the help of ideal type one can find out, to what degree is it similar or different from the reality. In this manner if it is carefully applied it can be very useful to research. Ideal type is a means and not an end. It is an attempt to analyse historically unique events. Thus, by constructing a rational ideal type, we can learn something of how the world works. We can then learn more by comparing the ideal type with reality, say for example bureaucracy. We do not end with a model of what a bureaucracy is, or what it should be, but of what it might be if it were entirely rational. In this way we can learn much more from the sources of evident meaninglessness in real bureaucracy.

Ideal types are not formed out of a need for purely conceptual thought, but are created, modified and sharpened through the empirical analysis of concrete problems. This in turn, increases the precision of that analysis. Ideal type has been used by him as a device in understanding historical configurations or specific historical problems and are different in both scope and usage from descriptive concepts, which can be transformed into an ideal type.

For this he constructed Ideal types that are to understand how events had actually taken place and to show that if some antecedents or other events had not occurred or had occurred differently, the event we are trying to explain would have been different as well. For example, because of the implementation of the land reform laws and penetration of other modernizing forces like education, modern occupation etc. the joint family system has broken down in rural India. This means that there is a causal relation between the event (Land reform, education etc.) and the situation (Joint family). In this way Ideal type concept also helps in the causal explanation of a phenomenon.

Weber does not believe that one element of society is determined by another. He conceives the causal relations both in history and sociology as partial and probable relations. It means that a given fragment of reality makes probable or improbable, favourable or un-favourable to another fragment of reality.

1) What is value free sociology?

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2) What is the significance of ideal type?

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3.4 POPPER ON OBJECTIVITY

Popper understood the social and human sciences to be inter-changeable. In Popper's logic, three dominant concepts characterize the social sciences (a) scientific, (b) objective, and (c) empirical. First, Popper understood the social sciences as sciences, a position that attempts to refute the widespread idea that the social sciences represent a weak form of science. Popper (1991) elaborated, although historicism admits that there are plenty of typical social conditions whose regular recurrence can be observed, it denies that the regularities detectable in social life have the character of the permanent regularities of the physical world.

Popper considered the social sciences to be objective. Popper placed the social sciences in social world, which contains definite physical forces. These physical forces, give an objective character to the social sciences. For this reason, the social sciences provide us with an objective understanding of the social world.

Popper situated objectivity in a much more communal and inter-subjective sense than is usually perceived within the natural sciences, wherein the researcher is often seen as the sole center of science. Locating objectivity in an inter-subjective way he highlights the social world of science as necessary to ensure objectivity itself, since the exchanges that happen in such inter-subjective engagements as peer review and criticism, can filter out biases. Objectivity, then, is not a goal in and by itself, nor the achievement of an individual scientist, but a nest of autonomous, objective, and physical entities of the social world, namely: communities, groups, institutions, and venues that criticize the researcher's proposed theories. Objectivity derives from the combination of these social and physical forces. In other words, objectivity is the by product of critical inter-subjectivity such that the subject does not command on his/her own.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have tried to show how objectivity in sociology has been understood by Durkheim, Weber and Popper. Durkheim tried to show us how objectivity can be maintained in sociology through the use of social facts and treating it as things. On the other hand Weber tried to show us that objectivity is not absolute in sociology as culture is value oriented and selecting the topic of research itself is based on these values. However, objectivity can be maintained by following the procedures of research in an objective manner and thereby making inferences in a logical behaviour. Popper unlike the two founding fathers of sociology maintains that objectivity in social sciences can be achieved through inter-subjective criticism.

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GLOSSARY

Objectivity: in a layman language it can be understood as the direction given to the researcher to be unbiased and open to criticism. It means that evidences and facts needs to be verified dispassionately and conclusions need to be drawn on the basis of facts without any value judgement or preconceived notions, free of the individual's personal beliefs.

Social Facts: is every way of acting, fixed or not , capable of exercising on the individual an external constrained; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestation.

Value Free Sociology: Weber meant that in sociology researchers' personal values and economic interests should not affect the process of social analysis.

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UNIT 4 REFLEXIVITY*

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Gouldner and Reflexivity
- 4.3 Garfinkle: Reflexivity through Ethnomethodology
- 4.4 Bourdieu: Reflexive Sociology
- 4.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.6 References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- the meaning of reflexivity and how it is useful in social science research;
- the meaning and significance of reflexivity; and
- the works of A. Gouldner, H. Garfinkel and P. Bourdieu on reflexivity.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Reflexivity is the process by which the researcher reflects upon the data collection and interpretation process. The term, reflexivity has different meanings in different contexts. It is a term used in a wide variety of senses. In general, it means 'reflecting' and specifically, as part of the social research, reflexivity is the process by which the researcher reflects upon the data collection and interpretation process. Talcott Parsons, Anthony Giddens, Harold Garfinkel have used this concept in their works. Two very important usage of the term can be identified. It is used to characterise the general features of the modern social life and secondly it is used more specifically to refer to certain characteristics of social scientists' attempts to explain social life (*Kuper and Kuper, 1996*).

The term reflexivity was coined by Alvin Gouldner, who desired sociological examination of sociology. A very substantial and exhaustive argument for a so called reflexive sociology is found in Gouldner's work, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (1970). He transcends the methodological and theoretical contexts of ethnomethodology and proposed reflexive sociology. Sociology was viewed as a discipline that was inclined to produce an objective knowledge of the social reality which was not agreed upon. He, therefore, argued that knowledge was not independent of the knower and sociology is intimately bound up with the political and socio-economic context within which it exists. Therefore, for him it was important to be aware of this connection and of sociology's role as part of the way we look at ourselves and our future. Reflexive sociology requires us to really examine what we are doing, how we think, how we feel, what are our attitude, beliefs, feelings prejudices about particular things in social reality and if we really grasp this idea of being sceptical about our own views it helps us to get rid of the preconceived notions that we have about other people behaviour.

4.2 GOULDNER AND REFLEXIVITY

Gouldner wants to illuminate the manner in which theory products and theory performances are generated and received. The methodologists, for the production of theory stresses on the interaction between theory and research but Gouldner's conception is different. He argues that it is impossible to understand how social theory is actually made or how it makes its way in the world (*Gouldner, 1970*). He is of the opinion that the presence of a researcher alters reality. The objectivity that the researchers talk about is based on their values and the justification of them and it projects the reality as in the way the researcher wants to see it. The knowledge therefore can never be independent of the knower. A communication theory is very complex and this can be understood if we are able to comprehend the various ways in which the theorist is placed in their theories.

Social theorists take certain facts as given because these facts have resulted from their experience rather than research. The reliability of the facts is not problematic for them. What determines the facts is not important but the ordering of these facts are. "Social theorizing, then, is often a search for the meaning of the personally real, that which is already assumed to be known through personal experience" (*Gouldner, 1970:484*). Therefore, it is an endeavour to locate and interpret the meaning of what one has lived and to reduce the tension between a social event or process that the theorist takes to be real and some values which this violates.

For the social theorist there are two kinds of social world the 'permitted' and the 'unpermitted'. The theorist tries to transform the unpermitted into the permitted world and therefore the threat of the unpermitted and strengthen the permitted. Theorists do this in two ways 1) by communicating the importance or potency of the normal world, 2) by denying or ignoring the potency or values of what he considers to be an unpermitted world. Social theories in an effort to find and assign meanings of the social objects is simultaneously also locating objects in terms of their potency and goodness. In a value free social theory this is done in a covert manner. "The pressure to situate social objects in terms of their moral values abides and shapes the work of social theorists, whatever their professed conception of their technical role (*Gouldner, 1970:485*).

According to Gouldner sociologists are not able to tell us what they are doing and to distinguish this from what they should be doing. Reflexive sociology is therefore concerned with what they want to do and what they actually do in the world. Reflexive sociology has been perceived to be another field in sociology but he further argues that it is not and therefore it intends to transform the sociologists to penetrate deeply into his daily life and work enriching them with new sensitivities and to raise the sociologists self awareness to a new historical level (pp 489). Reflexive sociology presupposes a new praxis that would transform the sociologist himself/herself. Consequently our consciousness comes to deeply reflect upon our sociological work and social position. This is one of the objectives of reflexive sociology and to succeed in this reflexive sociology according to Gouldner needs to be radical because to advance the knowledge of the world it is important for the sociologist to understand his/her knowledge of himself/herself and one's position in the social world and also understand the social world of the other men. This demands that the sociologists have to view their own beliefs as they view the beliefs held by others and this would change how sociologists

have been viewing themselves and others. Reflexive sociology pursues the change of the self of the sociologist and subsequently his praxis in the world. This would end the distinction between the layman, who are studied and the sociologist, who studies. But in the absence of reflexive sociology this distinction would always remain.

Gouldner asserts that the separation between the knower and the known must be overcome, because it is impossible to know others without knowing yourself. To know the others the sociologist cannot simply study them but must also listen to them and confront himself/herself. Reflexive sociology changes the meaning of knowledge. It does not remain merely a piece of information, but becomes awareness. Reflexive sociology for Gouldner is moral sociology as it demands moral and ethical commitment unlike the positivistic sociology which demands the sociologist to be neutral and apolitical. “A Reflexive Sociology, then, is not characterised by what it studies. It is distinguished neither by the person and the problems studied nor even by the techniques and instruments used in studying them. It is characterized, rather, by the relationship it establishes between being a sociologist and being a person, between the role and the man performing it. A Reflexive Sociology embodies a critique of the conventional conception of segregated scholarly roles and has a vision of an alternative. It aims at transforming the sociologist’s relation to his work” (Gouldner, 1970: 495)

Box 4.1: Information and Awareness

The objective of Reflexive Sociology is to extend knowledge but there are difficulties because of how knowledge has been understood either as ‘information’ or ‘awareness’. The unstated doubt in the meaning of knowledge was brought into social sciences when natural and social sciences were differentiated from one another in the 19th century. The positivists conceived knowledge, about reality, as information which could be empirically proved. Therefore, the goal of science was to produce information either for its own sake or to improve power over the surrounding world. Science conceived in this manner therefore becomes an ideology.

“1) behind which all “humanity” might unite in a common effort to subdue a “nature” that was implicitly regarded as external to man and 2) with which to promote technologies that could transform the universal into the usable resource of mankind as a whole” (Gouldner, 1970: 495).

This idea of knowledge sees humans controlling the rest of the world and has the right to use the resources for its advantage. The assumed unity of mankind created problems when science was used to study human beings themselves, as it brought out differences among them and it was expected that social science would be used to control men as physical science was used to control nature. Such a view of social science premised that a man might be known, used and controlled like any other thing: it “thingafied” man. The use of the physical sciences, as a model fostered just such a conception of the social sciences, all the more so as they were developing in the context of an increasingly utilitarian cultures.

With its vehement criticism of the utilitarian culture, this information producing conception of social sciences by the Positivists was opposed by a different method of verstehen. Verstehen emphasised on producing knowledge that

would enhance men's awareness of their place in the social world rather than simply facilitating their control over it. This approach sees the social world being constructed on the basis of the shared meanings men have as there is "no knowledge of the world that is not a knowledge of our own experience with it and our relation to it" (1970:493).

When knowledge is conceived as awareness the concern is not with discovering the truth of the external reality but with seeing the truth as the product of the knower's interaction with the reality and the knower's effort to order his experience with it. "Knowledge as information, then, is the attribute of a culture rather than any person; and consequence are all depersonalized." On the other hand knowledge as "awareness, is an attribute of persons, even though it is influenced by the location of these persons in specific cultures or in parts of a social structure" (1970:493-494).

Awareness, therefore, requires a relationship between persons and information but information is not a sufficient condition for awareness. Information is never neutral to the men. It is either good or bad. Awareness is the openness to bad news and is born of a capacity to overcome resistance to its acceptance or use. "A scholar's ability to accept and use hostile information about his own view of social reality and his efforts to know it is part of what is usually called "objectivity"" (1970:494).

A Reflexive Sociology opposes and rejects the methodological dualism as witnessed in positivism. This dualism separates the subject and objects of research, separates the facts from values, reduces the knowledge of the social world to mere information and sees social world as mirrored in sociologist's work rather than as "constituted by the sociologists cognitive commitments and all his other interests" (1970:496). The practitioners of methodological dualism feel that if the sociologist engages politically, socially and emotionally with the objects of study the scientific nature of the discipline would be lost. This cold objectivity as Gouldner argues is essentially an expression of alienation of the sociologist from his/her own self. "It strives to free him from disgust, pity, anger, from egoism or moral outrage, from his passion and his interest, on the supposition that it is a bloodless and disembodied mind that works best" (1970:496). However, according to Gouldner "both the inquiring subject and the studied object are seen not only as mutually interrelated but also as mutually constituted" (1970: 493).

The aim of the Reflexive Sociology is not to remove his influence on others but to understand his own influence "which requires that he must become aware of himself as both knower and as agent of change" (pp 497). Reflexive Sociology recognises "that there is an inevitable tendency for any social system to curtail the sociologists autonomy in at least two ways: to transform him either into an ideologue of the status quo and an apologist for its policies or into a technician acting instrumentally on behalf of its interests" (1970:497-498).

4.3 GARFINKLE: REFLEXIVITY THROUGH ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

One of the most important thing in studying sociology is how do you look at things. In the book *Studies of Ethnomethodology*, Garfinkel's aim was to understand the methodologies used by social scientists. Sociologists have been

interested in order and its explanation, Garfinkel, however, is not concerned with order. Social life appears to be ordered and regular and that social action is systematic and patterned. Sociologists have assumed that social order has an objective reality. According to ethnomethodology, the social world is a natural world which contains a common stock of knowledge and precedes any individual. Subjects appropriate this common stock of knowledge with respect to their goals. The description or interpretation of facts and the performative accounts of daily action are regarded as the elementary basis on which the re-construction of the social world takes place (*Tsekeris & Katrivesis, 2008*). For Garfinkel, the world is chaotic and within this chaos sociologists try to discover and unravel a pattern or order. So the perception of this order and how the social scientists arrive at it is the important concern for Garfinkel. Is it possible to perceive order when there is no order, is the question that Garfinkel wants to address. Garfinkel suspends or abandons the belief that an actual or objective social order exists and proceeds from the assumption that social life appears orderly to the members of society. This order is not because of the fundamental nature of the social world. Social order is an appearance constructed by the members of the society.

He argues that sociology has characteristically depicted man as a 'cultural dope' who simply acts on the basis of norms, values and the culture of his society, without thinking and produces stable features of the society. Garfinkel replaces this 'cultural dope' in society by the skilled member who is constantly attending to the particular, indexical qualities of situations, giving them meaning, making them knowable, communicating this knowledge to others and constructing a sense and appearance of order. The members, for Garfinkel, construct and accomplish their own social world rather than being shaped by it.

Garfinkel was of the opinion that our understanding of anything is interpretative and the manner in which a social scientist works is the manner in which a man in the street also works. There is a lot taken for granted as in case of interaction, communication among street men. There is a lot taken for granted in sciences as well. Without this taken for grantedness there can be no communication. When somebody asks you "How are you?" You answer, "I am fine, thank you," irrespective of your condition. This is taken for granted. The person may not be concerned of your wellbeing but he asks. If the latter takes a scientific approach to the question asked, you may answer "with respect to what?" Such a question if asked, in reply to the question how are you? will be considered to be irrelevant. Theories and explanations are also taken for granted. At some stage questions and answers become meaningless and at times you are satisfied by the answer without asking any further because it is taken for granted, therefore you are trying to understand the reality.

According to Garfinkel there is no reality and to discover this reality you fall back on some pattern which is taken for granted. There cannot be any discovery of reality which is not taken for granted. That is the meaning of reflexivity. You are looking for data but for the analysis of the data you fall back on a theory. To arrive at a new theory an old theory is being made use of. A new law or theory is not being produced because to discover this new law or theory is rooted in the taken for grantedness of certain patterns and laws. If this concept is applied to social order, then order is all perceived. Under certain conditions you construct certain images of an order. It is your construction that means, the ideas of order

are as much dependent on what is ordered as on those people who are constructing the order.

Garfinkel argues that members employ the 'documentary method' to make sense and account for the social world and to give it an appearance of order. This method consists of selecting certain aspects of the infinite number of features contained in any situation or context, of defining them in a particular way and seeing them as evidence of an underlying pattern. In Garfinkel's words, the documentary method 'consists of treating an actual appearance as "the document of" as "pointing to" as "standing on behalf of" a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of "what is known" about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other. Thus the documentary method can be seen as reflexive. Garfinkel argues that social life is essentially reflexive. Members of society are constantly referring aspects of activities and situations to presumed underlying patterns and confirming the existence of those patterns by reference to particular instances of their expression. In this way members produce accounts of the social world which not only make sense of and explain but actually constitute that world.

In Garfinkel's discussion of ethnomethodology, reflexivity refers to the intimate interdependence between surface appearances (documents and accounts) and the associated underlying reality (a distinction which is characteristic of the documentary method of interpretation). The sense of the former is elaborated by drawing on knowledge of the latter, while at the same time the sense of the latter is elaborated by what is known about the former. Accounts are thus constituents features of the setting they make observable. Constitutive reflexivity has radical implications for social science's pretensions of causal argument, since it casts considerable doubt on the extent to which explanans and expalmandum can be considered distinct elements in an explanation.

Reflexivity is often said to be engendered by all social science with relativising tendencies. Any claims about the influence of social circumstances on a particular situation can be understood as also referring to the claim itself. This aspect of reflexivity comes into particular focus in work in the sociology of scientific knowledge. Whereas it has been convincingly demonstrated that natural scientific knowledge is a product of social cultural historical and political processes, rather little attention has been given to the fact that social science itself is an activity generated by these same forces. Sociology of science treats scientific knowledge in broadly relativist terms, but often continues to practise its own craft in realist terms. This has led to criticisms of inconsistency especially from objectivist philosophers of science. The recommended solution from this latter quarter is to abandon relativism. By contrast a body of work has arisen which takes the opposite tack and upholds the principle of consistency by exploring ways of abandoning realist methods in the social study of science.

4.4 BOURDIEU: REFLEXIVE SOCIOLOGY

When we are dealing with human behaviour reflexive sociology becomes important. Bourdieu is of the opinion that we need to deepen our understanding of our position in the world to better understand the social reality of the others.

Bourdieu insists on the importance of a reflexive sociology in which sociologists must at all times conduct their research with conscious attention to the effects of their own position, their own set of internalised structures and how these are likely to distort or prejudice their objectivity. A researcher needs to get out of his or her own way of thinking about social reality and be willing to step on other persons' shoes to understand why things are happening the way they are. In addition reflexive sociology requires us to be sceptical about our own views and really examine what we are doing, how we feel, how we think, what are our attitudes and assumptions, beliefs and prejudices and biases about particular things in social reality, then it allows us to step outside of our judgement of the situation. Bourdieu provides the following definition of reflexive sociology:

‘Understood as the effort whereby social science, taking itself for its object, uses its own weapons to understand and check itself, it is a particularly effective means of increasing the chances of attaining truth by increasing the cross-controls and providing the principles of a technical critique, which makes it possible to keep closer watch over the factors capable of biasing research. It is not a matter of pursuing a new form of absolute knowledge, but of exercising a specific form of epistemological vigilance, the very form that this vigilance must take in an area where the epistemological obstacles are first and foremost social obstacles.’ (Bourdieu, 2004:89).

According to Bourdieu (2004), social scientists themselves, are also objects under study and participating in the reality of society that is the object of their study. The social researcher occupies a place in the social world, which is the object of study, and must therefore adopt a critical awareness of his or her own social location in relation to both the research object and process. According to the precepts of reflexive sociology, social research must account for the interplay of objective and subjective social factors. Reflexive sociology focuses on overcoming the contradiction of objectivism and subjectivism” (Wacquant, 1998, p. 220). This is achieved largely through Bourdieu’s dialogic theoretical constructs of “field,” “capital,” and “habitus”

Box 4.2: Field, Capital and Habitus

Bourdieu understand the social world as being divided up into a variety of distinct arenas or fields each with their own unique set of rules, knowledge and forms of capital. Different social fields can be distinguished, e.g. the field of art, literature, science or careers that can be further subdivided into subfields. For him these social fields were microcosm in which the agents and institutions are integrated and interact with each other in accordance with field-specific rules. Rules are not formalized but rather tacit in nature (Wacquant, 2011) and need to be internalized by the agents in order to demonstrate appropriate practices and strategies. The internalization of the field-specific rules enables the agent to anticipate future tendencies and opportunities. There is no global rule that applies to all fields. Therefore, Bourdieu (1966) argues that due to their unique rules, fields are autonomous, which is relative as one field may be influenced by other social structures like economy, polity etc.

A social field represents a network of positions (Bourdieu, 1972). Boundaries of social fields are where their respective effect ends and where the effects of another field begin. These are not pre-defined and have to be found out empirically. The position an agent occupies on a field creates self-evident rules

that determine the limits of social mobility within a social field (*Bourdieu, 1972*). This forms the sense of our place and the feeling of what is possible and what not. Fields are places of power relations where practices of agents are not arbitrary. Once it has been understood that all interactions are anchored in a specific social field, it now has to be examined how positions on the respective fields are gained.

Capital

Taking as a basis that a social field represents the playground where certain rules apply (*Bourdieu, 1972*), agents need to be endowed with a specific quantity and structure of resources they can put at stake in order to obtain the right to enter a social field. Each field values particular sorts of resources that Bourdieu named capital. Bourdieu distinguishes between four types of capital, namely economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital which agents mobilize in order to enter and move on social fields. Although all types of capital appear to be distinct, in reality, they are very closely linked to each other and can be converted. Economic capital is related to a person's fortune and revenues. This form of capital can be more easily transformed into other types of capital than vice-versa. For an example when you buy a book you are exchanging economic capital to buy cultural capital. Cultural capital is especially transferred by family and education and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications. Cultural capital is the primary cause for status and relative positions within a social field. Social capital can be institutionalized in a title of nobility and requires efforts for its creation and maintain. Lastly, the notion of symbolic capital is related to honour and recognition. It is not an independent type of capital within itself, but rather consists in the acknowledgment of capital by the entirety of the peer competitors on a specific field.

Besides the right to enter a social field, the capital structure also determines an agent's position on the field or social space in general. Bourdieu insists on the fact that positions on social fields are relative. They are determined by the volume and structure of the agent's capital portfolio that is compared to that of other agents on the same field, especially regarding economic and cultural capital (*Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992*).

The Habitus is one of the important concept in Bourdieu's sociology. It must not be mistaken for the common notion of habit as a mechanical adoption of a previously determined program. Habitus refers to the physical embodiment of cultural capital to the deeply ingrained habits, skills and dispositions that we possess due to our life experiences. It also extends to our taste for cultural objects such as art food and clothing. It is the system of dispositions as a product of history that "produces practices in accordance with the schemes engendered by history" (*Bourdieu, 1984, p. 82*). At the core of Bourdieu's habitus lies the tendency to always act the same way in similar situations. The habitus is acquired during primary and secondary socialization. Primary socialization is the socialization that comes from the family during childhood. The resulting primary habitus is rather stable. The schemes of action and perception that have been transferred during childhood are an education that is linked to the parents' social position in the social space. Therefore, the primary habitus is about 'internalizing the external' as the parents' modes of thinking, feeling and behaving that are linked to their position in the social space are

internalized in the children's own habitus. This is what Bourdieu (1977) also calls class habitus that reflects the different positions people have in society and that leads to different lifestyles tastes and interests among social classes. The secondary habitus is built on the primary habitus and especially results from one's education at school and university, but also from other life experiences. The primary habitus never loses its impact and always influences the development of the secondary habitus. In this respect, the primary and secondary habitus can also be summarized into one single habitus that is constantly reinforced and modified by life experiences giving it a dynamic quality. According to Bourdieu (1977, p. 72), habitus is "the strategy generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations".

Furthermore, the habitus ensures that agents act in accordance with the field specific rules as all agents tacitly recognize "the value of the stakes of the game and the practical mastery of its rules" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 117). This also ensures that agents are competitors for positions within the field as they pursue the same objective in the game.

4.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have understood that reflexivity is the process by which the researcher reflects upon the data collection and interpretation process and the term has different meanings in different contexts. To understand this we have referred to three important theorists of reflexivity: Gouldner, Garfinkel and Bourdieu. Gouldner argued that knowledge was not independent of the knower and sociology is intimately bound up with the political and socio-economic context within which it exists. Therefore, for him it was important to be aware of this connection and of sociology's role as part of the way we look at ourselves and our future.

In Garfinkel's discussion of ethnomethodology, reflexivity refers to the intimate interdependence between surface appearances (documents and accounts) and the associated underlying reality (a distinction which is characteristic of the documentary method of interpretation). The sense of the former is elaborate by drawing on knowledge of the latter, while at the same time the sense of the latter is elaborated by what is known about the former.

According to Bourdieu, the social researcher occupies a place in the social world, which is the object of study, and must therefore adopt a critical awareness of his or her own social location in relation to both the research object and process. According to the precepts of reflexive sociology, social research must account for the interplay of objective and subjective social factors.

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GLOSSARY

Reflexivity: It is the process by which the researcher reflects upon the data collection and interpretation process.

Ethnomethodology: means the study of the methods used by people. It is concerned with examining the methods and procedures employed by members of society to construct, account for and give meaning to their social world.

'Cultural dope': A man-in-the-sociologist's society who produces the stable features of society by acting in compliance with pre-established and legitimate alternatives of action that the common culture provides.

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UNIT 5 HISTORICAL METHOD*

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 The Historical Method in Sociology and Social Anthropology: Development and Changes
- 5.3 Early Times
- 5.4 The Inductive Method: The Evolutionists
- 5.5 The Inductive Method: The Ethnologists
- 5.6 The Development of the Ethnological Method
- 5.7 The Ethnological Method
- 5.8 The Deductive Method: The Social Anthropologists
- 5.9 The Historical Method: Later Times
- 5.10 The Use of The Historical Method in India
- 5.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.12 References
- 5.13 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- Use of historical method for explanations in sociology, and
- Trace the way that the use of the historical method has changed over a period of time.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The changes in the historical method are linked to the changes and growth of Sociology as an academic discipline. The earliest scholar to write on the use of the historical method was the British social anthropologist A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. In the first few sections we will be dealing with the use of the historical method from the perspective of Radcliffe-Brown. Consequently, we will be looking at the method as it was used by the evolutionists and later by the ethnologists. In the later sections we will discuss the use of the historical method by the social anthropologists and later by scholars in the 20th century. In the concluding section we will examine the use of the historical method in India.

5.2 THE HISTORICAL METHOD IN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY: DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGES

The historical method, as the name implies, is a method which uses history to understand societies. The historical method began when we first started to

* Dr. Reema Bhatia, Miranda House, Delhi University, Delhi

systematically study societies. The use of history helps us understand the way in which the past has impacted and influenced the present day societies. This method traces the development of society or social institutions over a period of time. It may also trace the causes of change and the direction of change (*Srinivas, 1983*)

Sources of History

The sources of this history can be many. On the one hand history could be accessed through sources like government records and written accounts of societies. The other sources of history include accounts on artefacts, clothes, ornaments, weapons and so on. The kind of sources used to gather information about societies is dependent on the nature of societies. Sources like written accounts of societies, documents and government records etc. are typically resources that are available in complex societies and not in simple societies. In complex societies, one has access to written material. There is often a lot of information available through written documents like official gazetteers, archives etc. In simple societies since the level of technological development is lesser than complex societies there are no written records. In this case the sources that are available would include artefacts, weapons, clothes or even oral histories etc.

Amongst the earliest thinkers to write on the use of the historical method was A. R. Radcliffe Brown (17 January 1881 - 24 October 1955), the British social anthropologist. Radcliffe-Brown while analysing the use of the historical method for explanations traces the development and changes in the use of history in sociology and social anthropology. Radcliffe-Brown's seminal work on Research Methods which was edited by M.N. Srinivas deals at length with the history of social anthropological research.

5.3 EARLY TIMES

The first section of the essay will focus on tracing the trajectory of the use of the historical method. According to A. R. Radcliffe Brown methodologically historical explanations can either be deductive or inductive (*Srinivas, 1983*).

- The *deductive method* is what characterised the growth of the discipline in the middle of the 19th Century. This method was used by the earliest anthropologist. They relied on indirect or direct evidence. The historical explanations offered by evolutionists were often based on conjecture. This method was also later used by those that Radcliffe Brown refers to as ethnologists. The ethnologists focussed on the study of particular aspects of societies or on culture. The ethnologists were also critical of the evolutionists. For the ethnologists the use of historical explanations are limited to a particular society or culture. It is not based on universal laws or explanations.
- In the second case the method used to explain societies is *inductive*. This method is directed towards discovering the general laws governing societies. This method according to Radcliffe-Brown was used by these social anthropologists. The inductive method in sociology and social anthropology is based on field work and it may offer historical explanations that are evidence based. It is directed towards discovering universal laws or general explanations.

5.4 THE INDUCTIVE METHOD: THE EVOLUTIONISTS

The use of the historical method can be traced to the second half of the 19th century. It was the time when the systematic study of societies first started to appear. The earliest approach to the study of societies was evolutionary in nature. The evolutionary method was used to write about the history of societies. The focus of those who used the evolutionary method in this way was on discovering the origins of everything. They studied societies and cultures from the point of view of societies passing through successive stages. The assumption was that all societies follow the same path of development. The progress of societies was viewed from a unilinear perspective.

Amongst the first to use the method of social evolution was Herbert Spencer (27 April 1820 - 8 December 1903), an English philosopher, biologist and anthropologist. Spencer used the historical method when writing on the large scale transformations in society. He wrote about the changes in society from simple to compound due to changes in population size.

The French philosopher and social visionary Auguste Comte (19 January 1798 - 5 September 1857), like Spencer used the historical method. Comte was writing at the time of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. He was trying to understand the changes taking place in society. In his six volume work, *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830-1842) (The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte) he set forth an evolutionary perspective on the development of society (Peel 1996). Using the historical approach he deliberates the origins of human thought in his *Law of Three Stages*. In this work he traces the origin of all human societies from a theological to a metaphysical stage (based on conjecture) to finally a positivist stage i.e. a stage in which scientific explanations dominate.

Lewis Henry Morgan (November 21, 1818 - December 17, 1881) was another prominent anthropologist using the evolutionary method. He worked on the origins of totemism, marriage, family etc.

The other notable names amongst the evolutionists were James Frazer whose work was on the origins of totemism. His method influenced scholars like Bachofen, Kohler and Durkheim.

Thus we see that the evolutionary approach believed that all societies evolve along a single path of development. This may be described as unilinear progression. Some societies were at an earlier stage of development compared to the others. The history of all societies was viewed from an evolutionary perspective. The evolutionists were criticised for their belief that all societies were similar and that they all follow the same path of development.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What are the various sources of history?

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2) What is the inductive method?

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3) What is the deductive method?

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4) What is the evolutionist method? Name some thinkers who have used this method.

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5.5 THE INDUCTIVE METHOD: THE ETHNOLOGISTS

The ethnologists were critical of the evolutionists for their belief that all societies evolve along a single unilineal path. For the evolutionists this implied that some societies were more developed than the others. The less developed societies they believed would develop along the same lines as the more developed ones. For the evolutionist history was thus an evolutionary one. The ethnologists on the other hand use history differently. They do not focus on evolution. The ethnologists use the historical method to study societies and their culture. (*Srinvas, 1983*). Such a method explains an institution or a particular aspect of culture by tracing its development over a period of time. It explains a change in society by linking it to a particular stage of development of society. If for instance, we are interested in the rights of women then we can understand them by linking them to various stages of development of feminism and feminist thought. Therefore, the theory

has been used in different context. However, the dominant theory is the study of human society.

The use of the historical method in this way establishes specific connections within a particular aspect of culture. The historical method in this case relies on both quantitative and qualitative data. For example, in order to study the government in England we will study its history from the point of view of changes over a period of time and trace its development to the present times. In this case we rely on factual data that is available through official records and other government sources. If there are no official records available then we do a hypothetical reconstruction of the past. For this we may also use indirect evidence in order to understand cultures and societies which were labelled as primitive and which were less well developed than the Western societies. Radcliffe-Brown gives the example of Madagascar, an island on the east coast of the African sub-continent as an illustration of the method (*Srinivas, 1983*). The study of the cultures of the people of Madagascar reveals that the culture and race of the people of Madagascar is influenced not just by Africa but also by South-East Asia. The ethnologists explained this based on migration of people from Asia to Madagascar sometime in the past. They offered conjectural dates and time periods of this migration. They reconstructed the history. This reconstruction could also rely on archaeological evidence. In this case there was no access to any kind of written historical records. The explanations that were offered were based on indirect evidence. Indirect evidence based on language, artefacts, physical features etc. was interlinked in order to explain these societies.

Thus for the study of simple societies where there is almost no official sources the ethnologists offer a historical explanation even when there are no records of history. To get a complete knowledge of society we often have to rely on indirect evidence of the kind that is derived from archaeology and history. Ethnological knowledge for Radcliffe Brown is a method of historical reconstruction of the past specific to a particular society or culture. It is not based on universal laws or explanations. It is often conjectural history particularly where documentary evidence is unavailable. Real history for Radcliffe Brown is where documentary evidence is available.

5.6 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ETHNOLOGICAL METHOD

The development of the ethnological method critiquing the evolutionary method began towards the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. The ethnological method explaining cultures using the historical method has varied over a period of time. It can be broadly divided into four phases as follows (*Goldenweiser, 1925*)

Graebner and his followers

In Germany, the cultural historical school was influenced by Fritz Graebner (4 March 1877-13 July 1934). Graebner believed that the task of ethnology was to reconstruct historical contacts between people and culture. Historical explanations about society were offered from the '*kulturhistorische*' or culture history point of view.

The German scholars, following Graebner, believed that culture was transmitted from one region to the other through the process of diffusion. They viewed this as a very important way for the development of culture the world over. For instance, in order to explain religion or an artefact like a pot, Graebner compared both the quantitative and qualitative features in the context of the two cultures. It is not necessary according to this school of ethnology for the two cultures to come into contact with each other. The contact could have happened sometime in the past. Graebner himself studied Africa, North America and South America using this method.

W.H.R. Rivers

William Halse Rivers (12 March 1864 - 4 June 1922), was an English anthropologist and ethnologist. Rivers used the historical method differently from Graebner and his followers. Rivers was an evolutionist to begin with. He later modified his stance and started focusing on the role of culture contact in the context of social evolution. He believed that when cultures come into contact with one another, then new features could appear. These feature could have been completely absent in either of the cultures. As a result of the contact new features appeared or developed. For him unlike Graebner contact between cultures was essential.

Elliot Smith and Willem James Perry

British ethnologists like Elliot Smith (15 August 1871 - 1 January 1937) and William James Perry (1887–1949) explained the similarities in culture from the point of view of diffusion from a common centre. If they find similarities in cultures which may be located in geographically unrelated regions then they explain it from the point of view of diffusion from a common centre in the historical past. They deny that they may have developed in an unrelated manner. Unlike Rivers and Graebner they believed that culture flows from one centre to the rest of the world. Both Smith and Perry believed that Egypt was the centre for all cultural diffusion. The primary diffusion for them happened to nearby areas like Syria, Crete, East Africa, Southern Arabia and Sumer. Secondary diffusion then occurred to other parts of the world from these areas.

The American Historical School

In America, Lewis Henry Morgan (November 21, 1818 - December 17, 1881) following in the footsteps of Rivers mapped the genealogy of the American Indian tribes. He believed that there were similarities in their kinship structures. By studying kin terms across tribes Morgan attempted to classify kinship systems. The data that he collected was largely on the disappearing of Red Indian tribes. He published a seminal work 'Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family' in 1871. In his work Morgan used extensive data to establish the unity of various kinship systems. He examined the way in which the structure of the family and social institutions change and develop (*Mary Bouquet, 2015*).

After Morgan, Franz Boas (1858–1942), a German-born American anthropologist and later his student A. L. Kroeber (June 11, 1876 - October 5, 1960) focussed on explaining data through the use of historical explanations. Boas was critical of the evolutionary perspective and instead proposed that cultures develop historically through the process of diffusion when people interact with one another. He was also critical of the evolutionists' ideas that some cultures were more

developed than the others. Kroeber through his work further exemplified this approach. Edward Sapir (January 26, 1884 - February 4, 1939) was an American anthropologist-linguist, and also a student of Boas applied historical method to study the indigenous languages in America. For Boas and his students historical explanations were based on diffusion. They used statistical data to compare different aspects of cultures. The similarities between cultures was explained through diffusion.

The American anthropologists used the historical method in several ways. It was used as a method of convergence, as a statistical method, as a genealogical method and also as a psychological method. American anthropologists like Boas also used the statistical method. For instance Boas in his study of myths numerically counted the similarities in myths across cultures. He used this quantitative comparison to establish a connection between cultures. Boas method was very different from the genealogical method used by Lewis Henry Morgan. The American anthropologists also believed that cultural similarities that could not be explained through diffusion could be explained through convergence. Two cultures with diverse historical features may have come together and later the cultural features may have knit together into a unified culture. This was the method of convergence. According to the psychological method, it is believed that the process of diffusion is not simply a mechanical one but is also a psychological one. People coming into contact with one another or with a different culture have to psychologically also adapt themselves. Thus, in American anthropology one sees the use of the historical method in different ways.

5.7 THE ETHNOLOGICAL METHOD

In the 18th and 19th Century there is a shift from the evolutionary perspective to the ethnological perspective. For the ethnologists development of cultures could be explained through cultures coming into contact. The contact between cultures was viewed differently in different parts of the world. There was a lack of agreement amongst the ethnologists on the use of the historical method.

In Germany Graebner and his followers used the '*kulturhistorische*' or cultural history approach. For them cultures developed when they came into contact with one another through the process of diffusion. In Britain, Rivers, Elliot Smith and Perry too believed in the process of diffusion. For Rivers culture contact was essential for the development of cultures. Perry and Smith believed in a single centre of diffusion. The American Historical School differed from the German and British ethnologists. Boas and his students used the statistical method to explain cultures. The other Americans used the method of convergence, the genealogical method and the psychological method too.

Ethnologists as we have seen, contributed greatly to the use of the historical method to study society. Such a method explains an institution or a particular aspect of culture by tracing its development over a period of time. It explains a change in society by linking it to a particular stage of development of society. This labelling as ethnology was an attempt by Radcliffe Brown to break away from historical studies. It was an attempt to establish the independence of Sociology and Social Anthropology as independent disciplines. The term ethnology is not popularly used any more. However, the contribution of the thinkers discussed in the preceding sections, to the historical method is immense.

They in several ways, laid the foundations for the use of history in Sociology and Social Anthropology.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What is the ethnological method?

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- 2) How have Graebner and his followers used the ethnological method?

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- 3) Trace the development of the ethnological method in America.

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5.8 THE DEDUCTIVE METHOD: THE SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGISTS

In the preceding section we have seen that ethnologists focus on particular societies and cultures. The use of the historical method as we have seen so far was very different amongst those whom were labelled as ethnologists. Ethnologists were more focussed on understanding the development of culture. They often used sources of history that were not written which could include artefacts, customs and so on. Official sources and documents were also used but they were used more in terms of understanding specific events or occurrences.

As opposed to the methodology of the ethnologists Radcliffe-Brown proposes the use of the term social anthropology for those who formulate general laws for society. Their focus is not on specific aspects of society unlike the ethnologists.

The task of social anthropology in this method was to discover universal laws of society. For instance, Radcliffe-Brown himself in his work “Structure and Function in Primitive Societies” uses this method to study societies. He focusses on studying the social morphology and social physiology of societies in order to discover universal laws governing them. A knowledge of history helps discover social structure and function. This is however an indirect use of history. The focus is on societies at present and not on events that have happened earlier.

According to Radcliffe-Brown the historical explanations by historians are concerned with particulars and are not generalizing in nature. Social anthropology on the other hand uses history in a different way. Social anthropology for Radcliffe Brown explained societies in terms of sociological laws and not in terms of reconstructed history. Ethnology according to him used unverifiable guesses which could not be verified. Proper history for him relied on facts that were available through written documents. Facts and data for anthropologists had to be gathered through field work. Sociologists began to take more of their data from contemporary societies, whether they used official statistics or carried on fieldwork.

5.9 THE HISTORICAL METHOD: LATER TIMES

In the preceding sections we have seen the way in which history has been used to understand societies when we began studying societies. This method has been used by the evolutionists, the ethnologists and the social anthropologists. In this section we will discuss the use of the historical method in the 19th century by those who were not classified as evolutionists, ethnologists or social anthropologists but contributed to the historical method in Sociology.

We see the use of the historical method in the works of Emile Durkheim (15 April 1858 - 15 November 1917), a French sociologist. He drew from the works of Fustel de Coulanges, a French historian, for his books—*The Division of Labour in Society* (1893) & *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912). He also wrote on the history of education in France. Durkheim also made it a policy in the journal *L'Année Sociologique* (Kando, (1976).), that he founded, to review books on history.

Ferdinand Tönnies (26 July 1855 - 9 April 1936), a German sociologist, retained an interest in the past. Vilfredo Federico Pareto (15 July 1848 - 19 August 1923), in his treatise on Sociology developed the notion of the circulation of elites in society. He discussed classical Athens, Rome and Spartan society, took examples from history of Italy in middle ages. Albion Small (May 11, 1854 - March 24, 1926) the chairman of first Sociology department in Chicago, in 1892, was previously a professor of History.

In Germany, under the influence of Leopold von Ranke (21 December 1795 - 23 May 1886) in late 19th Century one also sees the use of official sources in order to document history. There was an attempt in Germany to write a more objective or scientific history on the basis of official documents (Burke, 1980). The Germans used elaborate techniques to establish the authenticity of documents they used. In contrast the works of social historians looked unprofessional.

Some scholars made an extensive use of archives by historians in Germany. Karl Marx's (5 May 1818-14 March 1883) famous Communist Manifesto of 1867,

was based completely on archival material. Max Weber (21 April 1864 - 14 June 1920) wrote extensively on the agrarian history of Rome in 1889 and again using archival materials. Weber also wrote books on trading companies of the middle Ages. When he studied economic and social organization, he did not give up history but drew on history for material and on historians for material and concepts like patrimonial state, charisma. His work on the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is also historical in nature.

As the discipline of sociology and social anthropology evolved the study of culture from a historical perspective became a part of the methodology. They often used the 'unofficial sources' like artefacts, customs and institutions to explain societies. Gradually the historical method began to rely not just on official sources but also on unofficial sources. Those who studied cultures were now not labelled as ethnologists. Their work and methodology became a part of main stream sociology and social anthropology.

In The 20th Century

Social anthropologists following Radcliffe-Brown were more focussed on discovering general laws of society. This was in an attempt to make Sociology and Social Anthropology as scientific as the natural sciences. In the endeavour to establish Sociology as a science Radcliffe Brown, and the others focussed more on discovering general laws for society.

In the 1920s, one sees a break in the use of the historical method in Sociology. Those who studied societies from the perspective of their cultural past were critical of the approach used by Radcliffe-Brown and other social anthropologists to study society. The German thinkers studying societies considered this approach to the study of society to be a mechanical one. The social anthropologists on the other hand following Radcliffe Brown used the method of doing field work in order to discover general laws governing society. Bronislaw Malinowski, a British Social anthropologist too focussed more on the scientific study of society based on field work. This meant that the specificity of societies was often overlooked.

The historical approach used by Ranke and his followers and which dominated the German intellectual tradition for a considerable time, was criticised for its focus on only official documents. Karl Lamprecht (25 February 1856 - 10 May 1915) criticized the German establishment for its emphasis on political history. He called for a collective history which would draw on other disciplines like psychology and economics (Chickering, 1993).

In the 1920s, Karl Mannheim wrote extensively on the Sociology of Knowledge using the historical approach. In 1930s, R.K. Merton in his work *Science, Technology and Society in 17th-Century England* uses the historical method. His work establishes a link between Puritanism and Science in England, in the tradition of Weber.

As the discipline of Sociology has evolved, interdisciplinarity has increased. For a discipline to grow it's important to rethink the methodology used. For a more enriching knowledge researchers use a mix of methods. Anthony Giddens, Peter Burke, Charles Tilly and several others have extensively used the historical method in conjunction with other methods.

Check Your Progress 3

Historical Method

- 1) According to Radcliffe-Brown how do social anthropologists differ from ethnologists in the use of the historical method?

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- 2) Discuss Durkheim's contribution to the use of the historical method.

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- 3) Elucidate on Ranke's contribution to the use of the historical method? Discuss his impact on the development of sociology in Germany.

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- 4) Compare the use of history in the works of Radcliffe-Brown and Ranke and his followers.

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5.10 THE USE OF THE HISTORICAL METHOD IN INDIA

In India too we find the extensive use of the historical method. In the early years we find that the sociologists in India used historical texts to understand social reality. Many of them were Indologists . Prominent amongst them were G.S. Ghurye (1969), Louis Dumont (1983), Ketkar (1909), M.H. Kapadia (1945) and, Iravati Karve (1953, 1961, 1991). The latter day sociologists to use these ancient texts include Veena Das (1987), T.N. Madan and Amrit Srinivasan (1980). At the Bombay School of Economics and Sociology, Ghurye and his students extensively used historical and Sanskrit texts to study contemporary social structures and institutions. This exemplified the use of history for a macro analysis (Dhanagare 2007 a) (*Dhanagare, 2007 b*).

We also see the metaphoric use of history (*Dhanagare, 2007 a*) (*Dhanagare, 2007 b*). This meant that their research was rooted in the history of ideas. Their actual research did not reflect the use of historical sources unlike in the works of Ghurye and others discussed in the preceding section. This approach was followed by Radhakamal Mukherjee, D. P. Mukerji, D.N.Majumdar, P.C. Joshi, Yogendra Singh and others. This approach was prominently used by the Sociologists of the Lucknow School.

The substantive use of history in the study of societies is seen in the works of A. R. Desai, D.N. DhanagareYogendra Singh, P.C. Joshi, A.M. Shah, M.S.A. Rao, and several others. A substantive use of history implies that history is used to explain societies. The use of history is not just limited to ideas. Historical sources are used as a tool of explanation. They used archival sources, primary sources and also secondary sources. In the recent times the some of the sociologist in India who have used the historical method include Ramachandra Guha, Gail Omvedt, Sharit Bhowmik, V.Xaxa, Sujata Patel and S. Jodhka amongst others. (*Dhanagare, 2007 a*)(*Dhanagare, 2007 b*).

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) How was the historical method used in India in the earlier times?

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- 2) What does a metaphoric use of history to study societies mean?

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5.11 LET US SUM UP

In this Chapter, we have discussed the use of the Historical Method. We have examined it in the context of the early times as well as the present. The earliest to use this method were the evolutionists followed by the ethnologists. The social anthropologists and sociologists across 20th and the 21st century continue to use the historical method. There is no one way in which history is used to explain society. There are diverse ways to use the historical method. Explanations vary from explanations based on diffusion theories to Indologists who use ancient texts to explain society. As the discipline of Sociology has progressed interdisciplinarity has also increased. The Sociologists today use a combination of methods to study society.

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5.13 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The sources of this history can be many. On the one hand history could be accessed through official sources like government records and written accounts of societies. The unofficial sources of this history could be artefacts, clothes, ornaments, weapons and so on. The kind of sources used to gather information about societies is dependent on the nature of societies. Sources like written accounts of societies, documents and government records etc. are typically resources that are available in complex societies and not in simple societies.
- 2) The *inductive* method is directed towards discovering the general laws governing societies. This method according to Radcliffe-Brown was used by those social anthropologists. The inductive method in sociology and social anthropology is based on field work and it may offer historical explanations that are evidence based. It is based on universal laws or explanations.
- 3) The *deductive method* is what characterised the growth of the discipline in the middle of the 19th Century. This method was used by the earliest anthropologist. They relied on indirect or direct evidence. This method was used by evolutionists and was often based on conjecture. This method was also later used by those that Radcliffe Brown refers to as ethnologists.
- 4) The focus of those who used the evolutionary method in this way was on discovering the origins of everything. They studied societies and cultures from the point of view of societies passing through successive stages. The assumption was that all societies follow the same path of development. The progress of societies was viewed from a unilinear perspective. The earliest to use the method of social evolution was Herbert Spencer, Auguste Comte, Morgan, Frazer and Bachofen.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The ethnological method explains an institution or a particular aspect of culture by tracing its development over a period of time. It explains a change in society by linking it to a particular stage of development of society. If for instance we are interested in the rights of women then we can understand them by linking them to various stages of development of feminism and feminist thought. The use of the historical method in this way establishes specific connections within a particular aspect of culture. The historical method in this case relies on quantitative and qualitative data that is available.

- 2) In Germany, the cultural historical school influenced by Fritz Graebner believed that the task of ethnology was to reconstruct historical contacts between people and culture. Historical explanations about society were offered from the '*kulturhistorische*' or culture history point of view. The German scholars following Graebner believed that culture was transmitted from one region to the other through the process of diffusion. They compare both the quantitative and qualitative features in the context of the two cultures. It is not necessary according to this school of ethnology for the two cultures to come into contact with each other. The contact could have happened sometime in the past.
- 3) In America, after the work of Lewis Henry Morgan, the focus of studying societies shifted from a predominantly theoretical perspective to the collection of data. The data that was collected was largely on the disappearing Red Indian tribes. Franz Boas and later his student A. L. Kroeber focussed on explaining data through the use of historical explanations. Boas was critical of the evolutionary perspective and instead proposed that cultures develop historically through the process of diffusion when people interact with one another. The American anthropologists used the historical method in several ways. It was used as a method of convergence, as a statistical method, as a genealogical method and also as a psychological method.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) According to Radcliffe-Brown Social anthropology formulates general laws for society. Their focus is not on specific aspects of society unlike the ethnologists. A knowledge of history helps discover social function but it is different from historical explanations. Historical explanations deal with events that happened earlier and latter facts arise out of these. These are two essentially different methods. Social anthropology for Radcliffe-Brown explained societies in terms of sociological laws and not in terms of reconstructed history. Ethnology according to him used unverifiable guesses which could not be verified. Proper history for him relied on facts that were available through written documents. A historical explanation for him was very different from a sociological or functional explanation. Facts and data had to be gathered through field work. Sociologists began to take more of their data from contemporary societies, whether they used official statistics or carried out their surveys.
- 2) Emile Durkheim drew from the works of Fustel de Coulanges, a French historian, for his books- *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893) & *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912). He also wrote on the history of education in France. Durkheim also made it a policy in the journal *L'Année Sociologique* that he founded, to review books on history.
- 3) In Germany under the influence of Leopold von Ranke in late 19th Century one also sees the use of official sources in order to document history. There was an attempt in Germany to write a more objective or scientific history on the basis of official documents (*Burke*, 1980). They used elaborate techniques to establish the authenticity of documents. In contrast the works of social historians looked unprofessional. There was an extensive use of archives by historians in Germany. Karl Marx's famous Communist Manifesto of 1867, was based completely on archival material. Max Weber

wrote extensively on the agrarian history of Rome in 1889 and again using archival materials. Weber also wrote books on trading companies of the middle Ages. When he studied economic and social organization he did not give up history drew on history for material and on historians for material and concepts like patrimonial state, charisma. His work on the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism is also historical in nature.

- 4) In the 1920s, one sees a break in the use of the historical method in Sociology. Those who studied societies from the perspective of their cultural past were critical of the approach used by Radcliffe Brown and the other social anthropologists to study society. The German thinkers studying societies considered this approach to be a mechanical one. The social anthropologists on the other hand following Radcliffe Brown used the method of doing field work in order to discover the general laws governing society. Bronislaw Malinowski, a British Social anthropologist too focussed more on the scientific study of society based on field work. This meant that the specificity of societies was often overlooked.

The historical approach used by Ranke and his followers and which dominated the German intellectual tradition for a considerable time was criticised for its focus on only official documents. Karl Lamprecht criticized the German establishment for its emphasis on political history. He called for a collective history which would draw on other disciplines like psychology and economics.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) In India in the early years we find that the sociologists in India used historical texts to understand social reality. Many of them were Indologists. Prominent amongst them were G. S. Ghurye in 1969, Louis Dumont (1983), Ketkar (1909), M.H. Kapadia (1945) and, Iravati Karve (1953, 1961, 1991). The latter day sociologists to use these texts include Veena Das (1987), T.N. Madan and Amrit Srinivasan.
- 2) In India we also see the metaphoric use of history. This meant that their research was rooted in the history of ideas and their actual research did not reflect the use of historical sources unlike in the works of Ghurye and others discussed in the preceding section. This approach was followed by Radhakamal Mukherjee, D. P. Mukerji, D.N.Majumdar, P.C. Joshi, Yogendra Singh and others.
- 3) The substantive use of history in the study of societies is seen in the works of A. R. Desai, D.N. Dhanagare, Yogendra Singh, P.C. Joshi, A.M. Shah, M.S.A. Rao, and several others. A substantive use of history implies that history is used to explain societies. The use of history is not just limited to ideas. Historical sources are used as a tool of explanation. They used archival sources, primary sources and also secondary sources. In the recent times the some of the sociologist who have used the historical method include Ramachandra Guha, Gail Omvedt, Sharit Bhowmik, V. Xaxa, Sujata Patel and S. Jodhka amongst others.

GLOSSARY

Bombay School of Economics and Sociology: Ghurye and his students extensively used historical and Sanskrit texts to study contemporary social structures and institutions.

Deductive Method: The deductive method relied on indirect or direct evidence. This method was used by evolutionists and was often based on conjecture. This method was also later used by the ethnologists.

Ethnologists: The ethnologists focussed on the study of particular aspects of societies or on culture. The term was used by anthropologist A.R. Radcliffe-Brown.

Evolutionists: The focus of those who used the evolutionary method in discovering the origins of everything.

Functionalist Approach: The focus is on studying societies from the point of view of their functioning. The functionalists also used the organic analogy in order to study societies.

Historical Method: The historical method as the name implies means a method which uses history to understand societies.

Indologists: An Indologist is one who uses sacred texts to study traditional Indian society. They predominantly focus on Hindu ideology, values and institutions.

Inductive Method: The inductive method in sociology and social anthropology is based on field work and it may offer historical explanations that are evidence based.

Kulturhistorische: Historical explanations about society were offered from the cultural history point of view. This method was used in Germany.

Metaphoric Use of History: This meant that their research was rooted in the history of ideas and their actual research did not reflect the use of historical sources.

Substantive Use of History: A substantive use of history implies that historical sources are used to explain societies.

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UNIT 6 COMPARATIVE METHOD*

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Durkheim and Comparative Method
- 6.3 Radcliffe-Brown and Comparative Method
- 6.4 Weber's Comparative Analysis
- 6.5 Debates on the Comparative Method
- 6.6 Murdock's Comparative Method and The Use of Statistics
- 6.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.8 References

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- comparative method used by Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown;
- Weber's Comparative Analysis; and
- Various debates on the Comparative Method.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Comparative sociology may be defined as that field which is concerned with the systematic and explicit comparison of social phenomena in two or more societies. No social phenomenon can be isolated and studied without comparing it to other social phenomena. Comparison is a fundamental tool for analysis. It shapes our power of description, and plays a central role in concept-formation by bringing into focus similarities and contrasts among cases. Comparison is routinely used in testing hypotheses, and it can contribute to the inductive discovery of new hypotheses and to theory-building. Comparative method refers to the study of different types of groups and societies in order to determine analytically the factors that lead to similarities and differences.

For most sociologists the very nature of sociological research is considered comparative, and thinking in comparative terms is inherent in sociology. All empirical observations must be related to some kind of theoretical construction, and no theoretical construction has any value unless it bears some relation to empirical observations. When sociologists choose to observe only part of the surrounding social realities the choice always represents a comparison of the selected phenomenon under observation in relation to other social phenomena, whether this choice is made explicitly or implicitly. All sociological method is intrinsically comparative in the sense that it either involves explicit and direct comparison of time and/or space differentials or involves concepts that were developed through such comparisons. Therefore, sociology is implicitly comparative. It is no wonder that Emile Durkheim wrote 'comparative sociology is not a particular branch of sociology; it is sociology itself, in so far as it ceases to be purely descriptive and aspires to account for facts' (*Durkheim*, 1958). Weber,

* Dr. Reema Bhatia, Miranda House, Delhi University, Delhi

on the other hand, thought that comparison did not consist in drawing parallels and analogies but in exploring the trajectories of social institutions in their irreducible differences and singularities.

Comparative analysis is central to sociology because it provides solutions to one of the constitutive problems—the competing claims of complexity and generality in sociological analysis (*Ragin and Zaret, 1983*). Weber's epistemological analysis resolve complexity and generality by showing that they serve complementary purpose in ideal types. Durkheim on the other hand reconciles in an ontological argument about social species that far surpasses simple assertions about the uniformity and diversity of social organisations.

6.2 DURKHEIM AND COMPARATIVE METHOD

Durkheim was the first to seriously use the comparative method correctly in scientific sense” (*Collins, 1975; 529*) and it is central to Durkheim's vision of sociology. According to Durkheim, to demonstrate that a given phenomenon is the cause of another, we have to compare the cases and employ the comparative method. Sociological explanations require the establishment of cause-effect relationship. Since social phenomenon can escape the control of the experimenter, comparative method is best suited for sociology. Durkheim in his endeavour to establish comparative method as method par excellence proposed a basis for comparison— ‘a given effect has always a single corresponding cause.’ For example suicide can be caused by multiple factors but each factor produces only a particular type of suicide. Over integration with the society causes altruistic suicide, less integration causes egoistic suicide.

He was of the opinion that not all forms of comparative method was applicable to the study of social facts. This led him to be critical of Mill and his method of residues, and the use of the method of both agreement and difference. He disagreed with the method of residue as he thought that the social phenomena are too complex for the effect of all causes except one to be removed in a given case. The method of agreement and difference according to him are difficult for the same reason. They suppose that the causes compared either agree or differ by one single point. In reality the chances of observing all phenomena is less than the chances of allowing a phenomenon to escape, as a result such method can only produce conjectures which are devoid of all scientific values. Though Durkheim was not in favour of these methods advocated by Mill's but he was positively inclined towards the method of concomitant variation. Mill dismissed the importance of concomitant variation for social sciences, and argued that social reality provides many examples of plural and convergent causation. Because such phenomena present no necessary link between variation in cause and effect, the method of concomitant variation could not be used. In response to Mill, Durkheim rejects the idea that an effect could have more than one cause as unscientific. He believed that for this method to be reliable it would be sufficient that a correlation between two phenomena was established in a numerous and varied cases. Its validity would be due to the fact that the concomitant variations display the casual relationship intrinsically and not by coincidence. It reflects that the two phenomena to mutually influence each other and in a continuous manner. The establishment of a constant concomitance then becomes a law. The cause effect relationship between the two phenomena is established. This relationship should not be doubted even in the absence of one. This may occur

due to the action of some contrary cause or that it is present in a different form than previously observed. If two or more phenomena appeared to vary together then it is likely that a causal relationship existed. This however needs to be checked as it is possible for the two phenomena to vary together because of the action of a third factor.

“We shall first investigate, by the aid of deduction, how one of the two terms has produced the other; then we shall try to verify the result of this deduction with the aid of experiments, i.e., new comparisons. If the deduction is possible and if the verification succeeds, we can regard the proof as completed. If, on the contrary, we are aware of no direct bond between these facts, especially if the hypothesis of such a bond contradicts laws already demonstrated, we shall begin to look for a third phenomenon on which the other two depend equally or which have served as an intermediate between them.

For, example we can establish in the most certain way that the tendency to suicide varies directly with education. But it is impossible to understand how education can lead to suicide; such an explanation is in contradiction to the laws of psychology. Education, especially the elementary branched of knowledge, reaches only the more superficial regions of consciousness; the instinct of self preservation is, on the contrary one of our fundamental tendencies. It could not, then, be appreciably affected by a phenomenon as far removed and of so feeble an influence. Thus we come to ask if both facts are not the consequence of an identical condition. This common cause is the weakening of religious traditionalism, which reinforces both the need for knowledge and the tendency toward suicide” (*Durkheim*, 1958;132).

However, comparison must be made systematic and applied with precision to produce best results. It would not do simply to illustrate the hypothesis with a few scattered cases of covariance.

“To illustrate the idea is not to demonstrate it. It is necessary to compare not isolated variations but a series of systematically arranged variations of wide range in which individual items tie up with one another in as continuous a gradation as possible. For the variations of a phenomenon permit inductive generalisations only if they reveal clearly the manner in which they develop under given circumstances” (*Durkheim*, 1958; 135).

The way in which the series was formed depends on whether the comparison were within society, between societies of the same social type or between different types of societies. Making comparisons within a society “may suffice, if absolutely necessary when it is a matter of facts that are widely distributed and on which we have statistical information that is rather extensive and varied” (*Durkheim*, 1958;136). It is possible to establish concomitant variation within a society with regard to a particular social current, example, a suicidogenic current or a legal or moral regulation that is in question, then it would be necessary to compare different societies or the same society at different times.

Comparisons of several societies of the same species applies only to the phenomena which originates during the same time. Society does not create its organisations entirely, it receives some of it from the preceding societies. These organisations undergo changes over time. “Therefore, the changes and innovations which occur cannot be understood if one does not first study these more

fundamental phenomena which are their roots; and they can only be studied by the aid of much extended comparisons. To be able to explain the present state of family, marriage, property etc it would be necessary to know their origin and the elements of which these institutions are composed" (Durkheim, 1958; 138).

The most complex social phenomena can only be explained after most extensive historical and cross cultural comparisons is carried out. We need to at first establish the most elementary form of the phenomena, in order to examine the gradual progress into a complex phenomena step by step. This would give us both the analysis and synthesis of the phenomena. "*Consequently, one cannot explain a social fact of any complexity except by following its complete development through all social species.*" (Durkheim, 1958; 139).

In doing comparison an error is made which leads to misleading results. People have compared societies at different stages of their evolution. The weakening of the religious beliefs is a transitory phenomenon in the life of people as it appears in the last phase of the evolution of a society and soon ceases as a new stage begins. But with this method one is tempted to take as the regular and necessary march of progress that which was simply the effect of an entirely different cause. In fact any certain stage of a young society is not simply the prolongation of the stage of the preceding declining society. Therefore to arrive at a just comparison, *it will suffice to consider the societies compared at the same period of their development.* (Durkheim, 1958; 140).

Prior to writing *The Rules of Sociological Methods* Durkheim had sowed the seeds of comparative method in his work *The Division of Labour*. He used the comparative method to study the change from mechanical to organic solidarity in societies. He compared the legal systems of various societies and showed that they differed according to how many laws were based on the principle of repression and restitution. He took the relation between these laws as an index of the type of solidarity of a society.

In his work *Suicide* which was written after *The Rules of Sociological Methods*, he tried to demonstrate the procedure of doing research. He wanted to demonstrate and establish sociology's scientific status by providing a sociological explanation to suicide. He defined suicide as a social fact that required explanation in terms of other social facts. It was suicide rates that constituted the social fact to be explained as an effect of an imbalance of social structural force. Comparative statistics for countries and categories of people within each country showed that suicide rates were relatively constant, therefore it must be a social fact that a collective tendency towards suicide existed. These collective tendencies could be related to sets of causes to produce a classification of types of suicide. The sets of causes was theoretically postulated on the basis of integration.

One of the types of suicides was egoistic suicide. Here the level of integration was low as a result the individual lost the advantages of group membership such as support and revitalization and consequently found little meaning in group life. Thus suicide rates were higher for Protestants than Catholics both in comparisons between predominantly Protestant countries and Catholic countries and between Protestants and Catholics in the same society. It was not the case that one religious belief condemned suicide and the other did not, as suicide was severely condemned by both Protestants and Catholics. The difference was that Protestantism encouraged individual free inquiry unlike Catholicism, it did not

offer priestly and sacramental support. Whereas Protestant church did offer more of those supports, as in the Church of England which had kept some of Catholic emphasis on priesthood and sacraments, the suicerate was mid way between that of the Catholic and protestant countries.

Table 6.1 : John Stuart Mill's Methods

The Method of Agreement

Mill's rule of agreement says that if in all cases where an effect occurs, there is a single prior factor C that is common to all those cases, then C is the cause of the effect.

Example: A family goes out to eat and everyone falls ill. They had eaten many types of food but one food that all of them had eaten was rajma rice. So applying the rule of agreement we infer that eating rajma rice is the cause of the illnesses.

The Method of Difference

This rule says that where you have one situation that leads to an effect, and another which does not, and the only difference is the presence of a single factor in the first situation, we can infer this factor as the cause of the effect.

Example: A family goes out to eat and everyone except the son fall ill. They had eaten many types of food but the son had not eaten rajma rice. So applying the rule of difference we infer that eating rajma rice is the cause of the illnesses.

The Joint Method

The joint method is a matter of applying *both* the method of agreement and the method of difference. So application of the joint method should tell us that it is the beef which is the cause this time.

Example: A family goes out to eat and everyone except the son fall ill. They had eaten many types of food but the son had not eaten rajma rice and salad. Even his brother did not eat salad but he did have rajma rice. Salad cannot be the reason for all falling sick as the second son who did not have salad also is sick. So applying the rule of joint method we infer that eating rajma rice is the cause of the illnesses.

The Method of Concomitant Variation

The method of concomitant variation says that if across a range of situations that lead to a certain effect, we find a certain property of the effect varying with variation in a factor common to those situations, then we can infer that factor as the cause.

Example: Thus using the same kind of example, we might find that you felt somewhat sick having eaten one samosa, whereas your sister felt rather not well having eaten a few, and your father became critically ill having eaten ten in a row. Since the variation in the number of samosa corresponds to variation in the severity of the illness, it would be rational to infer that the illnesses were caused by the samosa.

The Method of Residues

According to the method of residues, if we have a range of factors believed to be the causes of a range of effects, and we have reason to believe that all the factors, except one factor C, are causes for all the effects, except one, then we should infer that C is the cause of the remaining effect.

Source: <https://philosophy.hku.hk/think/sci/mill.php>

6.3 RADCLIFFE-BROWN AND COMPARATIVE METHOD

The aim of comparative anthropology or sociology according to Radcliffe-Brown is to explore the varieties of social life as a basis for the theoretical study of human social phenomena (*Radcliffe-Brown*, 1958). One of the important tasks of comparative method is to look for parallels similar social features appearing in different societies in the present or in the past.

According to Radcliffe-Brown the Australian Tribal societies are divided into oppositions based on totems. Birds and animals are used to categorise the moieties, like the Eaglehawk and Crow, and this is found in many other societies as well. We may ask the question why these social divisions are identified with reference to two species of birds. Radcliffe-Brown had collected many stories about Eaglehawk and Crow in different parts of Australia and in all of them the two are represented as opponents in some sort of conflict. He gives an example from Western Australia. He says “Eaglehawk was the mother’s brother of Crow. In these tribes a man marries the daughter of a mother’s brother so that Eaglehawk was the possible father in law of Crow, to whom therefore he owed obligations such as that of providing him with food. Eaglehawk told his nephew to go and hunt wallaby. Crow, having killed a wallaby, ate it himself, an extremely reprehensible action in terms of native morality. On his return to the camp his uncle asked him what he had brought, and Crow, being a liar, said that he had succeeded in getting nothing. Eaglehawk then said “But what is in your belly, since your hunger-belt is no longer tight?” Crow replied that to stay the pangs of hunger he had filled his belly with the gum from the acacia. The uncle replied that he did not believe him and would tickle him until he vomited. This incident is given in the legend in the form of a song. The crow vomited the wallaby that he had eaten. Thereupon Eaglehawk seized him and rolled him in the fire; his eyes became red with the fire, he was blackened by the charcoal, and he called out in pain “Wa!Wa!Wa!” Eaglehawk pronounced what was to be the law “You will never be a hunter, but you will forever be a thief.” And that is how things are now.” (pp 96)

Radcliffe-Brown observed that in the stories narrated by the Australians there are number of parallels to the tale of Eaglehawk and Crow. The tale of Wombat and Kangaroo from the region where South Australia adjoins Victoria tells us that in the beginning Wombat and kangaroo lived together as friends. One day Wombat began to make a ‘house’ for himself. The Kangaroo annoyed him. Then one day it rained and the Wombat went inside his ‘house’. When the Kangaroo asked to make room for him but he Wombat explained that there was only one room. Thus the two of them fought. Kangaroo hit the Wombat with a stone on his head and flattened his skull, Wombat on the other hand threw a spear at Kangaroo which fixed itself at the base of the backbone. The wombat has a flattened skull

to this day and the kangaroo has a tale and are no longer friends. There are many more tales which have the same single theme. The resemblances and differences of animal species are translated into terms of friendship and conflict, solidarity and opposition. "In other words the world of animal life is represented in terms of social relations similar to those of human society.

A comparative study therefore reveal to us the fact that the Australian idea about the eaglehawk and crow are only a particular instance of widespread phenomena. First, these tales interpret the resemblances and differences of animal species in terms of social relationships of friendship and antagonism as they are known in the social life of human beings. Secondly, natural species are placed in pairs of opposites. They can only be so regarded if there is some respect in which they resemble each other. Thus the eaglehawk and crow resemble each other in being the two prominent meat eating birds" (*Radcliffe-Brown*, 1958;98).

The next step in comparative study is to try and discover the diverse forms that the opposition between the moieties of a dual division takes in actual life. The expression of opposition between moieties may take different forms. One is the institution of 'the joking relationship'. This institution is found in various societies. Opposition is also expressed in another major custom. Some tribes of Australia and North America the moieties provides sides in games such a football. Such matches provide an opportunity for the two groups to be opponents. Two continuing groups in a social structure can be maintained in a relation in which they are regularly opponents.

There is also a third relationship of opposition which is a combination of agreement and disagreement of solidarity and difference. Radcliffe-Brown began with the existence of moieties named after the Eaglehawk and Crow in Australia and by making comparisons amongst other societies, observed that this was not particular or peculiar to one region but is a widespread general tendency of human societies (*Radcliffe-Brown* 1958). He thus substitutes for a particular problem of the kind that calls for a historical explanation certain general problems. "There, is for example the problem of totemism as a social phenomenon in which there is a special association of a social group with a natural species. Another, and perhaps more important problem that has been raised is that of the nature and functioning of social relationships and social structures based on what has there been called 'opposition.' This is a much more general problem than that of totemism for it is the problem of how opposition can be used as mode of social integration. The comparative method is therefore one which pass from the particular to general, from general to more general, with the end in view that we may in this way arrive at the universal, at characteristics which can be found in different forms in all human societies" (*Radcliffe-Brown* 1958; 67).

6.4 WEBER'S COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The use of ideal types, which helps to conceptualise the research, identify and assess the causes and also aids in explaining the historical diversity, is very important for this method. Ideal types are models that are selectively developed as aids to genetic explanations. Structural properties of ideal types are often closely related to specific genetic issues. Capitalism as a model is inseparable from rationalisation. Because of this Weber calls ideal types "genetic concepts". "The ideal type is an attempt to analyze historically unique configuration or

their individual component by means of genetic concepts” (Weber, 1949;93). For example the concept of Church and sect can be formulated genetically or statistically says Weber. However, in formulating the concept of sect genetically eg “with reference to certain important cultural significances which the “sectarian spirit” has had for modern culture, certain characteristics of both become essential because they stand in an adequate causal relationship to those influences” (Weber,1949; 93-94). Genetic explanations select events based on theoretical assumptions, events which are causally relevant. However, these must satisfy the criteria of logical consistency and objective possibility (92). Genetic explanations provides the solution to historical problems. For this solution “the *cultural significance* of a phenomena eg, the significance of exchange in a money economy, can be the fact that it exists on a mass scale as a fundamental component of modern culture. But the historical fact that it plays this role must be causally explained in order to render its cultural significance understandable. The analysis of the *general* aspects of exchange and technique of a market is a-highly important and indispensable-*preliminary task*” (77).

For Weber, the trans-historical generalisation is a means to another goal, genetic explanation of historical diversity. The correlations would only be one among many possible techniques for forming concrete concepts-that is for forming ideal types as a tool of comparative historical analysis (Ragin and Zaret, 1983). With the use of ideal types one can formulate and evaluate genetic explanations of historical diversity with the focus on concrete cases. Ideal types helps us in constructing hypothesis. Its function as a research tool is for classification and comparisons. Weberain method uses qualitative historical methods to identify different patterns of invariance within the diversity each pattern of invariance constituting a historical path.

Weber’s work on religion illustrates the nature of his comparative method. He was interested to understand the reasons for the emergence of capitalism in Europe. He was of the opinion that the socio economic conditions of many societies were similar to that of Europe but capitalism developed only in Europe. To find out the reasons for this he studied some societies but mainly India and China. Weber was looking for the unique factor that was applicable to Europe and not other societies that facilitated the growth of capitalism there.

6.5 DEBATES ON THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

Although Durkheim attributed immense centrality to comparative method and it was considered to be a great achievement of the 19th century, there was a division among its advocates. Some were very enthusiastic while few were sceptical about comparative method (Beteille, 2002). The belief that comparative method could be helpful in discovering scientific laws about society and culture attracted many to use this method and those who favoured the method believed that it was possible to have a natural science of society “that would establish regularities of coexistence and succession among the forms of social life by means of systematic comparisons” (Beteille, 2002; 74). Franz Boas was not convinced with the generalisations made by comparative method and suggested that limited area to be studied with careful attention to facts. He was in favour of the historical method. Boas was of the opinion that before making any kind of extended comparison the comparability of the material must be proved and was in favour of comparison between ‘neighbouring cultures’. Neighbourliness, for Boas was not limited to

geographical nearness but it was at the same time important for him. Neighbourliness was to be identified in terms of cultural and evolutionary artifacts. However, this would lead us to study only the unique characteristics of a single society.

Radcliffe-Brown believed that natural laws of society could be discovered with the use of comparative method based on the observation, description and comparison of societies as they actually existed. He was in favour of system analysis and was focused on discovering laws related to the structure and functioning of societies rather than to their evolution. In contrast to Boas he believed that comparison of particular features of social life for the purpose of historical reconstruction were different from comparison for the purpose exploring the varieties of forms of social life as a basis for the theoretical study of human social phenomena. He wanted comparative method not to be heavily dependent on the organic analogy therefore said that two societies do not resemble or differ from one another in a way two animals of the same species match and from different species differ.

Evans-Pritchard acknowledged the importance of observation, classification and comparison in some form or the other but questioned the achievement of comparative method. He was very critical of the statistical use of the comparative method. He reckoned that the comparative method used by Radcliffe-Brown and many others were little more than the method of apt illustration. Evans-Pritchard took social anthropology back to historical method which viewed everything in a context while he thought that the comparative method took things out of their context. He was of the opinion that comparative method overlooked the richness of the context and they need to be treated with suspicion when statistical techniques are used. Though he favoured, like Boas, small scale comparison than large scale comparisons, but had reservation even for this.

6.6 MURDOCK'S COMPARATIVE METHOD AND THE USE OF STATISTICS

Murdock found comparative method as useful for studying cultures and rejected the Boasian cultural relativism and historical particularism which explored individual cultures in their respective historical context. He used data from many cultures and identified variables coded the data for statistical analysis. With this method he was able to establish universal generalisations. In his book, *Social Structure*, he was able to identify natural laws of social organisation by means of cross cultural comparisons. On the basis of the data collected from 250 societies for describing family as being made up of parents and children which is central to the social structure in all cultures.

Murdock contributed significantly by using sampling and probability statistics in comparative research. Although this can be productive, many difficulties arise when probability statistics are applied on cross cultural studies as done by Murdock. The sampling design used by him is however not immune to criticism. His sample includes societies which have ever existed, meaning some are historically 'extinct'. It consists of societies where we have enough data and others where we do not. Therefore, his sample is not randomly selected which may have major biases and needs extreme caution in interpreting inductive statistical techniques. For example, he used the chi-square test to generalise from

his sample to the universe. Social scientists very often use statistical procedures without examining the assumptions upon which their analyses necessarily rests (Sjoberg, 1955) as sample units need to be comparable. Researchers can use statistical comparative method in doing cross cultural studies but attention must be paid to its limitations.

Several kinds of comparisons are possible. Comparison can be made within a single cultural systems of units from a given time period or of units from different time periods. However, comparative method encounters many difficulties and there is no consensus regarding the nature of it. The focus of comparison of whole societies is to derive social laws, and it is the central focus of the method. However, this is responsible for the difficulties it encounters. While comparing whole societies we find different types of societies to exist which therefore poses difficulties in identifying the units of comparisons. Comparisons of whole societies is not satisfactory as human society is different from animal societies.

It is doubtful that we will ever have a comparative method, like some ideal method of the natural scientists, about whose proper use sociologists and social anthropologists will reach complete agreement. At the same time our deepest insights into society and culture are reached in and through comparison. We have to improvise and exercise our judgement as well as our imagination, and beyond that we can only hope that our comparisons—as well as our contrast—will be illuminating and fruitful” (Beteillie, 2002;94).

6.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we began by introducing the comparative method and further discussed the method as envisaged and used by various sociologists and social anthropologists. We have also discussed how some social anthropologists were opposed to the use of this method in order to study social reality. Furthermore we have also highlighted how the use of statistics can be helpful in comparative method and the kind of precaution that we have to maintain.

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GLOSSARY

Method of Apt illustration: consists of thinking up some plausible explanation of some social phenomenon and then searching round for illustrations which seem to support it and neglecting the rest of the material relating to the topic under consideration.

Joking relations: clearly defined relationships of reciprocal ritual, mildly abusive behaviour, between persons who are not only permitted but expected to behave in ways that would be offensive or insulting to persons not so related.

Cultural Relativism: is the idea that a person's beliefs, values, and practices should be understood based on that person's own culture, rather than be judged against the criteria of another. It is to judge every culture from its own standard.

Historical Particularism: To explore individual cultures in their respective historical context.

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UNIT 7 ETHNOMETHODOLOGY*

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 What is Ethnomethodology
- 7.3 Indexicality
- 7.4 Accounts
- 7.5 Documentary Method
- 7.6 Breach Experiments: Case of Agnes
- 7.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.8 References

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- Everyday reality and people's account of it;
- Methods people employ to understand social world; and
- How people attribute meanings to regularities of social life.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we will try to understand how society is studied through ethnomethodological approach. But first we will try to know what does ethnomethodology mean? What does it explain about how social life functions? Unless we grapple with these basic ideas of this approach, we would not be able to proceed with the discussion on this approach. Ethnomethodologists argue that nothing is sacred to be critiqued, and even the most basic concepts of classical sociology must be revisited. Ethnomethodology is not a theoretical rebuttal to classical sociological theory, rather it adopts the scientific vision to produce an account of how the objectivity of social facts are constructed through individuals as members of the society. Ethnomethodology, therefore, is an approach that takes seriously the implications of the routine observation of social activities.

As we know that the discipline of sociology is concerned with the study of social structures and processes. In classical understanding social structures are treated as 'objective', 'constraining', also known as 'social facts'. At the empirical level, sociology treats these structures as variables. Conventional approaches seek the relationships among these variables. Ethnomethodologists claim that the objective and constraining social structures of the world are constituted by "social structuring activities" (i.e. practices, methods, procedures). Ethnomethodology says that sociology ignores these structuring activities when they measure the degree of association among variables. One way of reading ethnomethodology is to see it as a study of the people's actions, practices and behaviours that form social structures. 'Ethnos' refers to members of social, cultural, ethnic groups, 'method' refers to the things people routinely do create or recreate regularities of

*Suraj Kumar Singh

order or practices and 'logy' means the logic of or study of these methods. Ethnomethodology means the study of members' methods for producing recognizable social orders. It starts from the fact that sociologists are, first and foremost, members of society like anyone else, equipped with the same kinds of social competencies that any member of society can be presumed to possess. Ethnomethodology turns its attention to such competencies, capabilities as topics of inquiry in their own case. Its focus is upon the methods by which members of society are able to observe and recognize what is happening around them, and thereby know what they should do to fit their actions together with the actions of others. Another way of putting this is to say that ethnomethodology concerns the 'possibility' of observation of orderly social practices. What does it mean to say ethnomethodologists are interested in the 'possibility' of observations? Broadly it means two things, first, is that how does an observer, be it a sociologist or layman, make sense of what they are seeing as this or that phenomenon. Second, how the observed phenomenon is produced or assembled in such a way that it is observable as the phenomenon actually is.

According to social scientists there are three distinctive characteristics of ethnomethodology: First, it aims to know how people construct meaning or "definitions of the situation," as a version of symbolic interaction. Second, because definitions of the situation emerge from how persons announce and impart sense-making perceptions and perspectives to one another, ethnomethodology is said to be individualistic. Third, ethnomethodology is understood to have emerged as a critique of traditional ways of doing sociology. Ethnomethodology's theoretical proposal is that there is a self-generating order in concrete activities, an order whose scientific appreciation depends upon neither prior description, nor empirical generalization, nor formal specification of variable elements and their analytic relations. From an ethnomethodological standpoint, ordinary experience is not necessarily chaotic, for the concrete activities of which it is composed are coeval with an intelligible organization that actors "already" provide and that is therefore available for scientific analysis. The central aspect of this organization are practical activities through which actors produce and recognize the circumstances in which they are embedded. The principle aim of ethnomethodology is to investigate the systematic and meaningful accomplishment of these concrete activities as actual behaviours. Sociologists can rigorously explicate that phenomenon as an accomplishment of actors' concerted work in making social facts observable and accountable to one another in their everyday lives. This is, in a nutshell, the heart of the ethnomethodological enterprise. If the substantive concern of ethnomethodology is the achieved intelligibility and organization of every day activities, it can be appreciated that social order does not come about because individual actors bring their own cognitive definitions of the situation into some kind of convergence or common agreement. The focus in ethnomethodology on what are called, interchangeably, 'procedures', 'methods', and 'practices' runs contrary to a cognitive-interpretive or subjective solution to the problem of order, wherein actors produce patterned courses of action because they share internalized frames of reference and value system that enable common definitions of situations. Moreover, these procedures do not represent the solitary resources that singular souls impose upon one another; they are systemic resources that members of society concertedly enact. Thus, ethnomethodology avoids inferences about how otherwise separated actors abstractly think and negotiate definitions for joint projects and instead investigates how members are from the outset embedded in contingently accomplished structures of social order.

Ethnomethodology emerged through an adoption of Alfred Schutz's and Aron Gurwitsch's reading of Husserl. Schutz and Gurwitsch spoke of the everyday world as constituted by mental acts of consciousness. Garfinkel transformed these phenomenologists' 'mental acts' into public interactional activities, and ethnomethodology was born. The given objective reality of social facts is treated instead as an ongoing accomplishment of concerted activities of everyday life. Social interactional activities constitute social facts; the facts do not exist independently of constituting practices.

7.2 WHAT IS ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

Ethnomethodology is considered to be a study of common and everyday methods, of practical action and practical reasoning. It was founded by Harold Garfinkel, a student of American sociologist, Talcott Parsons, in the 1950s and 1960s. It became popular with Garfinkel's text, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* published in 1967. The key assumption of this text was that the production of observable social routine practices involves the local or situated use of member's methods for doing such activities. With respect to these methods, the mastery of natural language is paramount. Thus, ethnomethodology conceives of language and social interaction as part of the process of social facts formation. Garfinkel's approach draws inspiration primarily from Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. The origins of this approach lie in Garfinkel's engagement with the thought of Talcott Parsons related to social action. This engagement led Garfinkel to turn to the writings of Alfred Schutz (for example, Schutz, 1962) and seek to apply the lessons of Schutz's phenomenological studies to the problem of social order as discussed in the work of Parsons. Schutz had emphasized the need for sociological analysis to attend to and be grounded in the ways in which persons, as members of society, experience social life. Garfinkel took this experiential focus and refined it to pose the question of how members of society produce 'from within' the observable features of social life.

Ethnomethodology is a synthesis of logico-empiricism and hermeneutic dialectic tradition, two traditions that are commonly considered to be mutually exclusive. From the first it borrow the notion of routine based rational actions. Ethnomethodology derives from the second tradition a commitment to study concrete scenes rigorously, with the recognition that the researcher is a reflexive participant and not mere observer of those scenes. The first issue Garfinkel deals with defines the area of interest of ethnomethodology. It is the study of methods by which members (socially functioning human beings) make sense out of their world (Garfinkel, 1967). Hence it works with a view of social action where the emphasis is on the organization of perception which results in action becoming meaningful. Their study is directed to know how members' actual, ordinary activities consist of methods to make practical actions, practical circumstances, common sense knowledge of social structures, and practical sociological reasoning analysable' (Garfinkel, 1967:9 - 10). The second issue to which Garfinkel attends concerns meaning and language. For Garfinkel, making sense out of a situation, and giving ordinary language accounts of that sense, are inextricably connected. At one level this means the following: a large part of members' abilities to make sense out of a situation is predicated upon their abilities to announce to themselves and to others what meaning they are getting out of the situation. In addition to this, a large part of ethnomethodology becomes the study

of how members build accounts of social action, while doing that action. Garfinkel, in his distinctive style, describes the focus of ethnomethodology as follows:

For ethnomethodology the objective reality of social facts, in that, and just how, it is every society's locally, endogenously produced, naturally organized, reflexively accountable, ongoing, practical achievement, being everywhere, always, only, exactly and entirely, members' work, with no time out, and with no possibility of evasion, hiding out, passing, postponement, or buy-outs, is thereby sociology's fundamental phenomenon (Garfinkel 1967:11).

However, Garfinkel does not simply talk only about image of members making sense out of continuing situations and independently telling that sense. He sets up an important equivalence between the making sense of situations and the telling of that sense. His concern is to document and analyse "the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of organized everyday affairs are identical with members' procedures for making those settings 'accountable'. When I speak of accountable my interests are directed to such matters as the following: observable-and-reportable, i.e. available to members as situated practices of looking-and-telling" (Garfinkel, 1967:1). The above statement clears Garfinkel's equivalence, that to 'do' interaction is to 'tell' interaction. This correspondence is expressed in terms of "procedures" the primal unit of ethnomethodological terminology. The procedures by which we "produce" interaction are identical to the procedures by which we "describe" that interaction.

Ethnomethodology transcends the micro-macro debate by transcending its terms. That is, ethnomethodologists have repeatedly announced their suspension of belief in social structural phenomena per se as objects of theoretical inquiry. The purpose of this methodological stance, referred to sometimes as "ethnomethodological indifference" is not to legitimize one level of structure at the expense of others, but rather to examine social practices where by social order is made to happen, made to appear and accomplished by members of society. To illustrate, Garfinkel identifies ethnomethods of producing survey research as including those same methods that "the lay person" engages in when deciding what an acquaintance means by an utterance, for instance, 'that looks like child'.

Ethnomethodology thus represents a very simple idea. If one assumes, as Garfinkel does, that the *meaningful, patterned, and orderly character of everyday life* is something that people must work constantly to achieve, then one must also assume that they have some methods for doing so. If everyday life exhibits a patterned orderliness, a *recognizable coherence*, as Garfinkel believes it does, then it is not enough to say that individuals randomly pursuing shared goals, then they will do similar things enough of the time to manifest trends, or patterns, of orderliness in society, an approach characteristic of Parsonian sociology. Garfinkel argues that members of society must have some shared methods for achieving social order that they use to mutually construct the meaningful orderliness of social situations. One way of understanding this is by analogy with the idea that in order to make sense by speaking in a language we have to speak the same language, using the same meanings for words and the same grammatical forms. Another analogy is with the idea that in order to play a game we have to play by the rules recognized by other parties to the game as the rules of that game. It is, for instance, not possible to play cricket by running downfield with a football. The essential rules of cricket are in important respects constitutive of the game

of cricket. Constitutive means that the rules define the recognizable pattern of the social order/order of the game.

7.3 INDEXICALITY

We now move to the concept of *Indexicality* in ethnomethodological research. *Indexicality* is a concept which describes a property of language and ordinary talk. It refers to the fact that a word may have a meaning which holds true for all situations in which the word is used (e.g., its dictionary meaning), but a word also has meaning which relates to the particular situation in which it is being used. Indexicality, then, means that there is a particular code, grammar or vocabulary used among people in a given region. For example, “she was there” has different meanings for both “she” and “there” depending upon the particular occasion or situation in which the sentence was said. More generally, any sentence is understood in terms not only of the literal meaning of its words, but in terms of the surrounding conversation and knowledge of the people talking. According to Garfinkel, a piece of talk does not just describe an interaction, but also stands for ‘indexes’ (hence indexical) some meaningful feature of that particular situation. Any piece of talk stands for or indexes more than it actually says. For example “where is your son”, “he is at home” indexes a whole range of things which are available to speakers. Extrapolating from purely linguistic materials, Indexicality, then, refers to the fact that accounts and meanings in any situation are dependent upon the nature of the situation. So, for example, the meanings which two people have in an interaction are uniquely linked to the location and time of the interaction, the persons present, the purpose or intention of the actors, their knowledge of each other’s intentions, and so on. The indexical concept is a major focus of Garfinkel’s work. For social interaction is seen as inextricably linked to context (situate), and explainable only in context. The identification of indexicality as an irreducible and inescapable feature of everyday life thus focuses attention on the embeddedness of language in use in which it is created and used.

7.4 ACCOUNTS

The aspect of action which is of interest to Garfinkel’s ‘accounts’ of the situations by people. The image is a dynamic one. However: the accounts are developed within and as part of the social situation which they describe, a situation which itself is constantly changing. One of Garfinkel’s key points about people’s routine methods is that they are “reflexively accountable.” Accounts are the ways in which actors explain (describe, criticize, and idealize) specific situations. Accounting is the process by which people offer accounts in order to make sense of the world. The word ‘account’ carries this equivalence; to account for something is both to make understandable and to express that understanding. The idea of reflexive accounts of human practices, makes it possible for ethnomethodologists to document the ways in which this order was perceived by actors during their actions. It implies that social interaction among actors is seen as routinized and central to make sense of everyday life. The key to accounting process is on people’s process of making sense of talk in conversation with others

Ethnomethodologists devote a lot of attention to analyze people’s accounts, as well as to the ways in which accounts are offered, accepted and rejected by others. This is one of the reasons that ethnomethodologists are preoccupied with

analyzing conversations. To take an example, when a student explains to his professor why he failed to take an examination, he is offering an account. The student is trying to make sense out of an event for his professor. Ethnomethodologists are interested in the nature of that account but more generally in the manner in which the student offers the account and the professor accepts or rejects it. In analyzing accounts, ethnomethodologists adopt a stance of “ethnomethodological indifference.” That is, they do not judge the nature of the accounts but rather analyze them in terms of how they are used in practical action. They are concerned with the accounts as well as the methods needed by both speaker and listener to explain, understand, and accept or reject accounts.

7.5 DOCUMENTARY METHOD

The most explicit similarities between phenomenological view and ethnomethodological approach is Garfinkel’s (1967) discussion of ‘the documentary method of interpretation’. By way of the documentary method, practitioner attempts to find a pattern in the response of the subjects and through the pattern tries to find an underlying pattern of the larger situation. Garfinkel draws on the writing of Karl Manheim to develop this method in ethnomethodological approach. Through the analysis of the actions, responses, behaviours, researcher aims to develop this ‘underlying pattern’ among all these actions. According Garfinkel, a documentary method:

“consists of treating an actual appearance “as the document of”, as “pointing to”, as “standing on behalf of” of a presupposed underlying pattern” (*Garfinkel, 1967: 78*).

Garfinkel emphasized perceptual knowledge of subjects as a mental process or activity, because of an emerging concern for “embodied” activity and the practical production of social facts that emerges in the very details of talk and action as endlessly contingent manifestations of real-worldly conduct. To demonstrate the strength of this method, Garfinkel asked students in psychiatry department to participate in a psychotherapy session with ten students. Students were supposed to discuss their problems with people who acted as experts/counsellors during the session. These experts gave responses only in ‘yes’ and ‘no’ and students accordingly gave their responses seeing these ‘yes’ or ‘no’ as ‘advices’ by the counsellors. He was of the view that researchers could find some pattern in the students’ responses.

Garfinkel has referred to the local as the proper domain for ethnomethodology, limiting scientists’ observations to what can actually be seen or otherwise empirically witnessed. This does not imply that ethnomethodology is anti-theoretical or that it approaches human behaviour from the point of view of pristine, crude, or behaviourist empiricism. Ethnomethodological empiricism does not remove the analyst as an interpreter of data, nor do ethnomethodologists claim privileged exemption from the social practices they investigate. Instead this approach exemplifies the empirical thrust of scholarship to observe meaningful, regular and orderly nature of routine practices. The documentary method of the ethnomethodological program seeks to provide a detailed, naturalistic account of competent practice within specific domains of socially organized action.

7.6 BREACH EXPERIMENTS: CASE OF AGNES

By taking the case of breach experiments, ethnomethodologists have examined the relevance of this approach to social science discussions on gender, education, organizational forms and so on. Let's discuss Harold Garfinkel's (1967) interesting demonstration of the ethnomethodological analysis in the case of 'doing gender'. He shows how society confers certain social and sexual status on every individual. In cases of some irregularities in these ways, some persons manages to achieve desired sexual status, Garfinkel calls this process as 'passing'. In the 1950s Garfinkel met a person named Agnes, who seemed unquestionably a woman. Not only did she have the convincingly figure of a woman, but it was virtually a perfect figure with an ideal set of measurements to be a woman. She had both physical and behavioural features of a women. For instance, she had a pretty face, her voice tone, attires, large breasts, a good complexion, no facial hair, and plucked eyebrows, had used lipstick (Garfinkel, 1967: 137 - 140). Garfinkel discovered that Agnes had not always appeared to be a woman. In fact, at the time he met her, Agnes was trying, eventually successfully, to convince physicians that she needed an operation to remove her male genitalia and create a vagina.

Agnes was born as a male at birth with normal male genitals. In fact, she was by all accounts a boy until she was 16 years of age. At that age, sensing something was awry, Agnes ran away from home and started to act like a girl. She soon discovered that dressing like a woman was not enough; she had to learn to act like (to "pass" as) a woman if she was to be accepted as one. She did learn the accepted practices and as a result came to be defined, and to define herself, as a woman. Garfinkel was interested in the 'passing devices' used by Agnes to achieve the desired female sex status in the society (*ibid*, 167 - 172). He highlights the point that people as members of society and certain category learn and routinely use the routine practices that allow them to pass successfully as men or women. It is only in learning these practices that we come to be, in a sociological sense, concept of gender status. Thus, this approach explains that even a category like gender, which is thought to be an ascribed status, can be understood as an accomplishment of a set of situated practices.

7.7 LET US SUM UP

The influence of ethnomethodology has been felt widely in social sciences and beyond. In addition to studies of naturally occurring ordinary practices, ethnomethodologists have increasingly explored new areas of research in institutional settings: legal processes; academic pedagogic milieus; medical field; scientific institutions; political structures. The considerable influence of ethnomethodology has been established beyond its own discipline. The methodologies and findings of ethnomethodology have contributed directly to our broader understanding of organizations, diagnoses and assessments, the social production of 'thing-like-facts' and the construction of texts and oral accounts.

After this brief discussion of the ethnomethodological approach we can say that it is a thoroughly empirical way of understanding the nature of social order and intelligibility as witnessable achievements. Garfinkel's key aim was to transcend this micro-macro binary which has created more confusions then clarity in sociological theory. His emphasis in developing this approach was to argue that

local orders exist and these orders can be observed in the scenes within which they are produced and their possibility for intelligibility depends on their detail enactment. It is perceived that these orders are actual and they can be observed and simultaneously they are collective. Therefore the focus on individual subjectivity would obscure our understanding of these orders. This approach involves a focus upon ordinary social life and how it is done by people. It involves the observation of social activities 'as they happen' broadly in two senses: first, as they happen in the real world, not in some theoretically constructed version of the social world; second, it is meant that these activities are observable at first hand, not just by expert sociologists but by anyone. Social life is made up of many different activities and these are available to be recognized and understood for what they are by ordinary members of society.

In the backdrop of this discussion one can argue that ethnomethodology's lasting achievement has been to place the investigation of ordinary, practical action at the centre of sociological studies and reveal, through those studies, the myriad empirical forms that such action takes. Said this, one can also assert that ethnomethodology is not a homogeneous research field and should be viewed as a subset of qualitative inquiry. Its examination of ordinary action stands in contrast to the prevailing conception in the social sciences. Ethnomethodology, in contrast, has uniquely sought to reground ordinary action as a topic of inquiry in its own right. Its ordinarieness lies in its mundane availability for the members of society. In other words, according to this view, the members of society 'know what they are doing' and it is taken seriously in ethnomethodology. This commitment frequently has been misunderstood. It does not mean that ethnomethodology advocates an individualist and subjectivist theory of action. Rather, it implies that the intelligibility of the myriad actions comprising social life is an accomplishment of those engaged in them. Social 'order', meaning the recognizable, intelligible, accountable features of such actions: the features that make them 'ordinary' to those engaged in them is reconceived as endogenously produced. It is part and parcel of the ways that the members of society realize.

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UNIT 8 FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES FOR RESEARCH*

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 The Beginnings
- 8.3 The Critique of the Dominant Androcentric Methodologies
- 8.4 Feminist Empirical Approach
- 8.5 Feminist Essentialism
- 8.6 Standpoint Theorists
- 8.7 Post Modernists
- 8.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.9 References
- 8.10 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- Feminist Empirical Approach,
- Feminist Essentialism,
- Post Modernists, and
- Standpoint Theorists.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Sociologists till almost the twentieth century did not focus on gender as an important aspect of society. The study of gender began in the 1970s. Prior to the 1970s there was little or no work on gender. The study of society by various thinkers before 1970s did not main stream gender. It was almost as if society was constituted only by men. It was assumed that any study of men in society automatically included women. Gendered aspects of society whether in terms of institutions or roles were unquestioned. Gender was assumed to be part of the natural order of things. This rendered gender invisible in the study of men.

The emergence of the feminist methodology challenged this way of studying society. In the initial phases it emerged as a critique to the positivist epistemology that prevailed in the social sciences. It questioned the way that gender had been largely ignored, studied and presented by the positivists. They argued that almost aspects of society include a gendered perspective. The proponents of the feminist methodology argued for a methodology that made the gendered aspects of society visible.

The debates over feminist research range from arguing about the epistemology to the methods used. There is no single method of research. The chapter looks at the way that feminist methodologies has changed and evolved over a period of time. The broad themes in feminist methodology are as follows:

- 1) The emergence of the feminist methodology as a rebuttal to research methods that were positivist and were supposed to be value neutral.
- 2) There have been debates about the method that should be used to study society. These debates have varied from the need to study society as a lived experience and the need to study it in a scientific objective manner.

8.2 THE BEGINNINGS

The values of rationality, freedom from religious dogma, ideas of progress and a linking of progress with capitalism were the main themes that dominated Sociology. The epistemology and the ontological positions that they took were predominantly positivist. There was a belief that humans had developed a better understanding of society and were committed to its development.

The first set of scholars who began studying society used the positivists approach. Positivism in the social sciences were led by theorists such as Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim. The positivists believed that it was important to study society from a scientific perspective. They worked with the vision to formulate universal laws for the study of societies. Social structures were seen as comparable to the natural world. It was believed that the methods of the natural sciences could be applied to study society. The task of the positivist was to study social facts. They studied societies like a biologist would study a plant or an animal. The focus was on objectivity, reliability and validity. They believed that they were studying societies in a neutral impartial manner just like a chemist or a biologist would study a chemical reaction or an animal species.

Others like Max Weber were critical of the positivists. Weber studied societies through the method of subjective interpretation and *verstehen*. He believed that the method of the natural sciences were not appropriate for the study of societies. For him a sociological study was value free in the sense that its rationality was defined by the community of social scientists and the culture prevailing at that time. For Weber the choice of the subject matter for research was not value free. However, once the choice was made then the study was done in a value free manner. The subject matter chosen for research in the Weberian sense would be influenced by the prevailing norms of research. Thus objectivity for Weber in the social sciences would be determined by the ontological orientation of the researchers themselves (Weber, 1947).

Weber's version of a value free social science was flawed. The feminists argued that ontology of the researcher determined the choice of the topics of research. Since gender was almost invisible in research this meant that the epistemology of the social sciences itself was based on a falsely value free premise. The interpretation of social action was also based on this flawed version of reality shared by the researcher and the research subject.

- 1) What were the main themes that dominated sociology at its inception?

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- 2) What was the method followed by the Positivists?

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- 3) What was the method of research followed by Weber?

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- 4) What were the feminist criticisms of Weber's methodology?

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8.3 THE CRITIQUE OF THE DOMINANT ANDROCENTRIC METHODOLOGIES

Feminist methodology was critical of this vision of society. Progress in society was attributed to the development of rational human thought. The default understanding was that it assumed that human beings were represented by men. It assumed that human beings and those who contributed to the development of society were men and their brotherhood. They had very little to say on issues related to gender. Nor did they have much to say on the impact of these changes on women. The universal idea of progress and thought was limited to the universe of men only.

The criticism of the dominant positivist methodology prevalent in the social sciences has been at several levels. The positivist approach was critiqued for its emphasis on value free objectivity. The dominance of reason, rationality and empiricism in the nineteenth century had a false premise of objectivity. Women were excluded from research. The views on women of the leading thinkers at that point were biased. Thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Kant deemed women to be the weaker sex. Women were positioned on the other side of truth, rationality and science. Institutionalization of such thought and expertise also meant that this view of society became legitimate and authoritative.

The feminist argued that this was just a perceived objectivity and did not constitute value free research. There was an artificial division between the mind and the body. René Descartes work in the seventeenth century was a turning point in terms of studying the world. He focussed on the world around through reason and mind and not intuitions and emotions. This Cartesian dualism believed in the separation of mind and matter. Cartesian dualism became a part of the Western common sense. It was believed that men were the masters of their mind. They were rational and could master their minds. As opposed to this women were considered to be passionate and more in tune with their emotions. The impact of the Cartesian dualism was that scientific investigations focussed on the external observable world. No importance was given to the mind i.e. thought and emotions.

The feminist researchers claimed that the Cartesian classification of women was unreasonable and was biased. The feminists said that reason itself was socially constituted (*Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland, 2002*). They argued that the validity of knowledge and even the research questions asked were androcentric. The questions asked and the analysis have all been done using masculine categories of analysis. Theorists like Harding (*Harding, 1986*) and Smith (*Smith D. E., 1987*) pointed out the masculine bias in the social sciences. They argued that the focus of research has been on Western categories of reason and rationality as opposed to emotions. The focus on the official, public visible ways of functioning and not on informal systems indicated a masculine bias in the social sciences. They further contended that men and women occupy different social universes thus the generalizations presented as generalizations of human beings were unfair to women.

They argued that traditional epistemologies have excluded the voice of women. Science and history have been written purely from a masculine perspective. The subject of traditional sociological analysis has always been men (*Harding, 1987*). Such a science they argued was unreflective. The masculine bias meant that the feminine point of view was assumed to be a part of the **humanist** (implying masculine) perspective.

This was called the **gynocentric methodology** (*Jagger, 2008*) of the 1970s and 1980s. Feminist research methodology developed an understanding that it was difficult to understand women through male categories. There was a need for a rethink on categories too. Feminists like Smith (*Smith D. E., 1974*) argued that sociology was unreflective and presented women from the standpoint of men who were the ruling class. She argued that the “male social universe” included only a set of issues specific to men like industrial sociology, social stratification political sociology etc. This marginalized women. The world of women was confined to the domestic sphere. Mainstream anthropology focused on men’s activities rather than issues like child rearing or domestic violence or women’s participation in the work force. The knowledge that was produced was for the

elite (*Smith D. E.*, 1987). The epistemology used was biased. For these researchers there was a need for the feminizing of the social sciences. Smith (*Smith D. E.*, 1987) argued about the alienation of women scholars in sociology.

The feminists also argued that this sort of an objective approach led to the objectification of those being researched. The researched were treated as objects and were not given any agency. The relationship of the researcher and the researched was a hierarchical one. The researcher was the knower who imposed their own categories of thought on those being researched. In 1978 Mies (*Mies Maria*, 1983) proposed the need for a research in which the research subject is not just treated as an object but is replaced by a conscious partiality towards the oppressed and suppressed. There is a conscientization of the research and the researched (*Gorelick*, 1991). A conscientization of research implied that the researcher develops a conscience. The focus is not just on the research and understanding of the oppression and subordination of women but also challenge these. The feminist methodology should begin with the everyday world of women. The everyday world of women should be taken as problematic and not as a given.

The feminist researchers argued against the use of traditional methods of research. They argued that this created a hierarchy between the researcher and the research subject. The researcher appears as a knower who knows everything and the researched as the known. Often the category of thought that is imposed on the research subject are those of the researcher. The practical difficulty in doing research in which the subject is treated as a thing also leads to the production of a false kind of knowledge. Those who are being researched often do not share their true experiences. The power relationship between the researcher and the researched is in some ways done away with in the feminist methodology. Harding (*Harding*, 1991) and Smith (*Smith D. E.*, 1987) argue for a need to place the researcher on the same plane as the researched.

The feminists proposed a phenomenological, ethnomethodological and interactionist approach in which women's experiences mattered. They advocated the use of the qualitative method as opposed to the quantitative method. This method was based on identifying with the subjects rather than objectifying them.

Focus should not be on the structure of societies but on the processes 1. The concept should be generated within the field itself and should not be predefined. This would also give voice to the researched. The researchers should build from their experiences of the everyday world. The methodology used should be experiential and inductionist rather than deductive (*Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland*, 2002) (*Gorelick*, 1991). There was a need for generating concepts within the field rather than working with preconceived and predefined concepts. This was in direct contrast to the androcentric methodologies prevalent in the social sciences.

Gorelick (*Gorelick*, 1991) argues that giving voice to the women is not enough. She is critical of the focus only on women's experiences. Often the experiences of women are based on a false consciousness. She contends that there is a need to go beyond the analysis of the women's experiences. Using Marx's concept of the false consciousness Gorelick argues for a need to identify the unseen. She compares women to the proletariat. The development of consciousness involves a realisation by the proletariat of their importance for the continuation of capitalism and the existence of the bourgeoisie. Feminist research too should highlight the

hidden aspects of women's roles in society. It should unmask for example the emotional dependence of husbands or wives; the role of computer operators and secretaries in the work place. Gender is an inherent part of the subconscious and many aspects of gender go unquestioned. There is a need to go beyond the seen to the unseen and to raise consciousness. Gorelick contends that a focus on the experiences of women alone does not help identify the unseen aspects of society. Sharing direct experiences highlights the structures of oppression and collectivisation of these experiences become important. This helps reveal the hidden structures of oppression. Giving a voice to the oppressed is not enough. The use of a non-hierarchical methodology helps to overcome the duality between the two.

The fact that the researcher is a female and not a male alters the nature of the relationship between the researched and the researcher. The gender of the researcher means that she is able to straddle the world of women on the professional as well as the personal front. It provides for a reflexivity on the part of the researcher. It also re-theorises the relationship between the researcher and the researched (*Speer, 2002*) and (*Smith D. E., 1987*). Smith N.D. Speer and other feminist researchers argue that the very nature of feminist research does away with the hierarchy between the subject and the object i.e. the researcher and the researched. They also argue that it is difficult to link experiences and reality to theory and thus a situated analysis becomes important (*Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland, 2002*). A situated analysis helps bridge the gap between absolute truth and objectivity 2 and experiences. Taking into account the experiences of the research subject takes away the anonymity of the researched. It also helps do away with the imposition of the external thought categories of the researcher.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What were the criticisms offered by the feminist on the androcentric methodology?

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- 2) How were the feminists critical of the Cartesian dualism?

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- 3) Explain the feminist criticisms on objectification of the research subject?

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- 4) How do the traditional methods of research create a hierarchy between the researcher and the research subject?

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- 5) How does the gender of the researcher impact research?

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8.4 FEMINIST EMPIRICAL APPROACH

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was an effort to respond to the criticisms against the use of an androcentric approach. Emerging from the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, feminist theorists argued that there was a need to do research from the standpoint of women. The aim was to create a space for women's research and to raise consciousness. Western feminist scholars started incorporating women in their studies of history, literature, philosophy and other social sciences. In their bid to incorporate women in their studies there was an inclusion of works by women authors. A conscious effort was also made to study women. The study of women, their achievements etc. became institutionalized in several women's studies departments in the West. Its values were those of equality and androgyny. They insisted that women were as capable as men. This was considered to be a step in the right direction, wherein the androcentric bias was being corrected.

The feminist researchers criticised this kind of an approach to the gendering of the research methodology. Just adding women to pre-existing categories did not undermine the androcentric masculine approach. They contended that this was just an attempt to study women from the point of existing masculine categories. Such researchers tend to use the positivist methodology though they were critical

of the masculinist bias in research. Millman and Kanter's work *Another Voice: Feminist Perspectives on Social Life and Social Science* (Millman, 1975) and the work by Cancian (Cancian, 1992) and Molm (Molm, 1993) illustrate this approach.

A feminist research methodology did not imply making women as objects of study. They argued for the inclusion of women in research however they also purported that the study of women should be done as per the norms of existing research. This meant that objectivity and the methods of the positivists continued to be followed. The feminist empiricists brought women into research but they continued to follow the existing methodologies. They believed that for feminist research to be taken seriously it was important to follow the existing *scientific* methods of research. The structures of analysis used by the empiricists were the structures already being used in research. This approach assumed that all men and women are essentially the same.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) How did research on women start in the 1960s and 1970s?

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- 2) What were the criticisms against the early attempts to do research on women?

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- 3) What is Feminist empiricism?

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8.5 FEMINIST ESSENTIALISM

The feminist empiricists were criticized for not recognizing the difference between men and women. They were criticized for just adding women to the mix of research that was already being conducted. The critics contended that women

and men were different. The feminist researchers however followed the humanistic approach. They argued that the study of *man* was just the study of men and not *mankind* (meaning humankind). The study of *women* was essential for *womankind*. They sought to replace ideal man with ideal woman. The humanist approach declared that that women can perform all tasks of men but go beyond that as well. There was a transfer of women from the margins to the centre in research. The effort was to rebuild humanities from point of view of women.

For example, it was assumed that the Western white middle class female represents all women. This was true for men too since all men were considered to be essentially the same. This approach was criticized for othering women and men who are different. It was critiqued for not representing the less privileged or those who were different. It assumed that there was no difference between men women, homosexuals, Jews, Christians etc. The focus was on the ability to understand society as a product of rational human thought. The emphasis was on the rational ability of men and women to exercise agency and bring about change. There was no recognition of the fact that knowledge is situated and is always produced from a particular standpoint. This knowledge was assumed to be universal and rational. However this knowledge was produced from the point of view of the white, heterosexual male and later female.

The standpoint theorists questioned the fact that a particular variety of women and men were represented as universal humans. It was critiqued not just by feminists but also by queer theory as well as ethnic and post-colonial studies. Feminists like Harding (*Harding*, 1986) argue that all knowledge is situated. The epistemology and the ontology of the researcher is determined by his or her location. The researcher as an abstract disembodied entity without a historical and social context is challenged by this methodology.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) What were the criticisms of the feminist empirical approach?

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- 2) What does feminist essentialism mean?

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8.6 STANDPOINT THEORISTS

The standpoint theorists argue that without acknowledging the social location of the researcher the knowledge that is presented as universal is incorrect. The situatedness of the researcher is important. The value neutrality of the social sciences was biased and skewed. The normative framework that is used for analysis must necessarily take into account the social locations of the researcher and the researched. These normative frameworks are not universal and will necessarily vary. They also contend that knowledge that is presented as universal is always produced from a position of power.

The standpoint theorists believe that understanding women's experiences is fundamental to understanding their realities. The feminist researcher on the one hand is trying to hold onto the values of science and reason and on the other hand she knows that there is no absolute truth and that truth is socially and culturally located.

The standpoint theorists argue that research should be from all points of view. They contend that the point of view of the white, heterosexual, upper and middle class researcher is extremely skewed. They argue for a research from the standpoint of the marginalized. Standpoint theorist like Nancy Hartsock (*Hartsock, 1983*) believe the Marxist idea of truth is historically specific and all knowledge is political. She contends that the position of women in society and the sexual division of labour means that the lives of women differ from the lives of men. The patriarchal vision of gender structures material relationships between men and women. The situatedness of women gives women a unique standpoint from which they are able to critique the status quo. The situatedness of women does not give them the power to struggle for equality naturally thus a feminist point of view is essential. She argues for a feminist standpoint and not just a women's standpoint. She is like Harding arguing for a version of absolute truth while agreeing that truth is historically specific.

Patricia Hill Collins (*Collins, 1990*) uses Hartsock's conception of truth for the Black feminist thought. She believes that knowledge does not arise from experience and that experience is not individual. She argues for drawing on collective experience of the subjugation of the Blacks and the other disadvantaged groups in the USA. Collins approach is one of straddling the two consciousness from the point of view of Black feminists. She contends that Black feminist Sociology has been marginalized by the Black men and white women. Thus making the Black women the outsider within.

Smith (*Smith D. E., 1987*) unlike Hartsock (1987) believes that the reality of experiences produces knowledge. She argues for a women's standpoint and not a feminist standpoint unlike Hartsock. The reality of experiences is situated. She argues for a **Sociology for women**. She argues for a Sociology that is not organized around anonymity and impersonality. But for one in which the researcher is between two consciousness that of a trained Sociologist and a woman. Stanley and Wise (*Stanley and Wise, 1990*) believe that reality is not unproblematic and that there are different versions of reality. Reality for them is not just based on person's experience but also on their realisation that there is an objective reality over and above their individual reality.

According to Sandra Harding (*Harding, 1991*) the standpoint epistemology starting from the perspectives of the marginalized lives makes the everyday world problematic. The knower and the known are both situated in the same plane. The standpoint of the marginalized provides us with new ways of understanding the world around us. She advocates for a Sociology organized around the marginalized. This methodology will allow for a dialogue between the researcher and the researched and will articulate women's own voices. She argues for a **sociology of women**.

Thus a feminist standpoint theorists explores the relationship between knowledge and power. This means that what is considered to be knowledge is something that is dependent on equations of power. It is the voice of those in power that is heard. It also problematizes the relationship between the researcher and the researched. The researcher by virtue of her position becomes the one in power and thus the knower. Realisation by researchers that their positions effect the questions asked and the responses they get. It is not always neutral. The social position of researcher in terms of gender, class etc. all impact the research. The question then is that is it the standpoint of the women or the feminist. Women have diverse experiences. Bringing these diverse experiences together and interconnecting the experiences of not just women but of all (men and intersexual) is problematic. Knitting them together needs a certain knowledge of social situations, of power and of empirical investigations. This will necessarily privilege the researcher and put her in a position of power. There is thus a need for an intermediate position. This intermediate position between discovering absolute truth on the one hand and multiple truths based on multiple realities on the other hand offers a methodological way out of the conundrum put forth by Harding (*Harding, 1986*) (*Harding, 1991*). The recognition of the intermediate position between absolute truth and truth based on women's experiences helps overcome the criticisms as offered by Hammersley (*Hammersly, 1994*) (*Hammersly, 1992*) of the researcher losing their objectivity.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) What were the criticisms of feminist essentialism by the standpoint theorists?

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- 2) Discuss Nancy Hartsock's views on feminist methodology?

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- 3) Explain Collin's views on standpoint methodology?"

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- 4) How does Harding argue for a sociology for women?

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- 5) What is the significance of adopting an intermediate position between absolute truth and multiple realities?

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8.7 POST MODERNISTS

Post modernists critique feminist knowledge production since the 1980s on the grounds of the focus on epistemological assumptions of rationality, objectivity and value neutrality. They argue that research is never bias free. Post-modern thought as developed by Derrida, Foucault and has had a powerful impact on feminist methodology. They contend that the feminist ways of thinking about the world is just one of the ways of thinking about the world. Feminist thought following post modernism challenged the unified conception of women or feminism. This also was an answer to critics like Martin Hammersley (*Hammersly*, 1992) (*Hammersly*, 1994) who offered a positivist critique of feminist research. He believes that the focus on experiences of women takes away from research and theory building. The postmodern feminist thought argue that this does not necessarily mean that research that is apolitical is not political. They argue that all research is political and socially invested. The growth of epistemology is determined socially and politically.

Ramzanoglu (*Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland*, 2002) argues that postmodern feminist thought also needs to recognise the limitations that our material existence sets upon the performance of gender. For instance a black poor woman cannot perform the role of a white rich woman. The material reality

constrains our choices and access to resources. Feminist thought needs to recognize that there are social, cultural and political constraints on our existence be it as a transsexual, homosexual, female, male or intersex.

Check Your Progress 6

- 1) What is the postmodernist critique of feminist methodology?

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- 2) How does Ramzanoglu criticize the postmodernists?

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8.8 LET US SUM UP

Feminist methodology is varied and diverse. There is no single version of feminism rather there is a need for feminisms. However, feminist methodology despite its divergence and differences implies a general commitment to understanding gendered lives. The understanding of gendered lives as standpoint theorist argue began with an understanding of women. Feminist research remains committed to exploring and documenting diverse gendered lives.

In this chapter we have explored the emergence and development of feminist thought over the years. Feminist thought has progressed through Empiricism to Essentialism to Standpoint Theorists and finally to Post modernism. The development of feminist methodologies cannot be looked at independently of the development of methodologies in general.

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8.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The values of rationality, freedom from religious dogma, ideas of progress and a linking of progress with capitalism were the main themes that dominated Sociology. The epistemology and the ontological positions that they took were predominantly positivist. There was a belief that humans had developed a better understanding of society and were committed to its development.
- 2) It was believed that the methods of the natural sciences could be applied to study society. The task of the positivist was to study social facts. They studied societies like a biologist would study a plant or an animal. The focus was on objectivity, reliability and validity. They believed that they were studying societies in a neutral impartial manner just like a chemist or a biologist would study a chemical reaction or an animal species.
- 3) Weber studied societies through the method of subjective interpretation and *verstehen*. He believed that the method of the natural sciences were not appropriate for the study of societies. For him a sociological study was value free in the sense that its rationality was defined by the community of social scientists and the culture prevailing at that time. For Weber the choice of the subject matter for research was not value free. However, once the choice was made then the study was done in a value free manner.
- 4) The feminists argued that ontology of the researcher determined the choice of the topics of research. Since gender was almost invisible in research this meant that the epistemology of the social sciences itself was based on a falsely value free premise. The interpretation of social action was also based on this flawed version of reality shared by the researcher and the research subject.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Feminist methodology was critical of this vision of society. Progress in society was attributed to the development of rational human thought. The default understanding was that it assumed that human beings were represented by men. It assumed that human beings and those who contributed to the development of society were men and their brotherhood. They had very little to say on issues related to gender. Nor did they have much to say on the impact of these changes on women. The universal idea of progress and thought was limited to the universe of men only.
- 2) The feminist researchers claimed that the Cartesian classification of women was unreasonable and was biased. The feminists said that reason itself was socially constituted (*Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland, 2002*). They argued that the validity of knowledge and even the research questions asked were androcentric. The questions asked and the analysis have all been done using masculine categories of analysis. Theorists like Harding (*Harding, 1986*) and Smith (*Smith D. E., 1987*) pointed out the masculine bias in the social sciences. They argued that the focus of research has been on Western categories of reason and rationality as opposed to emotions. The focus on the official, public visible ways of functioning and not on informal systems indicated a masculine bias in the social sciences. They further contended that men and women occupy different social universes thus the generalizations presented as generalizations of human beings were unfair to women.
- 3) The feminists also argued that this sort of an objective approach led to the objectification of those being researched. The researched were treated as objects and were not given any agency. The relationship of the researcher and the researched was a hierarchical one. The researcher was the knower who imposed their own categories of thought on those being researched. In 1978 Mies (*Mies Maria, 1983*) proposed the need for a research in which the research subject is not just treated as an object but is replaced by a conscious partiality towards the oppressed and suppressed. There is a conscientization of the research and the researched (*Gorelick, 1991*). A conscientization of research implied that the researcher develops a conscience. The focus is not just on the research and understanding of the oppression and subordination of women but also challenge these. The feminist methodology should begin with the everyday world of women. The everyday world of women should be taken as problematic and not as a given.
- 4) The feminist researchers argued against the use of traditional methods of research. They argued that this created a hierarchy between the researcher and the research subject. The researcher appears as a knower who knows everything and the researched as the known.
- 5) The fact that the researcher is a female and not a male alters the nature of the relationship between the researched and the researcher. The gender of the researcher means that she is able to straddle the world of women on the professional as well as the personal front. It provides for a reflexivity on the part of the researcher. It also re-theorises the relationship between the researcher and the researched (*Speer, 2002*)(*Smith D. E., 1987*). Smith, N.D.

Speer and other feminist researchers argue that the very nature of feminist research does away with the hierarchy between the subject and the object i.e. the researcher and the researched.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Western feminist scholars started incorporating women in their studies of history, literature, philosophy and other social sciences. In their bid to incorporate women in their studies there was an inclusion of works by women authors. A conscious effort was also made to study women. The study of women, their achievements etc. became institutionalized in several women's studies departments in the West. Its values were those of equality and androgyny. They insisted that women were as capable as men. This was considered to be a step in the right direction, wherein the androcentric bias was being corrected.
- 2) The feminist researchers criticized this kind of an approach to the gendering of the research methodology. Just adding women to pre-existing categories did not undermine the androcentric masculine approach. They contended that this was just an attempt to study women from the point of existing masculine categories. Such researchers tend to use the positivist methodology though they were critical of the masculinist bias in research. Millman and Kanter's work *Another Voice: Feminist Perspectives on Social Life and Social Science* (Millman, 1975) and the work by Cancian (Cancian, 1992) and Molm (Molm, 1993) illustrate this approach.
- 3) The feminist empiricists brought women into research but they continued to follow the existing methodologies. They believed that for feminist research to be taken seriously it was important to follow the existing *scientific* methods of research.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) They were criticized for just adding women to the mix of research that was already being conducted. The critics contended that women and men were different. The feminist researchers however followed the humanistic approach. They argued that the study of *man* was just the study of men and not *mankind* (meaning humankind). The study of *women* was essential for *womankind*. They sought to replace ideal man with ideal woman. The humanist approach declared that that women can perform all tasks of men but go beyond that as well. There was a transfer of women from the margins to the centre in research. The effort was to rebuild humanities from point of view of women.
- 2) The feminist researchers however followed the humanistic approach. They argued that the study of *man* was just the study of men and not *mankind* (meaning humankind). The study of *women* was essential for *womankind*. They sought to replace ideal man with ideal woman. The humanist approach declared that that women can perform all tasks of men but go beyond that as well. There was a transfer of women from the margins to the centre in research. The effort was to rebuild humanities from point of view of women.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) The standpoint theorists argue that without acknowledging the social location of the researcher the knowledge that is presented as universal is incorrect. The situatedness of the researcher is important. The value neutrality of the social sciences was biased and skewed. The normative framework that is used for analysis must necessarily take into account the social locations of the researcher and the researched. These normative frameworks are not universal and will necessarily vary. They also contend that knowledge that is presented as universal is always produced from a position of power.
- 2) Standpoint theorist like Nancy Hartsock believe the Marxist idea of truth is historically specific and all knowledge is political. She contends that the position of women in society and the sexual division of labour means that the lives of women differ from the lives of men. The patriarchal vision of gender structures material relationships between men and women. The situatedness of women gives women a unique standpoint from which they are able to critique the status quo. The situatedness of women does not give them the power to struggle for equality naturally thus a feminist point of view is essential. She argues for a feminist standpoint and not just a women's standpoint. She is like Harding arguing for a version of absolute truth while agreeing that truth is historically specific.
- 3) Patricia Hill Collins uses Hartsock's conception of truth for the Black feminist thought. She believes that knowledge does not arise from experience and that experience is not individual. She argues for drawing on collective experience of the subjugation of the Blacks and the other disadvantaged groups in the USA. Collins approach is one of straddling the two consciousness from the point of view of Black feminists. She contends that Black feminist Sociology has been marginalized by the Black men and white women. Thus making the Black women the outsider within.
- 4) Smith unlike Hartsock believes that the reality of experiences produces knowledge. She argues for a women's standpoint and not a feminist standpoint unlike Hartsock. The reality of experiences is situated. She argues for a **Sociology for women**. She argues for a Sociology that is not organized around anonymity and impersonality. But for one in which the researcher is between two consciousness that of a trained Sociologist and a woman.
- 5) Bringing these diverse experiences together and interconnecting the experiences of not just women but of all (men and intersexual) is problematic. Knitting them together needs a certain knowledge of social situations, of power and of empirical investigations. This will necessarily privilege the researcher and put her in a position of power. There is thus a need for an intermediate position. This intermediate position between discovering absolute truth on the one hand and multiple truths based on multiple realities on the other hand offers a methodological way out of the conundrum put forth by Harding. The recognition of the intermediate position between absolute truth and truth based on women's experiences helps overcome the criticisms as offered by Hammersley of the researcher losing their objectivity.

- 1) They contend that the feminist ways of thinking about the world is just one of the ways of thinking about the world. Feminist thought following post modernism challenged the unified conception of women or feminism. They argue that all research is political and socially invested. The growth of epistemology is determined socially and politically.
- 2) Ramzanoglu argues that postmodern feminist thought also needs to recognize the limitations that our material existence sets upon the performance of gender. For instance a black poor woman cannot perform the role of a white rich woman. The material reality constrains our choices and access to resources. Feminist thought needs to recognize that there are social, cultural and political constraints on our existence be it as a transsexual, homosexual, female, male or intersex.

GLOSSARY

Androcentric Methodologies: Methodologies that focus on men and assume that men represent humankind.

Cartesian dualism: The thought of Rene Descartes. Cartesian dualism believed in the separation of mind and matter. Cartesian dualism became a part of the Western common sense. It was believed that men were the masters of their mind. They were rational and could master their minds. As opposed to this women were considered to be passionate and more in tune with their emotions.

Epistemology: Epistemology is a branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge. It has to do with the nature, origin and limits of human knowledge.

Feminist Empiricism: This believed that knowledge of reality can be established through observations.

Feminist Essentialism: Claims that all women are essentially the same. They possess the same inherent qualities for example women's power of intuition.

Feminist standpoint: The standpoint theorists believe that understanding women's experiences is fundamental to understanding their realities.

Humanistic Approach: The humanistic approach is one in which men have the agency and the power to alter the world. This arose as a result of the Enlightenment and the Renaissance in which attention was driven away from God and was directed to the study of God. There was a belief in rationality and in the Modernist movement with its belief in the power of men. There was a rejection of religion which placed God at the centre of thought.

Ontology: Ontology is any way of understanding the world or parts of it. It has to do with understanding of the nature of reality. It makes assumptions about what kind of things exist in that reality. For example ontology in Sociology would include things like norms, values, social structures, roles etc. Epistemology and ontology are linked to one another.

Positivism: Positivists were influenced by the methods of the natural sciences. They follow the empiricist tradition. They sought to develop the study of societies

along the same lines. They tried to discover the origins of society and the laws of societies. The first to write on positivism was Auguste Comte.

Postmodernism: Post modernism refers to the writings of French theorists like Foucault and Derrida. It questions the epistemology and constitution of knowledge. It deconstructs the concepts of feminism and women. It contends that these too are products of a particular discourse.

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UNIT 9 QUANTITATIVE METHOD OF ENQUIRY*

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Characteristics of Quantitative Research
- 9.3 Differences Between Qualitative and Quantitative Research
- 9.4 Stages of Quantitative Research
- 9.5 Measurement Error in Quantitative Research
- 9.6 Approaches to Quantitative Research: Experimental and Non-Experimental Research
- 9.7 Data Collection in Quantitative Research: Survey Research
- 9.8 Experimental Research
- 9.9 Let Us sum Up
- 9.10 References

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- To learn the history and traditions of qualitative research,
- To acquaint oneself with the theories and paradigms of quantitative research,
- To learn about the types of quantitative research,
- To study the various world-views and perspectives related to quantitative research,
- To develop acquaintance with the research strategies of quantitative research,
- To learn about methods of data collection and analysis in quantitative research,
- To learn the research designs closely associated with quantitative research, and
- To identify the basic experimental and non-experimental designs related with quantitative research.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In quantitative research, the presumed assumptions are tested by setting up a tentative statement or hypothesis that is either supported or nullified. The test is done through data collected, which finally decides the fate of the hypothesis. One of the most commonly used design is the experimental one where behaviors or attitudes of the respondents are adjudged both before and after the experiment. An objective measurement with a high quality of reliability and validity is designed to collect the data. Finally, the information is analyzed by using statistical procedures and hypothesis testing (Creswell pp. 49).

* Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri, (Deppt. of Sociology), School of Social Sciences, Netaji Subhas Open University, West Bengal.

In this scenario, the researcher tests a theory by specifying narrow hypotheses and the collection of data to support or refute the hypotheses. An experimental design is used in which attitudes are assessed both before and after an experimental treatment. The data are collected on an instrument that measures attitudes, and the information is analyzed using statistical procedures and hypothesis testing. Quantitative research gained ground mainly in the nineteenth and twentieth century when it was found to be lingering back on post-positivist perspective, an approach found generously in the discipline of psychology. Different strategies were seen to be applied in this form of research, chief among which were true experiments and quasi experiments. Different definitions have been offered for quantitative research, especially by scholars like Cohen and Creswell, Borg and Gall. According to Borg and Gall (1989), the main purpose of quantitative research is to investigate causal relationships between variables. Statistical data collection is initiated through adequate selection of observed behaviors of samples. The data analysis is usually done in numerically objective form. Quantitative research is considered to be objective, precise, systematic, causal and far wider in range. This is in contrast to qualitative research which is more subjective, concentrated, and dense and carried on a small number of subjects. In this sense, it is far more appropriate when working within a wider periphery. In some cases, quantitative research gives far better results while in others, qualitative research may yield more effective results. This depends on the qualities of the research that may go with a particular bunch of research questions and a specific kind of research scenario. This brings us to investigating the specific characteristics of the quantitative research, to be discussed in the next section.

9.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

There are certain characteristics of quantitative research, to be discussed below:

- Quantitative research tends to present observations in terms of integers or digits and even some times tends to manipulate the data for the sake of its effective representation. It often does so to give a precise and apt explanation of the observations duly recorded.
- Another common character of quantitative research is its tendency to engage more of empirical methods and statements.

The data so collected are analyzed mostly in the numerical order, therefore the nature of the research is mostly objective, precise, in-effectual. The sample size involved in such research is quite large (*Babbie: 1989, Bogdan and Biklen: 1989*).

- The techniques applied for gathering data in quantitative research are many. These mostly include interviews, questionnaires and experimental research. Both collection and analysis of data can be done either in quantitative or qualitative way. However, numerical data is collected and analysis is done through mathematically based models steeped in statistical techniques. There are certain limitations in this context, as not all data found around us exist in the form of numerical data. Therefore, it becomes necessary to design instruments that can convert numerical data into proper qualitative data to suit our purpose. Qualitative data like attitudes and behaviors obviously do not naturally exist as quantitative data but must be converted into qualitative

ones by designing instruments like questionnaires or tests. This way enables us to translate qualitative data into quantitative ones, the cornerstone of quantitative research.

- Quantitative research is that form of research that uses empirical methods as well as statements, most of which are numerically represented and applied in nature. An empirical statement represents the true picture of the situation as it is there instead of imposing an idyllic situation.
- Quantitative research measures social reality in some form or the other, but usually in a precise, objective and integral shape. Qualitative research investigates those dimensions of life which are not suitable for qualitative or subjective analysis. It is a field of enquiry in its own right, one which refuses to tread the line of other more relative or interpretative methods of enquiry. While qualitative research is more relaxed and lenient in data collection and analysis, quantitative researches are far more stringent and rigid in laying down the steps and stages in conducting this forms of research. Unlike qualitative research, quantitative research is not open and contextual in their line of thought but are rather more planned, strategic and to the point, this makes quantitative researches steeped with more limitations and obstructions restricting its easy and unhindered application. This brings us to investigate briefly the characteristic differences between the qualitative and quantitative researches to better appreciate the qualities of the quantitative research.

9.3 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

There are serious differences between the two researches in terms of orientations or tendencies of their explanations. Qualitative research intends to explain the inferences in terms of individual units. This is to say, qualitative researches tend to split up each phenomenon into individual cases to facilitate the mode of explanation. A core goal of qualitative research is the explanation of outcomes in individual cases. For example, qualitative researchers attempt to identify the causes of World War-I, exceptional growth in East Asia, the end of the Cold War, the creation of especially generous welfare states, and the rise of neo-populist regimes. A central purpose of research is to identify the causes of these specific outcomes for each and every case that falls within the scope of the theory under investigation.

Cite: Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research." *Political Analysis* 14, no. 3 (2006): 227-49. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25791851>.

9.4 STAGES OF QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Though there are differences of many kinds between the qualitative and the quantitative research, there are still some phases which are common for both quantitative and qualitative research (*Rubin & Babbie, 2010*). Such common inter-phases include problem formulation, design of the study, data collection, data processing, data analysis, interpreting the findings and writing the research report. Each of these stages are quintessential for both qualitative and quantitative

research. However, there are characteristic elements that are typical of quantitative and qualitative researches respectively. Therefore, though these stages of research process are similar for both forms of research, there are characteristic differences between them. This calls for the typical essence of quantitative and qualitative research. For now, let us concentrate on the specific phases of quantitative research.

Problem Formulation in Quantitative Research

In this very first phase of quantitative research, the research question is usually posed. The questions are emboldened through the use appropriate concepts. Concepts are used and refined to make them capture the crux of the research question.

Problem formulation is a tricky step in quantitative research where we pose questions to assess the mood of the entire setting. It is necessary that research questions are lucid enough to be comprehensive for the respondents. Research questions before being posed are always screened for their practicality and their feasibility of implementation. Followed after this episode is the critical review of literature which may be quite rigorous and exhaustive. This is a very welcome step for the deductive quantitative studies, for it is the right time to specify the hypothesis and variables, which will soon be followed by conceptualization and operationalization. While quantitative deductive studies start with the hypothesis, inductive qualitative studies, on the other hand, wait and observe, and let the hypothesis emerge by themselves (*Rubin & Babbie, 2010:56*).

Conceptualization in Quantitative Inquiry

The concepts that the researcher has in mind while conducting an investigation is called a variable. The concepts are mental pictures that ranges from attributes easily observable like gender, height, blood group to social attributes difficult to observe like level of confidence, mental health, prejudice and discrimination etc. Such concepts turn into variables as their degree or quantum varies across the continuum. Individuals are likely to manifest different degrees of attributes as their social characteristics, experiences and exposures change with age and situations. In many quantitative studies, researchers try to find a relationship between two or more variables. By relationship, we simply mean that a change in one variable is likely to usher change in another variable (*Babbie, 78:2010*). Such an anticipatory relationship is called a hypothesis. Therefore, a hypothesis is a tentative and assumed statement that pre-supposes that modifications in one variable is likely to instigate changes in other variables.

Types of Variables and Their Mutual Relationships

Variables can be both dependent and in-dependent. A variable that influences others is called **independent variable** while on the contrary, a variable that is being influenced is called a **dependent variable** in the given hypothesis. Usually a good hypothesis follows a few general characteristics such as, it must be crystal-clear and straight –cut such that it can result into many probable results. The hypothesis must not contain any judgmental statement that seems value-loaded and clumsy. It must be easily tested so as to ascertain the outcomes appropriately.

Additional variables may be applied to magnify the relationship between dependent and independent variables. These variables that link up dependent and independent variables are **mediating variables**. For e.g., if we think that

children are more likely to attend schools regularly if given meals at schools, then the given proposal contains three kinds of variables. “Whether children are given any kind of boosts or incentives”, is our independent variable, then “administering meals to students at lunch time “is our mediating variable and “whether student attendance increases or not for this” is our dependent variable. In this way a cause-effect statement can be conceptualized where independent variable stimulates mediating variable which in turn triggers the dependent variable. It is like a chain reaction where one affects the other by turn and the process is perennial. Mediating variables are also known as intervening variables.

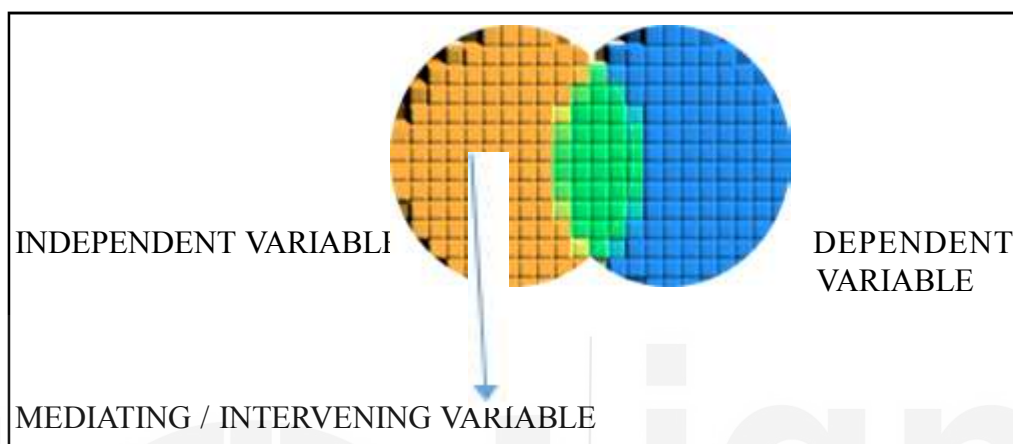


Figure 9.1 : The relation between the variables

Still another category of variable exists that are not affected by the independent variables, but they nevertheless can manipulate the trend of the mutual relationship between the dependent and independent variables, affecting the strength or direction of this relationship. For eg, if we feel that our mediation among the girl students will work and will not be fruitful in case of the male students, then probably “gender” will be taken as a moderating variable. Often the direction of the linkage or relationship between dependent and independent variables, as we say may change once the moderating variables have been taken into account. Thus moderating variables may give us an alternative explanation far away from what we had suggested before. To make it more lucid, let me give you another example, suppose we say that change in the sex ratio (dependent variable) of a district has been possible because of setting up of more schools (dependent variable), but on the contrary we found that adoption of a particular public policy (moderating variable) has brought forward such a transformation. These variables are also called control variables for they are often controlled in a research design. The researcher controls variables in order to examine the hypothesized relationship separately for each category of the control variable (*Babbie, 78: 2010*).

Check Your Progress 1

1) What is a variable? What are its types?

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2) How will you distinguish between mediating and moderate variable?

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Relationships between variables vary in terms of their responses in predicting the linkages. Positive relationships infer a direct relationship between the variables in the sense that they assume a symmetrical relationship such that if one variable changes direction, the other treads the same path. A negative or inverse relationship presumes that the variables will move in opposite direction, such that if one increases, the other will decrease and vice-versa. A curvilinear relationship is one in which the nature of the relationships transforms only at certain levels of the variables. For e.g., some social workers believe that students who are more doubtful towards establishing proper field rapport are the ones who have either taken up substantiated number of field projects or those who have none to their credit. Social workers with this kind of an attitude may hypothesize a u-curve that begins with negative relationship between number of field projects undertaken and degree of doubt about establishing effective field rapport. In other words, disbelief reduces as more field works are conducted and taken up to a certain number of projects, then it increases as more similar projects are undertaken in the due course.

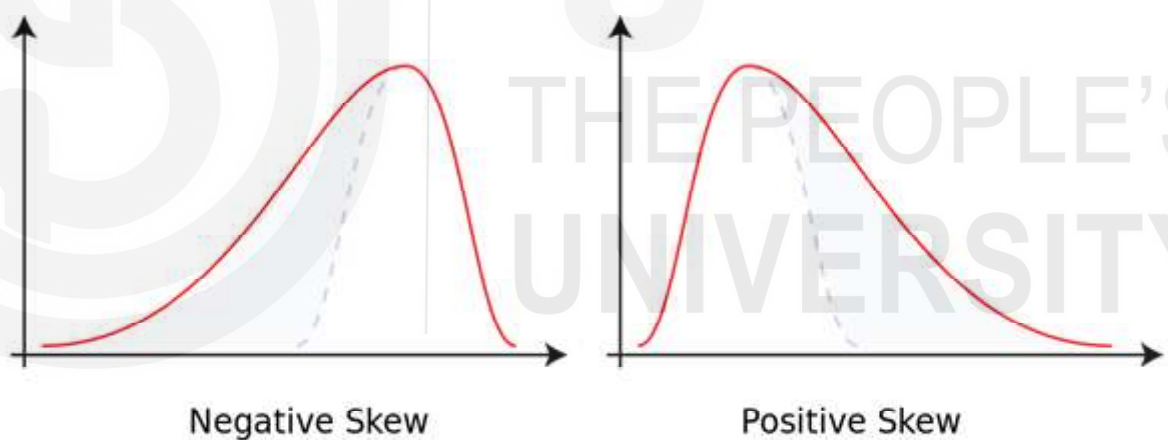


Photo credit: <https://www.intmath.com/differentiation/differentiation-intro.php>

Operational definitions

In quantitative research, operational definitions help us bridge the gap between conceptualization and measurement. We need to operationally define the abstract concepts to smoothen our measurement process in the quantitative research. Operational definitions help translate a concept into an observable unit which can be measured and evaluated. It becomes necessary to process a concept into an operational conceptsuch that it can be turned into an indicator to measure the attributes we seek to observe. Operational definitions are generally different form nominal definitions in the sense that the latter uses only a bunch of words to explain the phenomenon under study without identifying the indicators we seek to study. Operational definitions specify the ways of measuring a variable. We can operationally define abstract variables in numerous ways. One example of

turning social securing into a measurable or operational definition may be to construct a scale or continuum of scores to measure the extent of social security, say among the young female slum dwellers of a migrant community. Another operational definition may be to ascertain whether they are receiving the benefits of those public policies which are due to them. Those who are the beneficiaries of these policies may be categorized as belonging to the lower levels of social security while those with nothing of this kind to their credit are termed as belonging to the higher level of the social security among these slum dwellers. Thus operational definitions show us the path to measure variable.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) In a study comparing levels of sugar in the diet to diabetes among test subjects, the diabetes would be the _____ variable.
 - Mediating
 - Moderating
 - Dependent
 - Independent
- 2) Operational definitions of variables necessarily claim that ensure that findings are reproducible.
 - True
 - False
- 3) In a study that looked at the effectiveness of a new way of teaching a second language to students, the ability of the students to process and learn a new language would be considered a _____ variable.
 - Moderating
 - Mediating
 - Dependent

Correct answers:

1. Dependent, 2. True, 3. Mediating.

Levels of Measurement

Variables in a quantitative research design can be operationally defined upto four levels of measurement such as nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio. At the nominal level, variables are explicated in terms of clear and precise categories which are mutually exclusive. At the ordinal level, we move up to a notch higher where we can rank-order our variables without of course knowing how much is the difference between the subsequent categories. In the interval level, we can obtain the difference between the categories with ease. Lastly, we come to the ratio level where we have true zero point such that frequencies can be easily determined. We must remember that the hierarchy of measurement we are talking of is ascending in character such that as we move up we carry forward all the qualities from bottom to the top. The lowest level has only its own distinct character but the one above it has not only its own character but also the one it inherited from its predecessor. In this way the top-most layer is the most powerful one as it carries all the characters of its predecessors.

Nominal	Ordinal	Interval	Ratio
Runner ID	Order Finished	Time of Day Finished	Race Time
238	1	10:10	2:30
143	2	10:20	2:40
14	3	10:25	2:45
.	.	.	.
.	.	.	.
.	.	.	.
301	450	20:20	12:40

Photo credit: <http://giscommons.org/chapter-2-input/>

9.5 MEASUREMENT ERROR IN QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

As we have seen above, in quantitative research, operational definitions most often serve to fill the gap between conceptualization and measurement. However, we must be careful to the risks borne by the vulnerable nature of the measurement process, which itself can become the hot bed of measurement errors. In fact, measurement processes are a rich source of such errors, about which the researchers must be cautious from the very beginning. The two most common sources of measurement errors most cited in quantitative research are systematic error and the random error. The two errors are discussed below:

Systematic errors, are the recurrently happening errors that are consistently directed in the same direction. Systematic errors are usually caused by a problem which remains perennially present throughout the course of the quantitative enquiry. On the other hand, **Random errors** are abrupt changes or statistical fluctuations, directed in any way, and often detected in the measured data, usually caused by the shortcomings of the measurement apparatus used for the research. It might also be the case that such errors spring out because of the researcher's incapacitated handling of the research tool to bring about a consisted nature of findings over repeated usage. To make thematter precise, we present for you below, a table of the summary:

Source of research	Type of the research error	Instance	Ways of prevention
Quantitative	Systematic	The digital weighing machine you use reads 85 kilo grams, which is not your real weight. (because it	Systematic errors are very difficult to handle. Its detection and analysis requires a

		was not properly calibrated during the research process or because of its natural wear and tear, it is not functioning well).	lot of time. Diagnosing systematic error is quite a tedious task.
Quantitative	Random	We measure the body mass of a child three times using the same machine, and we get different values each time: 08.46 g, 08.42 g, 08.45 g	We need to take more data. Random errors can be detected by statistical analysis and can be minimized by averaging a large number of readings.

Now we shall come to the different approaches which are usually carried out while initiating a quantitative research. The approaches and the typologies have been discussed below so as to aid your comprehension.

9.6 APPROACHES TO QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH: EXPERIMENTAL AND NON - EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH

Various approaches are used in quantitative social research, and they are commonly used in sociological parlance. These approaches can be bifurcated into two compartments widely, such as experimental research designs and non-experimental research designs. Let us get a short description of these two approaches and the research designs subsumed under them.

Non-Experimental Research Designs

In this kind of study, none of the variables are tampered with and the research is carried out without any sort of manipulation. The variables are enumerated in their original setup and they not disturbed while conducting this form of research. Three kinds of Non-experimental research are usually observed and these are Descriptive research design, Co-relational research and Causal-comparative research. All of these will be discussed below:

Descriptive Research Design

In this form of research design, the task of the researcher is just to describe and explicate the conditions, settings and the locale of the variables as they occur naturally without disturbing its point of origin. The researcher does the work in tandem with the natural flow of the variables without interfering with its given periphery. No tricks are applied to control this natural flow so as to assess the impact of this manipulation of the variables on the research findings. There can be generally four kinds of descriptive research designs, such as observational research, case study, archival analysis and survey research, which are discussed below:

Observational Research

Observational research (or field research) is a type of correlational or non-experimental type of research where a researcher is engaged in observing a currently occurring behavior. There are different types of observational research, each used according to its relevance and application. These types vary by the degree to which the researcher interferes with the flow of the research and yields control on the set-up in question. Observation can usually be divided in four kinds such as:

- a) **Naturalistic (“non-participant”) Observation:** Here the researcher just observes the functioning of the research subjects with guarded silence without tampering with their pace of functioning. He does not intend to tinker with variables that he wishes to study.
- b) **Participant Observation:** Here the researchers participate in the life-activities of the subjects they intend to study. Studying people in the natural set-up becomes way more possible thorough observation and prolonged participation. A participant observer must have keenness for insightful observations and he should use various methods like interviews, questionnaires and other unobtrusive techniques.

Case Study Research

Case study is a special type of non-experimental research. Here the basic soul of a case study, is that it tries to throw light on a decision or a set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result. (*Schramm, 1971*,). The case study is usually preferred while studying contemporary events, especially when the relevant behaviors cannot be controlled. The case study has likeness with historical research, but it stands out for its two resources that it banks on such as collecting evidence from direct observation and systematic interviewing (*Yin, 2003*).

Archival Analysis

An archive is the most important form of a primary historical record. Archival analysis involves discourses resulting out of exchanges with the documents of an archive. “Most archives preserve and provide access to original primary source material” (*Harris, 2017*). An archive is a reservoir of journals, letters, speeches, published writings, physical objects, media snippets, newspaper clippings, radio or television broadcast etc. It provides important data to the researchers who try analyzing an archive with different methodologies that they lay their hands upon.

Survey Research

A survey is a method of collecting data in a systematic way. Survey research is relevant in the context of making a chronicle of the present community or group situations, characteristics of a populace or sample, and the narratives or opinions of the group or community in question (*Guyette, 1983*). There are different kinds of surveys such as cross-sectional survey, which collects information for a sample at one point in time; longitudinal survey, which collects information for a sample at different point in time. Longitudinal survey again has sub-divisions such as the trend study, which samples a general population at more than one points across time. Another division is the cohort study, where a study on a specific population is followed over a period of time. Panel study is yet another sub-

division, where a particular sample of individuals is followed and subsequently studied at different points in time.

9.7 DATA COLLECTION IN QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH: SURVEY RESEARCH

It is time for us to study now the instruments of data collection that we frequently use in survey research. These instruments are important for us because it is through these mediums that we collect the data. These instruments are interview and questionnaire, discussed below:

Questionnaire

The term questionnaire has been coined to refer to a bunch of questions. The questionnaires are given to the respondents, which they are supposed to fill up. The given data give the researcher enough information to analyse. The questions asked can again be of two types, viz. open ended and closed ended. In open ended questions, respondents are asked to fill in their own answers, without giving them any options to choose from. Though open ended questions can be seen in both qualitative and quantitative research, they are mostly significant for quantitative research. In case of the closed-ended questions, the respondent is asked to select their preferred answer from the enlisted answers. They are extremely popular in quantitative research for they help generate more uniform and consistent replies that can be more conveniently analysed. In case of the closed ended questions we must be sure that two most important structured criteria are met while designing these questions, such that the response categories must be made exhaustive. Quite often to satisfy this criteria, researchers use a special category like, 'other'. The other criteria presuppose that the responses categories must be chiseled such that they are mutually exclusive. The respondent must not have to ponder on which category to choose, in other words, categories should not be overlapping or grossly similar. For eg, Hispanics, black and white; because Hispanics can be both black and white. The types of questions have been diagrammatically given below:

Closed-Ended Questions <i>Answered with yes/no or one word answer</i>		Open-Ended Questions <i>Need an explanation</i>	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- fast answer- less complicated- easy to find using internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- doesn't tell you a lot- you don't have to think which means your not stretching your brain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- learn more by answering these questions- get more detailed information- more specific answers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- can take a long time to answer properly

Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid.>

Guidelines for Framing Questionnaires

There are often certain guidelines to be followed while designing the questionnaire. This is done to ensure that the questionnaire follows a consistent patterns and do not suffer from abrupt discontinuities or breaks. Often this hamper our methods

of data collection and analysis and therefore to prevent this, these common guidelines are followed. Some of them have been discussed below:

Clarify Your Items

This is made to ensure that the questionnaire items are transparent and crystal clear. Researchers often fail to point out clearly the basic crux of the research question. Inability to do so may disturb the direction of the research. Researchers are therefore asked to make the questions as precise as possible so that they are lucid enough for the respondents to grasp.

Avoid Double-Barreled Questions

We often fail to specify our question and end up in confusing our respondents. This happens when the researchers seek responses for a single question but instead, ask them a combine of questions, which the respondents do not know how to answer. As a thumb's rule, whenever we are using 'and' in the question, we should be careful as to whether we are asking a double-barreled question. For eg. If we ask them do you have a friendly relation with your grandparents? It often turns difficult to answer, because they may get along well with their grandmother, but gel quite well with their grandfather. So, what should they answer? questions like this ruffle the respondents, which they find difficult to cope with.

Respondents Must Have Enough Competence

The researchers must be wary that they must ask questions which they are capable to answer. Asking questions without taking into account their general profile, will only generate imaginary answers from the respondents, that will be of little help to the quantitative researchers. For instance, if you ask your respondents, who largely constitute the population of primary school teachers, that whether they regularly bunked classes in their universities, would be quite an absurd question. This would be a misleading question to this target population, many of whom never attended university at all. So asking questions, well within the reach of the respondents, should one of our major priorities.

Questions Must be Relevant Enough

Remember the questions, which you are asking must be relevant to your research question. Topics must be chosen in a way that they are of importance in the current setting. Asking questions about an issue which they do not face in their current situation, will not rouse the respondents. For example, if you ask your respondents from a drought acute area, that what techniques do they apply to trap sunlight, will be a bizarre question for they get ample sunlight throughout the year and will not be much interested in its accruing.

Questionnaire Should not Suffer from Biasness

The way a question is ordered, matters very much. Often the questions are ordered in a way that lead the respondents towards a particular response, this makes the questioned biased. Questions that provoke the respondents to reply in a particular way, must always be avoided while framing a questionnaire. Such questions suffer from innate biasness.

Cultural Sensitivity Matters

Questions must have a sense of cultural sensitivity, this is to say, all respondents may not be comfortable with a single set of questions. They may have inhibition in answering some questions which their counterparts may not. For instance, girls in a liberal society may feel much free to answer tabooed questions which their counterparts in an orthodox society may not. So questionnaire must be made keeping in mind the cultural quotient of the respondents.

For your easy comprehension, a sample questionnaire is given below:

Sl.	Quality Checks	A	B	C
1.0	Installation			
1.1	Are the fans installed as per the drawings and specifications?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Are the fans tagged properly?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
1.3	Are all the equipment in good condition?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
1.4	Are all dampers fully opened?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
1.5	Are all safety rules understood by personnel responsible for operating the equipment?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
1.0	Electrical			
1.6	Proper motor and fan rotation verified?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
1.7	Verify that proper disconnect is located within sight of the unit it controls.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>

Picture Source: <https://i.stack.imgur.com/XnVSg.png>

Quantitative Co-relational Research

Co-relational research is a type of non-experimental research where the researcher measures two variables and enumerates the statistical co-relation between them without manipulating or controlling the independent or extraneous variables (Jhangiani, 2015). This is one of the important types of non-experimental research used in social sciences.

Causal-Comparative Research

Causal-comparative research is usually applied to identify cause-effect nexus or to diagnose the impact of differences that was known to have been present between two groups (Tima, 2017). Causal-comparative research is also known as “ex-post facto” research since the researcher intends to know the underlying cause behind the differences that is said to have been present for quite some times. So what the causal comparative research invokes, is the need to study the supposed causal relationship between two contending groups, put on a common platform for comparison. It thus compares a causal relation that was already there from the beginning.

9.8 EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH

We have so far discussed only the non-experimental research. Let us now have a look at the experimental research. Experimental research is any kind of research conducted with a scientific approach, where a bunch of variables are

kept constant while the other bunch of variables are being measured as the subject of experiments.

Now we come to the next section of the experimental research designs that are quantitative per se, and therefore less used in soft social science practices. Such research designs include post-test only control group design, which perhaps is the simplest of the experimental designs (*Shadish, et al., 2002: 106-107*), where a sample of participants is exposed to a treatment after which the dependent variable is evaluated and measured. (*Kirk, 2013*). The next type of experimental research design is single subject experimental research designs, also known as a single-case research design. It lends us a strategy for recording experimental effects (*salkind, 2010*). Single-case research has been used for quite some purposes like erecting basic dictums of behavior, capture the footprints of specific mediations, and more vitally to develop a body of evidence-based strategies. The staple element of single-case research is the use of each participating respondent (subject) as his or her own experimental control (*ibid, 2010*). Next in this category is the reversal experimental research designs, which are among the family of single-case experimental designs used extensively by behavioral scientists and educators to enumerate the effectiveness of clinical or educational mediations (*Frey, 2018*).

Another prominent research design in this category is the alternating treatment design. It is constituted of rapid and random or semi-random alteration of two or more situations such that each has an approximately equal chance of being present during each measurement opportunity (*Hayes & Blackledge, 2015*). Mention must also be made of multiple-baseline research design, another popular form of research design, especially used in clinical science. These studies usually involve more than one participant, thus acting as SC studies with replication across participants. (*Lobo & Cunha, 2017*). For example, a multiple baseline SC study was used to investigate the effect of an anti-spasticity baclofen medication on stiffness in five adult males with spinal cord injury (*Hinderer et al, 1917*).

Check Your Progress

- 1) What is Quantitative Research?

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- 2) What are Its Characteristics?

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3) How is Problem formulation done in Quantitative Research?

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4) What is Survey?

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5) What are the levels of Measurement?

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9.9 LET US SUM UP

Quantitative research promotes the objective empirical methods as well as statements. Quantitative research focuses to yield unbiased result that can be generalized to larger population. This is done through arrangement of equalizing techniques such as interviews, questionnaires and experimental research. Data is analysed with the help of statistics and hypothesis testing.

Measurement errors in quantitative research such as systematic and random will also be explained along with various approaches.

Various approaches used in quantitative research can be bifurcated in two departments: experimental research designs and non-experimental research design. Finally, coming to go through all the stages of quantitative research is to collect numerical data from group to generalize those results to larger group of people to explain a phenomenon.

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UNIT 10 QUALITATIVE METHOD*

Structure

10.0 Objectives

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10.2 The Goals of Qualitative Research

10.3 The Traditions of Qualitative Research

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10.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- To learn the history and traditions of qualitative research,
- To acquaint oneself with the theories and paradigms of qualitative research,
- To develop acquaintance with the research strategies of qualitative research,
- To learn about methods of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, and
- To develop a world view of the art, politics, practices and ethics of data interpretation and evaluation in qualitative research.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research investigates those dimensions of life which are not suitable for quantitative or objective analysis. It is a field of enquiry in its own right, one which refuses to tread the line of others. Qualitative research is therefore the assemblage of a set of complicated concepts and operations which owe their allegiance to various sources and lineages. These are therefore connected to the theories of positivism, post-foundationalism, post-positivism, post-structuralism and many areas of cultural and interpretative studies. Qualitative research is a kind of research that carefully places the observer in the right position. It makes an attempt to use all those tactics that can help him visualize the world of the people he intends to study. Qualitative researcher analyses the data in the spontaneous backdrop to understand the meaning that the data presents before them. This surely means that the qualitative researchers are more interested in bringing out the personae or the psyche of the individuals as they appear in the crude or natural background.

Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri, (Deptt of sociology), School of Social Sciences, Netaji Subhas Open University, West Bengal.

Qualitative researches are concerned with various theoretical visions and therefore are apt in using various methods and techniques of data collection. The birth of this research strategy can be located in the nineteenth and twentieth century amidst various disciplines like cultural anthropology, interpretative sociology and many more with diverse orientations. The disciplines that were found to adopt such strategy were varied and interesting for their nature and scopes were amazingly distinct. The set-up in which the research objects are placed is transformed into an array of representations such as field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, memos and many such things of daily usage which the objects of research must have used at some point in life. This makes the texture and framework of analysis even more interesting. Let us now look into the goals of qualitative research.

10.2 THE GOALS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The qualitative research has a few goals at its disposal which must be delineated for you all. This will help you capture the soul of this form of research. The goals are important for they help us understand the nature and extent of gravity hidden in this form of enquiry. The goals will also help us appreciate the distinction of this form of enquiry from the quantitative one, which we shall be dealing a little later. As of now, let's concentrate on the goals of the qualitative research:

- a) Qualitative research helps us undertake an in-depth study of the objects, we desire to study. Unlike quantitative research, the qualitative researchers do not draw upon a representative and 'ideal' sample to infer upon but do just the contrary. They instead focus on a fragment of a larger population to make a proximate and detailed analysis. These kinds of studies are not as objective or precise like the quantitative ones, but they surely take a more spontaneous and grounded take on the problem in question.
- b) The goal of the qualitative researchers is to find out the reason behind the occurrence of the phenomenon rather than pondering about the content and the scope of the research matter in question. The basic idea is to find out why people act the way they do rather than rigorously sketching the gross outline of their behavior.
- c) It is assumed that the motives of qualitative research span across several levels such as the micro-macro spectrum and both structural and procedural issues (*Maines, 1977, 1983*). Sociologists believe that qualitative research is particularly well suited to the study of family processes on several levels of analysis, avoiding the traditional micro-macro dichotomy in sociology as well as the equally un-tenable objective-subjective polarity. (*Alexander, Giesen, Munch, & Smelser, 1987; Ritzer, 1992*).
- d) Qualitative research is most frequently engaged in discovering or exploring new facts and making revelations, instead of making verifications and reviews. New studies bring out many unknown dimensions of known facts. The research therefore, helps discover new rituals, patterns of behavior, social structures and processes. Qualitative researches are important because they help us look anew at old and already well researched objects. This helps us identify the unknown trends of change. Qualitative research is not always bound by the norms of the classical perspectives or by those of the

more structured rules of hypotheses testing. Thus it can be safely inferred that qualitative researches have a natural inclination towards inductive form of research with a clear cut inclination towards the empirical world (Becker & Geer, 1960).

10.3 THE TRADITIONS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The history of qualitative research is revealed through the goals of such research method mentioned above. The modern social science understood that qualitative research had the ability to study the patterned behaviors and conducts of the individuals and groups systematically. This is more highlighted through the various historical junctures and traditions through which the research travelled. Qualitative research owed its genesis to a few traditions that must be studied in detail to trace the historical trajectory of this form of research. These traditions of qualitative research include Human Ethnology, Ecological Psychology, Holistic Ethnography, Cognitive Anthropology, Ethnography of Communication and Symbolic Interactionism (Jacob, 1988:16-18).

Qualitative research is immensely enriched by Ethnologists that seek to understand the scope and extent of the naturally occurring behavior and its synchronization with the social environment in relation to which the individual adjusted his behaviors. Ethnologists simultaneously tend to concentrate on the social course that the behaviors take and their ultimate nature of evolution. Researchers used data mostly in the forms of behaviors collected through video-tapes and non-participant observations. Ecological psychology was pioneered by Roger Barker, Herbert Wright, and their colleagues at the University of Kansas. Ecological psychologists look into the interdependence between human behavior and the environment. They believe that both human behaviors and environments have subjective dimensions that influence the behaviors of the individuals. Ecological psychology also focuses on the trans-individual patterns of behavior centering on particular constellations of places, things, and times, which they study with the help of “behavior setting survey”.

Holistic ethnographers on the other hand, study culture of closed groups with a special emphasis on researching the culture as a whole. They show how the disparate parts of their life contribute in building up a well concerted lifestyle for the group as a whole. This is done to bring out the unique characteristics of the group life as well as to document the solidarity that they display in their communal life. Cognitive anthropology chiefly pioneered by Ward Goodenough and Charles Frake, who borrowed heavily from linguistics. Cognitive anthropologists work upon the processes through which group members work hard to consolidate and cognize their cultural knowledge as well as transmit the same to their successors. Data primarily comprise of words, sentences and syntaxes collected mainly through interviews and formal deliberations.

Yet another tradition closely associated with qualitative research is Ethnography of communication, which has other synonyms like ethnography of speaking, micro-ethnography, or constitutive ethnography, largely procured from works in anthropology, sociology, socio-linguistics, and nonverbal communication (Erickson & Mohatt:1982:136; Erickson & Wilson:1982:42). They strongly believe that most of the verbal and non-verbal behaviors are culturally rooted

even though the performers are mostly ignorant of such structured roots (*Erickson & Mohatt, 1982:136; Philips, 1983:4*). For them contexts in which a particular form of interaction takes place is the deciding factor for determining the particular form that the interaction will soon assume. They at the same time believed that it is the verbal and non-verbal interaction, especially the face-to-face interaction that decides the ultimate shape that the social structures and institutional processes will take in the long run. Ethnographers try to concentrate on the forms of communication taking place among the members of a cultural group as well as those of a different cultural group. Therefore, they compare between the different groups to find out how verbal and non-verbal interactions differ from one to another bringing underlying deep seated changes between the groups in question. Ethnographers are more interested in finding out how micro-sociological processes affect the macro-sociological aspects of the groups in this regard.

Yet another tradition of qualitative research had been borrowed generously from symbolic interactions. The perspective of Symbolic Interactionism was founded by Herbert Blumer especially clinging on the theoretical works of other sociologists like G. H. Mead, Charles Cooley, John Dewey, and W. I. Thomas (*Manis & Meltzer, 1978, p. xi*). Symbolic Interactionists see humans as qualitatively different from other animals in the sense that unlike animals which make sense of the world merely on the basis of the meanings that is transmitted to them through the stimulus-response process, human beings do not merely act upon such one-dimensional responses to stimulus but use their reflexes and internal selves to make sense of the world. Thus instead of just acting on the gross meaning of the objects, they imaginatively rehearse their behaviors in accordance with the situations before delivering their final round of actions. Analysis of this qualitative data usually is done through participant observation and open interviews, life histories, autobiographies, case studies, and letters (*Meltzer, Petras, & Reynolds, 1975:8*).

The traditions are better understood if traced through the historical phases or the moments through which the qualitative research traversed. The emergence of this form of research in North America was well showcased by Denzin and Lincoln (2005). The historical journey was lucidly illustrated through different junctures or moments through which the research practice walked through. This must be kept in mind that each of these phases can be historically canvassed and each of these moments are still strongly present in academic researches throughout the globe. We present below the moments; we just spoke of. Hope you will understand the historical paths of the qualitative research better if you have an idea of these major moments through which it veered through (*Higgs & Cherry, 2009:7*).

10.4 THE EIGHT MOMENTS OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: TRACING ITS HISTORICAL JOURNEY

Let us introduce ourselves with the eight qualitative moments, given below briefly:

- **The Traditional Phase (1900-1950)**

It begins from the 1900s and trails till the Second World War. The field experiences of this time were colonizing efforts to write precise and objective reports. The narratives portrayed the 'other' as a strange outsider worthy of despise and irritation, someone who stands 'low' in all respects than the observer.

Malinowski's (1967) field experiences in New Guinea and Trobriand Islands in 1914-15 and 1917-1918 are succinct instances of such objective accounts of the queer and 'uncivilized' islanders. The accounts smelt of prejudice and discriminatory attitudes, but the researchers still vouched for science and objectivity. Field workers of this tenure were looked with deep respect who went on expeditions to bring back unknown stories about lesser known cultures. This period drew heavily on the norms of classical ethnographic tradition, which we had already discussed above.

Do You Know?

Structural functionalists like Malinowski, Radcliffe Brown, Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson who wrote during this phase were known as lonely ethnographers and were believed to have given birth to classical ethnography. They built their research philosophy on the four-fold canons of objectivism, imperialism, monumentalism and timelessness. Objects of research were assumed to be like museum artifacts, better showcased than having any practical functionality. The objects were a historical social facts with no tendencies for change and transition.

- **Modernist or Golden Phase (1950-1970)**

The phase continued throughout the post-war years and was conspicuously present in the 1970s. The traces of the phase are still seen today. The researchers of this period, especially the modern ethnographer and the sociologists were trying hard to rigorously build upon the cannons of the qualitative research so as to legitimize its structure, reflected well in books like *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glasser and Strauss, 1967). Important social processes like the social crime, deviance, conformity etc. were studied in detail through the proper application of the qualitative research practices. At this juncture, new interpretative perspectives like ethno-methodology, phenomenology, critical theory and feminism were making inroads in the academic scenario. These new schools often used qualitative research practices to articulate their views and ideas, especially in favor of the under-class.

Do You Know?

An important text of this moment is S. Howard's *Boys in White* (1968). A significant part of the book is the combination of both the quantitative and qualitative research methods which have been used simultaneously in this work. This multi-method work used both participant observation and statistical analysis generously.

- **Blurred Genres (1970-86)**

This period saw the thriving of the qualitative research practices, its paradigms, models and methods (Rosaldo, 1989). Diverse theories like symbolic interactionism, constructivism, naturalistic inquiry, positivism and post-positivism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, critical theory, neo-Marxist theory, semiotics, structuralism, feminism etc. flourished during this time. Applied qualitative research was gaining a new footage and it was much talked about in the new academic backdrop. Such strategies included grounded theory, case study, historical, biographical, ethnographic, action and clinical research. The crowd of new strategies ensured that the thick boundaries between the humanities and

social sciences would get thin. This propagated new approaches like post-structuralism, neo-positivism, neo-Marxism, micro-macro descriptivism, ritual theories of drama and culture, deconstructionism etc.

Do You Know?

Two such texts which marked the beginning and the end of this decade: One was *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) and the other was *Local Knowledge* (1983). Both had been written by Clifford Geertz.

• The Crisis of Representation (The Mid-1980s)

The works during this time were reflexive and critical for they called into question sensitive areas of caste, class and gender, ethnicity that were taken at their face values before. Qualitative researches produced new models and paradigms of reality, truth, methods, representation and facts. The previously held classical views of objectivity, reliability and validity became un-settled once again. This aggravated the crisis of representation even more, and the way out was proposed in producing a new form of writing. Clough (1998) believes that new forms of writing can bring an end to this form of crisis. Therefore, a self-consciousness about writing must be developed and over and above, the difference between writing and field-work must erode (Richardson, L, 1998). It had been believed that new forms of writings were written in a way such that field experiences flow into field worker's text which finally moulded into researcher's text. Thus the essential differences between writing and field work finally melted and blurred. This creates a crisis in representation that gives qualitative research a new vista.

• The Post-Modern Period: A Phase of Experimental and New Ethnographies (1990-1995)

This period tried to figure out the crises already encountered in the previous phases and tried hard to resolve them. New ways of composing the ethnographies were tried out with different epistemologies formed to address the issues of the 'Others' (Bochner and Ellis:2002). The groups that were muted in the beginning marched ahead to offer epistemologies for the 'Other' groups. Instead of confining the observer in an insulated hole, and forcing him to take a snapshot from the ivory towers, time has now come to offer a lot more activity for the observer. The phase buzzed with participatory, action and impact research that had no room for the 'lone' observer. The earlier classical notions of grand theories were curbed in favor of more micro, local and regional theories that were more ground-rooted and immediate.

• The Post-Experimental Enquiry (1995-2000)

This period brought new excitement and vigor to the foray. New and experimental ways of writing qualitative accounts were proposed that erased the differences between humanities and social sciences. New ways of expressing the lived experiences of men were tinkered with such as literary, poetic, auto-biographical, multi-voiced, conversational, critical, visual, performative, and co-constructed representations (*ibid*:124).

Do You Know?

During this time two major journals started their journey. *Qualitative Research* and *Qualitative Journal* that begun their publications were chiefly dedicated in bringing out the best of the new research works produced during this time.

- **The Methodologically Contested Present (2000-2004)**

The journals mentioned above opened the flood-gate for the new forms of research and qualitative practices. These were of course, accompanied with new tensions, challenges, fragments, retrenchments and conflicts.

- **The Fractured Future (2005)**

This brings us to the eighth and the final moment which we are facing now. At this point we face a lot of instability and turmoil especially among those engaged in interpretative research practice. They are thoroughly engaged in critical and reflexive conversations with democracy, caste, class, gender, ethnicity and the state. This interaction has been aggravated more so by the undercurrents produced by the global and the neo-liberal society which demands generation of new techniques of data collection in order to capture the changed representations. The search for new research paradigms though continues to intrigue us, is less prominent than the conflict over new domains and jurisdictions {Feighery,2015}. This moment is characterized by an eagerness to tinker with new representational ideas, less heard before. Richardson (1994) noticed that the narrative forms linked to ethnographic writings have become hazy, modified and inflated to accommodate poetry, essays and narratives, bifurcated texts, critical-auto-biography, memoirs, self-histories, cultural criticism, co-constructed performance narratives and writings that carefully erase the borders between texts, images and criticisms.

10.5 GENERATING QUALITATIVE DATA: DATA SOURCES, METHODS, STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

Generating appropriate qualitative data for research purposes can be difficult for it involves the tricky question of what data sources to be used, which methods must be efficiently used to capture those data and which approaches correctly define these methods (Mason,2002:51). This section decides that while juggling with these ontological and epistemological questions, how do a few well known qualitative approaches fare. This is important for this prepares the ground for the researchers to build up their qualitative strategies.

Certain categories are believed to be constituting the sources of the data which the researcher is looking for, but at times the sources might as well overlap. The categories which commonly constitute such data sources may be many such as, people; organizations and institutions; texts, settings and the environment; objects, artifacts and media products; events and the happenings. These categories often help us locate the most probable sources of data or at least help us think what actually constitutes the source of a data. For example, those who think of organizations as sources of data, might think of structure, entity, bureaucracy, goals, morals, leadership, risks, opportunities and orientations (Mason,2002:53). Once having sorted out the sources of the data, it is now time to search for particular methods for generating the data. Such methods are many but it is important to choose methods according to the specificity of the data. Let us now learn about the methods for generating qualitative data.

10.6 PARTICULAR METHODS FOR GENERATING DATA

We shall discuss some of the most common methods for generating qualitative data. Some of these are “qualitative interviewing”, “observing and participating”, and “using visual methods and documents”. These are usually taken as fluid and flexible methods that are usually followed in generating qualitative data. Let us now discuss of the commonly used methods to collect qualitative data in the following section.

10.6.1 Qualitative Interviewing

Qualitative interviewing is probably the most commonly used method of collecting qualitative data. The term “qualitative interviewing” has some particular meaning attached to it. It usually pertains to in-depth and flexibly composed interviews. Qualitative interviewing though has various styles and traditions, still comprises certain distinct characteristics, which have been discussed below.

- a) Qualitative interviews may constitute of one-to-one dialogues as well as focused group discussions. Interviews may be conducted over the telephone, video or the internet. It does not use structured questionnaire.
- b) A relatively informal style of interaction is applied in this form of interviewing where casual conversations or spontaneous dialoguing is more encouraged than a formally structured questionnaire. Burgess’s term ‘conversations with a purpose’ captures this rather well (1984: 102).
- c) Usually a topic centric, biographical or narrative approach is adopted where the researcher converses in various directions. Either the researcher takes the initiative for the conversation to take off or leaves for the interviewee to narrate his own tale. The researcher never follows a previously determined or scripted form of questionnaire for it is left upon the researcher and the interviewee to cover un-expected topics and areas of discussions.
- d) Qualitative interviewing operates from the perspective that knowledge is always contextually constructed and situated such that it is always the responsibility of the interviewer to focus upon all relevant issues. This creates a fertile ground to harvest situated and contextually produced knowledge. Knowledge is therefore not pre-supposed but produced in the given context through dialogues and reciprocal interactions between researchers and interviewees. Qualitative interviewing therefore involves construction and re-construction of knowledge more than its mere excavation (*Mason, 2002 & Kvale, 1996:3*).

Things To Do

Do you know how many types of interview are there? Can you contrast between a topical interview and cultural interview?

10.6.2 Observing and Participating

Yet another way of collecting qualitative data is observation and participation. Often the researcher has to prepare himself for the social set-up which he is going to enter with apt readiness and eagerness to participate. This preparedness is for the interactions that he will develop with the prospective respondents. This requires individuals to enter into field-work where the researcher participates in the given set-up with to interact with his fellow respondents. This necessitates the researcher to negotiate and re-negotiate with the interviewees in the setting within a given length of time. This often requires a personal and friendly approach to develop a rapport with the subjects in the field. Developing a rapport with the field respondents is more important probably because the process though is more flexible and fluid than the qualitative interviewing, nevertheless demands a procedural and systematic approach. This is more so when we have to take more situated but strategic decisions such as what are we enquiring about, whom to converse with, how to reciprocate back in a given context, how to track the given sequence of events and over and above how to make the relevant observations. Systematic participation and precise observation is necessary because often researchers end up ‘hanging around’ in the field setting without any pre-planned thought or meaningful actions, this can however, be wastage of time and energy. We have to concentrate on the ways of generating relevant data and administer meaningful observations (*Mason, 2002:90*).

Observation will require development of certain skills, especially intellectual and social skills to make the right kinds of observation. This also involves the skill of turning these observations into data. The bulk of information, impressions and images that we generate must now be turned into data. This is a sticky issue for the proper selection of which coherent information will qualify as the relevant and meaningful set of data is both difficult and tedious. Turning varied, cognizable and sensuous bulk of observations into scientifically coherent data will require a large amount of rigor, skill and perseverance. Experiential and sensuous material can become social scientific data of a kind which you can use to construct a convincing or meaningful argument. After observing and collecting the data, we need to record what we have carefully observed. Possibly the best way to record our observation is through taking “field notes” though there are other ways of constructing data from observations such as audio or video-recordings, photographs, maps and diagrams. Writings produced in or in close proximity to ‘the field’. Field notes are usually produced in adherence with the contemporary events, conversations, experiences and encounters that are initiated between the researcher and the respondents. In this way observed and recorded observations are translated into recorded and embellished accounts. This way the field notes “(re)constitute that world in preserved forms that can be reviewed, studied and thought about time and time again. (*Emerson, 2001: 353*)

10.6.3 Using Visual Methods and Documents

The use of visual methods and documents can become a major method of social research, especially in the purview of the strategies adopted in the qualitative research. Likewise, the usefulness of documentary sources as constituting relevant data for qualitative research has already been recognized and appreciated. Not just visiting archives to browse through existing documents, but there are other sources of documents as well, including the internet and web pages, which can

act as pregnant sources of qualitative data. Some kinds of data are available through existing content and prior documents that enrich the prospects of future research and these are Acts of Parliament; Congressional papers; insurance policies; bank statements; accounts and balance sheets; company reports; wills; minutes of meetings; books, manuals and other publications; diaries; letters; shopping lists; computer files and documents; newspapers and magazines; rough notes and scribbles; menus; advertisements, websites and other materials available on the Internet and World Wide Web. This has become popular with the access to software technologies.

On the other hand, there are some forms of data that are not instantly found but have to be generated by individuals and bodies such as diaries; time diaries; written accounts and stories; biographies; pictures and drawings; charts; tables and lists. However, most of these documents are textual such as the graphics and layout of newspapers and magazines, while others are non-text based as well such as photographs, video recordings and visual images such as film, video and television, plays, graphic representations, sculpture, drawings and pictures, visual art and artefacts, objects, bodies, style, spatial organization, diagrams, 'cognitive maps'. (Mason, 2000: 104). However, these forms of visual sources generating wonderful qualitative data have often been ignored in the parlance of qualitative research (Emmison and Smith, 2000).

Check Your Progress

- 1) Answer in detail.
 - a) What is meant by Qualitative research? What are its characteristics?
 - b) Write a vivid note on the historical journey of the qualitative research?
 - c) What can you comment about the theoretical legacies of the qualitative research? Which legacy do you think best characterizes the scope of qualitative research?
- 2) Answer in moderation.
 - a) How do you think the traditional moments are marked differently from the post-modern moments of qualitative research?
 - b) Write a short note of ethnographic research?
 - c) Why do you think symbolic interaction is based on the methods of qualitative research?
- 3) Write in short.
 - a) Enlist some of the major sources of generating qualitative data.
 - b) What are field notes?
 - c) What is documentary analysis?

10.7 LET US SUM UP

Qualitative research is of course one of the most pertinent form of conducting research especially because it helps you to capture the live moments and slices of the experiences and moments which might not have been possible to trap otherwise. But probably one limitation with qualitative research is to develop

overtures with the research respondents with additional baggage of emotions and affinity which might make your research affectual and overwhelming. The precision and value neutrality may be maintained as far as possible so that we do not lose track of the necessary precision and procedural rigor. These are needed to ascertain the scopes and objectivity of the bigger frame-work of research based strictures demanded by the larger scientific community.

As far as the ethical question of the qualitative research goes, the stress is given on the feminist and communitarian ethics that support, collective, trustful and reciprocal but just and non-exploitative relationship between the researcher and the research subject. Investigators are not reckless but are careful enough to give due leverage to personal accountability, nurturing the values of individual freedom and expression and giving place to both empathy and sentiments (Newman, 2005:40).

Finally, coming to the review of the reasonable journey we have had in the qualitative research, this may be said without doubt that we have come to deploy more matured and sophisticated tools, theoretical paradigms and research methods for enquiring social issues in qualitative research. Time has come to do away with homogenous simplistic methods and try more efficient collaborative methods which are more versatile in probing social facts. Such qualitative measures include post structuralist feminist qualitative research collaborating with critical indigenous qualitative researchers or the critical post structuralists conjoining with post modern performance ethnographers. The idea is to show the rise of the multiple voices, one that were muted, disempowered or disenfranchised before. These are the voices of the native and post-colonial people who are politically charged to over-write their own life-worldstrying to say, “we are at the end of the history” (Fukuyama, 1989,1992) , such is the flavor and strength of the qualitative research today.

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GLOSSARY

Action research: This form of research counters the conventional social science paradigm by going against the reflective form of knowledge created by the external theoretical experts by observing respondents or decisions. It is in fact based on immediate observation of the social situations where the respondents are not mere observers but active participants of the research. They inform the research questions and help take major decisions.

Positivism: A philosophical theory that recognizes only those facts as scientifically valid, which are objective and can be perceived, and therefore discouraging all forms of metaphysics and theism.

Post-Foundationalism: The Post-Foundationalist model of rationality has come out of the ongoing conflict over the Foundationalist and the Non-Foundationalist models. Post-Foundationalism is the search for a middle way between the objectivism of Foundationalism and the relativism of many forms of Non-Foundationalism. (Denzin, 2010:29). Each of these moments not only have distinctive characteristics, what makes the qualitative research rich is its distinctive strategies of enquiry which are both diverse and unique. Let us now look into these strategies of enquiry.

Post-Positivism: It is a meta-theoretical stand that questions and corrects positivism. While positivists give concurrence to the isolation between the researcher and the researched person, post-positivists accept that various aspects of the researcher can influence what is being observed. While positivists give importance to the quantitative methods, post-positivists give emphasis to both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Post-Structuralism: Post-Structuralism presents critiques of Structuralism, where they mainly counter the autonomy of the Structures. Structuralism, on the other hand, questions the binary oppositions and the assumed knowledge about the purported hierarchy of such binary oppositions, that provides a basis to those structures. Post-Structuralism deconstructs such arranged knowledge to question the singular meaning in favour of multiplicities.

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UNIT 11 ICT IN SOCIAL RESEARCH*

Structure

11.0 Objectives

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11.2.2 Induction of ICT through Mass-Media

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11.10 Let Us Sum Up

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11.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through the Unit, you will be able to:

- What exactly is ICT and how is it related to social science research?
- Understand how ICT impacts social science research;
- Explain the changes that have emerged in social science research after adoption of the ICT; and
- To assess how academia has benefitted from this holy association.

Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri, (Deptt of Sociology), School of Social Sciences, Netaji Subhas Open University, West Bengal.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

ICT or Information and Communication Technologies or ICT refers to such technologies that provide us access to the vast body of knowledge through telecommunications. This may include a wide range of communication technologies like the internet, wireless networks, cellular phones, and of, course other modes of communications. Undoubtedly, information and communication technologies had gifted our society with an extensive range of dynamic communication modalities which enabled our people to communicate in real-time especially with others¹ inhabiting far-off countries through such technologies as instant messaging, voice over IP, Video Conferencing and teleconferences. Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram allow users across the globe to establish contacts with one another frequently and with considerable warmth and comfort. We can say that ICT serves as the base of modern computation which in turn had engineered the most modern form of virtual communication and dialogue. Though it is quite difficult to find one universal definition for ICT, we generally take the coinage to mean all those apparatus, devices, network-related configurations, applications and system rubrics that grossly account for individuals and government or corporate bodies, that work in unison as stakeholders to interact themselves or to enable interaction in a digitized world.



Picture 11.1. : Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Photo credit: <https://www.piqsels.com/en/search?q=Phone+in&page=196>

While talking of the nitty-gritty of an ICT system, it must be said that it consists of both the wired and the wireless networks. At the same time, it would also imply the existence of the near archived technologies like the land-line telephones, radio, and televisions. Though updated as they may have become, their use has not become redundant for we still use them in the automated world today, perhaps in an altered version alongside the contemporary artificial intelligence and robotic technology. The list of ICT constituents can be exhaustively long for it keeps adding to one after the other and just, for instance, our smartphones, digital devices, and robotic systems are just a few additions to the existing ones. ICT, in short, is the technological arrangement made to expedite the process of interaction or social communication among individuals, groups, or organizations in the digital age. In short, ICT, therefore, is an all-encompassing term that covers all and every device, system or application that ranges from radio, television, digital phones, computers, both hardware and software network, satellite coverage; and at the same time various applications, systems, and services related to them such as video-calling and distance education.

Along with ICT came the age of the ubiquitous 'digital divide' for it brought along with it a notorious gender gap in the society riding on the tide of socio-economic factors which tore the society apart. ICT has increasingly been used as an initiator for higher education since the 1990s. A decade ago we spoke of technical and vocational education as well as training the teachers. It was only in the late 1990s that we could see a change and this was reflected in the wider world.

11.2 EVOLUTION OF ICT IN ACADEMICS AND RESEARCH: A BRIEF HISTORY

The seeds of the evolution of ICT perhaps were sown with the development of speech in human beings. It was especially through speech that knowledge could be shared and transmitted to future generations. Other than speech, men also created symbols to communicate their feelings to each other. The invention of the first writing skill seemed to have been traced to the beginning of the Bronze age.

11.2.1 Invention of Writing



It was as early as the 3000 B.C when the earliest Papyrus rolls were said to have been invented by the Egyptians soon after which people began their writing spree. The Papyrus plant grew

Photo: Papyrus

Photo credit: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Papyrus1.JPG>

aplenty across the Nile delta and was used extensively for writing. It was also said to have been well used throughout the Mediterranean region as well in the kingdom of Kush. papyrus persisted till it was replaced by a parchment and paper came to be used in the Byzantine Empire, though papyrus did not completely disappear. The writing system that started in the early Bronze age should not be a sudden invention of writing rather it was preceded by a few earlier traditions of symbolic systems. Though such earlier forms could not be taken as the proper form of writing but they still could be taken as the precursors of the modern

forms of writing. They were often termed as "proto-typings" that drew upon ideographic or the early mnemonic symbols to express ideas, though it contained no natural language. These systems were presumed to have emerged in the early Neolithic period, as early as the very 7th millennium BC. Soon after the neolithic age when one speaks of the Bronze age in ancient history, the role of writing becomes quite prominent. The different cultures in the Bronze age saw the prolific growth of various scripts. Some notable amongst them were cuneiform writing of the Sumerians, Egyptian hieroglyphs, Chinese logographs, Indus script, and the Olmec script of Mesoamerica. Cuneiform was probably one of the earliest forms of writing invented by the Sumerians in ancient Mesopotamia. A hieroglyph⁶ was on the other hand, a character of the ancient Egyptian writing system. It was Egypt which invented the pictorial script that supposedly marked the initiation of the Egyptian civilization.

Chinese character or logograms, as they are popularly called, constitute the oldest system of writing in the world. They find a widespread use in eastern Asia though Chinese characters are numerous and number in tens of thousands. Unlike the Chinese logograms extensively used even today, the Indus script as produced by the Indus valley civilization, still remains difficult to decipher. Likewise the Olmec script flourished in the Gulf coast region of Mexico between 1250-400 BCE. In tandem with these are the Cascajal Block which are nothing but tablet sized writing slabs in Mexico that uses characters that might represent one of the earliest writing systems in the Americas.

Soon after the Bronze age, came the Iron age when the Phoenecian alphabet ruled. This alphabet, in particular, gave rise to the Aramaic and Greek alphabets. The Greek alphabet must be credited for producing the first-ever exclusive symbols for vowel sounds. The Greek and the Latin alphabets in the early centuries gave birth to many European scripts such as those of the Gothic and Cyrillic scripts used across Euro-Asia and in various Turkic, Mongolic, and Iranic speaking countries in Eastern Europe. Aramaic alphabets, on the other hand, evolved into the Hebrew and South Arabian alphabets. Greek, in short, might be taken as the spring bed for all the modern scripts of Europe. The most popular descendants of Greek is the Latin scripts, also at times known as the Roman script. However, with the suspension of the Roman authority in Western Europe, drives for literacy were confined only to the Eastern Roman Empire and the Persian empire. Incidentally, the rise of Islam in the 7th century led to the evolution of a major language like Arabic. However, the renaissance of the 14th century saw the return of Greek and Latin as popular literary languages. Ever since the nature of writing had been evolving especially after the development of the tools and allied its technologies. The discovery of the pen and the printing press had only facilitated this on-going process. Historically though, reed pens, quill pens, and dip pens were used, with their nibs dipped in the ink, their modern counterparts like a ballpoint, rollerballs, fountain, and felt pens had only further consolidated this writing tradition. Especially, after the printing press was discovered in Germany in around 1440 by Johannes Gutenberg, a man who introduced printing to Europe and sparked off the printing press revolution. Perhaps, this could be taken as the stepping stone to the evolution of ICT across the world. Following these phenomenal spurts, we sensed jaw dropping developments in the 20th and 21st centuries which probably ushered the growth of ICT almost everywhere, notwithstanding education, research and practise. Let us now briefly see how ICT made its inroad into education before we concentrate on social research in particular.



Photo: Hebrew Scripture found embedded in Kochangadi Synagogue in Cochin, India dated to 1344.

Photo credit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_Hebrew

Do You Know?



Picture: Johannes Gutenberg

Picture Credit: <https://freesvg.org/johannes-gutenberg-vector-image>

Johannes Gutenberg was a German goldsmith, inventor, printer and a publisher. His introduction of the mechanical movable typing machine to printing was considered a milestone of the second millennium. The invention was considered a broad factor in hailing the modern period of human history.

11.2.2 Induction of ICT through Mass-Media

Probably, the first known exploration or negotiation of ICT with education may date back to the colonial era when India aired its first radio broadcasting session

in June 1923 by Radio Club of Mumbai. Way back in the 1930s, the British Broadcasting Corporation, better known as BBC used to broadcast educational and culturally flavored programmes through Broadcast Radio. In 1937, All India Radio started broadcasting its educational programmes for school going children (Agarwal, 2005). It had been a long time, way back in 2002 that India's first educational radio station called Gyan Vani was launched. Gyan Vani was an educational FM radio station serving several cities of the country. Its programmes are sketched out by various bodies like educational organizations, Non-Government Organizations, United Nations agencies, ministries of the government, central and particularly state open universities. Coming to television, we find that it definitely was more effective than its radio given its unique feature of combining both the audio and visual technology. Role of television as an instructional medium found its first appearance in 1932 by the State University of Iowa in USA on an experimental mode. Later on owing to World War II, the use of television had to be minimized. However, the USA by now had very well understood the importance of television in imparting education and had therefore, reserved 242 frequencies for educational broadcast on the basis of neither profit nor commercialization in 1952 (Magnuson: 1965). However, by 1961, educational television began to grow by leaps and bounds and there was no turning its back. Some of the universities who took the pioneering role in creating networks for reaching both on-campus and off-campus student populace were Ohio University, University of Texas and the University of Maryland.

Do You Know?

The University of Maryland, one of the harbingers of televised educational programmes, merging ICT with research, are still working on the outcomes of educational television, especially on young minds. A newly published

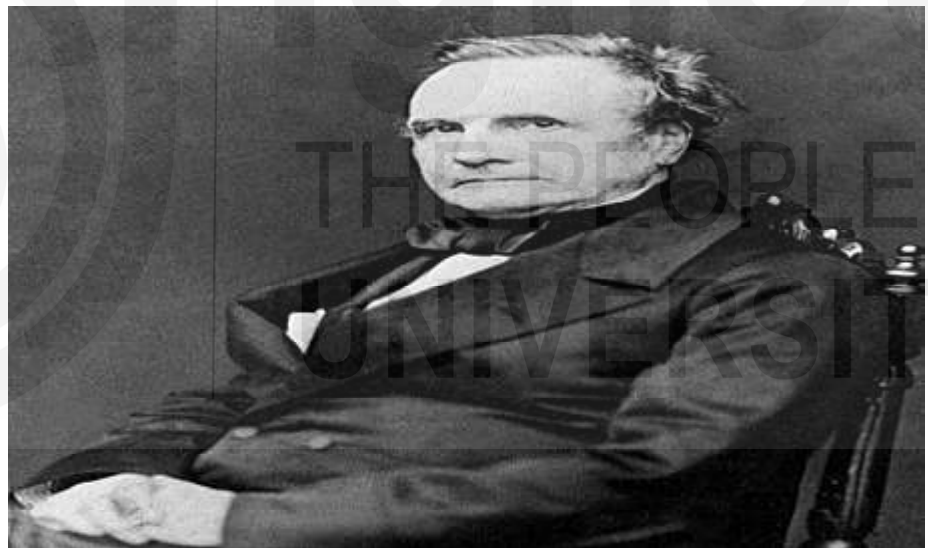


research driven by the University of Maryland School of Public Health Research Professor Dina Borzekowski (Department of Behavioral and Community Health) in the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, helps us address this issue with a study involving a locally-produced Tanzanian children's show called Akili and Me. Research findings pointed out that children who watched Akili and Me gained valuable and foundational educational substance above and beyond other factors grossly associated with achievement like existing knowledge and greater sense of maturity. The greatest effects of exposure were observed in the child's ability of counting, a measure that was featured and repeated often in the Akili and Me videos. The next greatest effect was seen with English skills in the Tanzanian children. Professor Borzekowski concluded that with lack of schools and infrastructure for toddlers, televised mediations often act as an agent of stimulation and supplementation. You can follow the below mentioned You tube link to watch the show:

https://youtu.be/o_gxC_4zI8M

11.2.3 Evolution of ICT through Computer and Multimedia

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) probably reached its peak with the coming of computers and multimedia. Computers date back to the early 19th century when Charles Babbage, an English mechanical engineer conceived the idea of a programmable computer. In 1980, Microsoft Disc Operating System (Ms-Dos) originated. Subsequently in 1982, International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), an American multinational technology company headquartered in New York introduced personal computers for both domestic and industrial purposes. Soon later, efforts were made to build the interconnected computer networks that originated in the United States through on-going collaborations with the researchers in the United Kingdom and France. Early packet switching networks like the NPL network, ARPANET, Merit Network and CYCLADES in the early 1970s made intensive research to provide data networking. Much later, Local Area Networks (LANS) were developed and started functioning through Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) and Internet Protocol (IP). It was soon followed by the birth of the World Wide Web (WWW) that the Internet gradually assumed the form it took today. The first popular search engine on the web was Yahoo search. Soon thereafter, several other search engines made their appearances such as Megallen, Excite, Infoseek, Inktomi etc. it was only around 2000 that Google's search engine rose into limelight. Other prominent ones soon followed such as Microsoft's MSN, Bing and plenty others like Baidu, Gigablast and Mojeek.



Picture: Charles Babbage

Photo credit: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charles_Babbage_-_1860.jpg

Do You Know?

Charles Babbage (26 December 1791 - 18 October 1871) was an English mathematician, philosopher, inventor and mechanical engineer, Babbage originated the concept of a digital programmable computer. Considered by some to be "father of the computer", Babbage is credited with inventing the first mechanical computer that eventually led to more complex electronic designs.

11.3 E-LEARNING AND ICT

E-learning however did not have a very chequered history. It only started back in the early 1970s which however expanded rapidly from the mid-nineties in the developed nations. Online learning appeared in 1982 when the renowned Western Behavioral Sciences Institute in La Jolla, California opened its School of Management and Strategic Studies. A little later, in 1989, the University of Phoenix started offering education programmes through internet networks. The school supposedly deployed the mode of computer conferencing to deliver a distance educate based course to the business executives. In 1989, the University of Phoenix started offering its educational programmes through e-learning tactics. In 1993 again, the University of Illinois, created its own web browser which helped it prosper. It was much later in 1998 that the first ever full-fledged online programmes made their debut. Some of such programmes were offered by New York University, Western Governor's University, the California Virtual University²⁷ and Trident University International.

Likewise in India, we find that the computer industry originated in India with the establishment of Tata Group in collaboration with Burroughs in Mumbai in 1967. The Santacruz Electronics Export Processing Zone (SEEPZ) was the first ever software export zone that was set up in the Andheri East area of Mumbai. It was a Special Economic Zone in Mumbai that housed electronic hardware manufacturing companies and software companies of India. Soon after in 1976 National Informatics Centre (NIC) was established under the wings of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. It helped the Indian Government to gear up for large-scale semblance with IT in the 1990s³⁰. It played a big role in setting up the building blocks of e-governance across the nooks and gullies of the Indian society.

In India since 1990, with the incidence of economic reforms, the human resource development sector had seen a revolutionary change. Direct deployment of computer and internet services had been vital in bringing such revolutionary changes in various sectors, especially education. Internet services have been enjoyed by the people in India by Videsh Sanchar Nigam (VSNL) since 1995. Though the service was primarily enjoyed from our four prime metros, Calcutta, Mumbai, Delhi and Madras only, it was later extended to other areas in 1998. Slowly and steadily, IT services tip-toed in homesteads and schools. India understood that it was high time that it should appreciate the prominence and significance of information technology in education, higher education and research. The nation therefore started the computer literacy studies in schools (CLASS) project to introduce computer literacy in schools. It later on graduated to higher education and institutions delivering such education. In 1964, Smt Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister proclaimed that education must be brought to all the parts of our country, especially the weaker sections of our populace. The establishment of the first open university was initiated on August 26, 1982 in Andhra Pradesh. The Andhra Pradesh Open University, now known as B.R Ambedkar Open University radicalized the sphere of education and research in the country. Far away from the sedentary classroom anatomy, this open system challenged the conventional system and resolved to democratize education through rampant use of technology and popular mass media. Indira Gandhi on September 20, 1985 inaugurated an open university that was eventually named after her, viz. Indira Gandhi Open University³¹. She believed that the Open

University would extend educational exposure and opportunities to all the nooks and corners of the country. The National Policy on Education (1986) proclaimed that the university had been set up to offer programmes through distance learning, redolent with the massive use of mass media and technology. Thus it was quite clear that ICT was tip-toeing into our educational threshold, right from schools to higher education and research, all over the country.

11.4 APPLICATIONS OF ICT IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

Thus we saw how a holy association between ICT and social research was formed for the former seems to have a large number of its applications in social research. ICT seems to have its application in the social research domain largely owing to its ability to facilitate the knowledge accumulation process which is a prerequisite for building a robust system of inquiry. Let us have a look at the areas where ICT can be of immense help to social research. The relevant areas of application for ICT in social research can be broadly classified into three major areas. These three categories are given below:

- 1) Application of ICT in pre-data collection and analysis.
- 2) Application of ICT in data collection and analysis.
- 3) Application of ICT in post-data collection and analysis.

Let us come to each of these stages as we examine the use of ICT in research.

11.5 APPLICATIONS OF ICT IN PRE-DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Application of ICT in social research can be traced to each of its stages of research design. As we shall explore each of these stages of research design, we shall be able to understand how ICT pitches in. Let us first begin with the pre-data analysis stage to understand the use of ICT at this level.

11.5.1 Literature Review

Soon as we choose the research problem, we move into literature-review for we want to introduce the reader to the topic we wish to address. We actually want to make it clear to the readers what we have already learnt about the problem in question. For instance, if you are working on drug addiction, it must be made clear that we have learnt enough about the topic from all the past researches done on the subject. The important works must be read and thoroughly delved into before we choose to start our project on this topic. Your review of the literature must point to the inconsistencies and disagreements to be found among the present research findings. Therefore, your task will be to find out the research gap and then to look for the ways to address the gap or resolve such incongruities. Performing this arduous task of literature review can be extremely painstaking and rigorous. To help this out, a lot of research materials, literature and artefacts today can be accessed through internet search engines and databases. These are useful in academic settings for finding and accessing articles in books, academic journals, institutional repositories, archives, or other collections of scientific and other articles. We can have a general list of search engines that help us for academic

purposes. On the other hand, bibliographic databases can give us information finding books and journal articles. Some providers that supplement us with such databases are EBSCO Publishing, African Journals Online, Airiti INC, DeepDyve, Google Scholar, Indian Citation Index, J-Gate, JSTOR, Mendeley, Microsoft Academic, OpenEdition.org, Project Muse, Social Science Citation Index, Social Science Research Network, Springer Link, Shodhganga, Swayam Prabha. Cambridge Core, Taylor and Francis, Wiley Online Library, World Cat etc. let us have a look at a few of the databases to have an idea of the intervention of technology within the confines of basic and applied research. It is not possible for us to study each of these frequently. Therefore, we shall look at a few of the Database and their functions.

11.5.2 Shodhganga

It is the name termed to denote digital repository of Indian Electronic Theses and Dissertations set-up by the INFLIBNET Centre. The word "Shodhganga" had been coined in order to identify the digital repository of Indian electronic theses and dissertations set up by the INFLIBNET Centre. It is a classic instance of how we can use technology to set up a database and use it extensively for literature review while researching our specialized field. It had been set up using an open source digital repository software called DSpace developed by MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in collaboration with Hewlett-Packard (HP). The Shodhganga provides us with a platform for the research scholars to deposit their doctoral theses so that it could be made available to the entire scholarly community in open access mode. The repository has the versatile capacity to capture, index, store, disseminate and preserve the electronic research works submitted by the researchers.

11.5.3 Mendeley

Mendeley is a company based in London which is a provider of products and services required for academic research. It is best known for its service for reference management, which is extensively used for managing and sharing research papers. It alongside generates bibliographies for scholarly articles. These functions greatly help our literature review for Mendeley has a very strong data set. Alongside it takes care to cite the articles we use in our literature review. Mendeley was purchased by the academic publisher Elsevier in early 2013.

11.5.4 Google Scholar

Google Scholar is a freely accessible web search engine that indexes the full text or metadata of scholarly literature across a collection of publishing formats and disciplines. It came into inception from November, 2004, and since then it included most peer-reviewed online academic journals and books, conference papers, theses and dissertations, pre-prints, abstracts, technical reports and other scholarly literature. It allows users to search for digital or physical copies of articles, whether online or in libraries. It is engaged in indexing "full-text journal articles, technical reports, pre-prints, theses, books, and other documents which also include web pages that are taken as 'scholarly'. Since Google Scholar's search results feed on commercial journal articles, often we can access only an abstract and citation outline of an article. Only after we pay a fee, we may be allowed access to the content we are looking for. Nevertheless, since 2006, it has provided us with

links to both published versions and major open access repositories. This includes those materials posted on individual faculty web pages and other unstructured sources identified by similarity. This added feature of the Google Scholar has greatly aided the literature review work by the researchers.

11.5.5 Microsoft Academic

Microsoft Academic is a free public web search engine for academic publications and literature. It had been developed by Microsoft Research. It had been launched in 2016 to emerge with a totally new data structure and search engine. It presently harbours over 220 million publications, 88 million of which are journal articles. Compared with Google Scholar, the latter can find about 99.33 million, or around 87% of an estimated 114 million English language scholarly documents on the web. As a technological tool Google scholar not only bypasses Microsoft Academic, it also outwits subscription products like Thomson Reuter's Web of Science or Elsevier's Scopus databases. It is assumed that Google Scholar indexes more documents than many of its counterparts. After the literature review, time comes for conceptualization, operationalization and selection of research methods. Having explored the structuring of inquiry in detail, the researcher gradually moves into the various data collection techniques and their subsequent analysis. Data collection largely depends on the observational techniques available to the researcher.

11.6 APPLICATION OF ICT IN DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data collection remains an optimal stage of social research through which the researcher collects the data that he wants to study. It is the process of gathering and measuring information about the variables we want to study in a given set-up. This enables the researcher to answer the relevant questions about the variables he wants to study and to eventually present his findings. Data collection is essential in almost any discipline we wish to name. Though methods vary in sync with the priorities of each discipline, data collection along with its allied tool remains an inevitably essential component of all research projects. Whatever may be the discipline, the objective of all data collection is to fish out the most appropriate data and quality evidence. Such authentic data will help the researcher to get reliable data from the respondents which will eventually lead to proper data analysis. Let us first study data collection after which we shall go to data analysis.

11.7 OBSERVATION

There are different methods of observation such as experiments, survey research, qualitative field research, unobtrusive and the evaluation techniques. Experiments are possibly the most rigorously controllable of the methods that social scientists use. Survey research, on the other hand, is one of the most popular methods in social science. This type of research engages itself with collecting data by asking people questions. These can be done, as you know, through self-administered questionnaires or through interviews. Interviews can be both telephonic or face-to-face. The qualitative field research, on the other hand, examines the natural form of data collection by the researchers. The direct observations of social phenomena in natural settings, as you must have read, is

the most spontaneous form of data collection. For participant observers, observation may be a more intimate and embedded part of their everyday living with which they juxtapose their research motives. Again on another note, we can talk of three still other forms of unobtrusive data collection such as content analysis, analysis of existing statistics and of course, historical documents remain the most valuable asset for social science research. Evaluation research involves the application of experimental and quasi-experimental models for testing social interventions in real life situations. After having discussed the methods of data collection, let us explore the ways in which ICT have come forward to ease the different ways of data collection, already stated.

11.7.1 Technology Assisted Experiments

We find that with greater enthusiasm, researchers are using the World Wide Web as a tool for conducting experiments. Since representative samples are not essential in most experiments, social researchers often use volunteers who respond to invitations online. We find experiments set up in conditions far away from natural set-ups through the help of ICTs. A Microcomputer-Based Laboratory (MBL) (in UK data-logging) tool is all but a combination of the hardware and software that are generally used for collecting data. Data is collected using sensors connected to a micro-computer through an interface. These collected data can be analysed and displayed in graphic forms, in real or delayed time. The MBL package for instance, can be taken as a large podium with different tools and environments for the user. Even when working and experimenting in a computer assisted environment, they still get a flavor of the real environment. It is as if they are studying the natural setting and conducting their experiments out there. This method is highly recommended compared to the hard copy method in which the researcher has to manually convert the scores from the hardcopy into softcopy before the statistical processing can be initiated.

11.7.2 Computer Assisted Survey

Data can now be collected via online, web based or internet survey by using for instance Google Documents and survey monkey. If we use these methods to collect quantitative data, it can be both time saving and cost-cutting. Besides, we can reach a lot more individuals and groups, who otherwise might not be available online easily. For instance people with disability, HIV or other forms of stigma may hesitate to go for face to face surveys. These are purpose-built software and Internet Technology which are undoubtedly more effective forms of collecting data from the respondents. Another advantage of this computer assisted survey is that data collection conducted in its original format can be fed directly into the statistical software package. Therefore, this kind of direct input is undoubtedly faster and more appropriate in comparison to hardcopy method. In the hard copy method the researcher has to manually convert the scores from hard to soft copy before statistically processing the data. In this direct method, data is entered directly into the computer conducive mode. The data which is entered is verified and validated by computer and then it is eventually transferred to tape or disk for further processing. Data is captured directly without there being any conversion stage. Specially marked or printed documents, for e.g questionnaires can be read by a special input device. The technology for online survey research is evolving every day. Today social researchers find themselves at ease with online survey work. There are presently around dozens of online survey software packages

and web survey services accessible to researchers, most of which ought to be subscribed. Some of these packages had been enlisted below:

CreateSurvey	http://www.createsurvey.com
EZSurvey	http://www.raosoft.com
FormSite	http://www.formsite.com
HostedSurvey	http://www.hostedsurvey.com
InfoPoll	http://www.infopoll.net/
InstantSurvey	http://www.netreflector.com
SurveyMonkey	http://www.surveymonkey.com
SurveySite	http://www.surveysite.com
WebSurveyor	http://www.websurveyor.com

These packages definitely help us navigate our survey research processes. Let us look at yet another form of observation that extensively uses ICT.

11.7.3 Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI)

It is a technique used frequently for data collection on a handy device. For the last decade the apt use of this technology can be noticed especially owing to its cost-effectiveness, usability, and prompt availability of data. Researchers use CAPI in large scale surveys because it restrains them from missing out on data, self-reliance on mathematical calculations and persistently tracks the unavailable responses. CAPI though is a face-to-face data collection method in which the researcher uses a tablet, a mobile phone, a computer or a laptop to record answers rendered during an interview. There is a wide range of CAPI softwares and therefore it can be used even for somebody with absolutely zero programming experience to properly program a CAPI questionnaire. CAPI software commonly used in data collection are given below:

Name	Developer
Blaise	Statistics Netherlands
CSPro	United States Census Bureau
Dooblo	Dooblo Ltd., Israel
Open Data Kit(ODK)	University of Washington's Department of Computer Science and Engineering
SurveyBe	Economic Development Initiatives Limited, UK
SurveySolutions	The World Bank

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Data_collection

11.8 APPLICATION OF ICT IN DATA ANALYSIS

Now we shall move to the data analysis part which is yet another important stage of research design. It is a process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming and modelling data with the objective of discovering crucial facts that influence decision making in research policies. Data analysis has several facets and

perspectives pertaining to the disciplines in which it is used. In statistical applications, which you will learn in the methodology course itself, data analysis has been dealt with in a rigorous manner. Data analysis can be divided into quantitative and qualitative types. Let us dive deeper into these brackets to enable a thorough understanding of how data analysis works in social sciences:

11.8.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Variable

One of the core objectives of the social and behavioral sciences is to help explain the human attributes or characteristics. For instance, we may want to find out why students are happy with female teachers or vice-versa? One way to understand this is to collect data relevant for the sample we are studying. As you already must have known, a variable is a quality or a certain characteristic that varies. If its quantity remains unchanged, then it is better to call it a constant. The socio-behavioral sciences are interested in expatiating why certain attributes vary while others remain constant.

The primary type of variable is a dichotomous one, that which has that is either existent or not. For eg, belonging to the Hindu religious community is dichotomous because you either belong to one or not. There can be absolutely nothing in between. Students, you see the dual categories or variables, as you say may be represented or coded, as we term it in statistics, by two distinct numbers, say 1 and 2 or say, 11 and 15. For instance, if you are a Hindu by religious affiliation, you are coded as 1 and the other belonging to say, Islam religious affiliation may be coded as 2. There are two main kinds of variables, such as qualitative, categorical, nominal, or frequency variables. For instance, we can say that religions are qualitative such as Hindu, Islam, Christian and Sikh are variables. They can stand coded with any range of random numbering such as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 or say, 23, 24, 28, 45 and 56. The numbers do not have any other implication excepting that they refer to each different category. The frequency of cases subsumed under each of the categories can be separately counted. Therefore this variable can be labelled as the frequency variable. The frequency, proportion and percentage of such cases can be ascertained. Therefore, we can say that data containing qualitative variables is at the same time quantitative in character since the frequency counts, proportion or percentage of cases can be quantified. (*Duncan, 2003*).

The other kind of a variable is called qualitative. Qualitative variables cannot be ordered on a numerical scale in statistics so they are termed as nominal scales. The word "nominal" means "name", which is exactly what qualitative variables are all about. A nominal scale is a scale where no underlying ordering is ever possible or implied. In other words, the nominal scale is where data is assigned to a category. For example, we can take eye colors, states, dog breeds, marital status etc. In social sciences, we get interested to find out whether one variable is related to one or more variables. It is evident that if the relationship between variables is robust, more common features are found among the variables. Bivariate data analysis explains the relationships between three or more variables simultaneously. A statistical tool that examines two variables at a time is the one way analysis of variance. All other statistical techniques three or more variables at a time.

Look students, a one-way analysis of variance looks at the relationship between a qualitative variable such as marital status and a quantitative one. Likewise

there can be a multivariate analysis that involves three or more variables, such that one is quantitative and the other two qualitative. It is undoubtedly clear that any aspect of human behaviour is impacted by two or more variables. Therefore, any day, a multivariate analysis is far far more sturdy than a one-way analysis. We can say that several analyses can be used during the initial data analysis phase, such as univariate statistics is used for single variable and bivariate associations for determining correlations between variables.

11.8.2 Software for Data Analysis

Now let us look at the ways ICT s help us in making such analysis. Some of these free software come handy for data analysis. Notable amongst them are DevInfo, ELKI, KNIME, Orange, Pandas, PAW, R, ROOT, SciPy and Dta.Analysis. Let us discuss a few of these packages in detail:

1) **Devinfo**

It was a database system created under the patronage of the United Nations and endorsed eventually by the United Nations Development Group for monitoring human development. Devinfo was an essential tool for organizing, storing and presenting data in a systematic and uniform way such that data sharing can be facilitated across government departments, UN agencies and development partners.

2) **ELKI**

ELKI or Environment for Developing KDD-Applications Supported by Index-Structures is a data mining software framework used extensively for teaching and research. It is originally associated with the database systems research unit of the university of Munich, Germany.

3) **Pandas**

It is a computer programming software library written for data manipulation and analysis. It specializes in offering data structures and time-series. Pandas is quite popular for importing data from a plethora of file formats such as JSON, SQL and microsoft Excel. Pandas , it is seen, allows various data manipulation operations such as merging,re-shaping and selecting.

Thus we see that there are innumerable organizations that provide software packages for data analysis to researchers and research organizations. Different companies or organizations vye among themselves in data analysis contests to encourage the researchers to use their data or to solve a particular question using data analysis. A good example may be the international data analysis contest of Kaggle. Do you know what Kaagle is? Kaggle is a subsidiary of Google LLC. Google LLC is an United States based multinational technology company that specializes in Internet-related services and products. It is considered one of the Big Four technology companies alongside Amazon, Apple, and Microsoft464748. Kaggle has an online community of data scientists and machine learning practitioners which allows users to find and publish data sets. They also encourage researchers to explore and set-up models in a web-based data-science environment and work along with other data scientists and machine learning engineers.

11.9 APPLICATION OF ICT IN POST DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

After data collection and analysis had been done, it's time to move into the last leg of the research, which we term as the post-analysis phase. It is here that we try to chalk out the various strategies for wrapping up our research findings and presenting them on the public domain. Speaking broadly the pockets of the post data interpretation phase can be generating citations for our research, sharing our paper on the academic forefront and of course plagiarism check, without which our research remains incomplete. Let us discuss each of these briefly to understand the essence of this phase especially to bring out the relevance of ICT at this particular stage.

11.9.1 Citations in Research and the ICT

We use various tools with support from ICT to assemble citations with limited efforts. These are the mechanisms we can use with a variety of systems that help us format the complete references for our paper with the minimized effort. As you know, while we write a paper we have to identify the sources of books, journal or any other scholastic content that we have used in our article to give due credit to the source author. This not only retains the academic integrity of the research community, but also at the same time maintains the transparency of our research article. Some of the tools that we use for this purpose are Citation Hunt, Citer, Citoid, MakeRef, RefScripr, WebRef etc. these tools usually generate citations on the basis of the information that we provide them. ICT at the same time uses templates for the researchers with similar purpose in mind. Some of the well-known templates are WebCite, Zotero, refToolbar etc. Many of these templates may even generate an alphabetical bibliography of all the works cited in the scholarly paper from a list of books and journals available with them.

Do You Know?

Zotero is a free and open-sourcereference management software that can manage bibliographic data and related research matters (such as PDF files). It was produced by the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University. The name "Zotero" is loosely derived from the Albanian verb *zotëroj*, meaning "to master".

11.9.2 Plagiarism Check

Plagiarism is the un-authoritarian use of another author's language, thoughts, ideas, or expressions as one's own original work. Plagiarism is considered an academicbreach of trust and a violation of journalistic ethics. It is subject to sanctions such as penalties, suspension, expulsion,substantial fines and even incarceration.Recently, cases of "extreme plagiarism" have been identified in academia.The modern concept of plagiarism as immoral and originality as an ideal emerged in Europe in the 18th century, particularly with the inception of the Romantic movement. Free online mechanisms have become handy in detecting plagiarism. There are a range of approaches that make serious endeavours to delimit copying. The ICT helps protect the originality of such research articles by disabling the right clicking option and putting warning banners related to copyrights on web pages. Besides, after a research material has been prepared,

attempts are taken to test its authenticity to check for plagiarism through the copious use of ICT. We shall look for some of such softwares and tools that help detect plagiarism. Such softwares are for instance, Quetext, Turnitin, iThenticate, Viper, checktext.org, plagscan.com, Grammarly, Crossref, Plagiarism Software, DupliChecker, Copyleaks, PaperRater, Plagiarisma, Plagiarism Checker, Plagium, PlagScan, PlagTracker, Plagiarism Hunt, etc. Besides, some other engines are VeriCite, Unicheck, Crot Plagiarism Checker, UNPLAG, URKUND, SafeAssign, CopyCheck, StrikePlagiarism.com, Crot Pro, Moss, Compilatio, Ephorus, PlagiarismSearch.

At the national level, on the basis of the recommendations of Sub-Committee, National Steering Committee (NSC) of eShodh Sindhu., The MHRD, Govt of India has initiated a programme "Shodh Suddhi" which shall provide access to Plagiarism Detection Software (PDS) to all our universities and Institutions in India since Sept 1, 2019. The programme shall cover all the Central Universities, State Universities, Deemed to be University, Private Universities, Centrally funded Technical Institutions(CFTIs) and Inter University Centre (IUCs) of UGC. We find that Under this initiative, URKUND a Web Based Plagiarism Detection Software system has provided to all the universities and Institutions in the country. This programme was formally launched by the Honorable Minister of Human Resource Development (HRD) on 21st September, 2019.

11.9.3 Publishing the Research Findings

We have come to the last stage of our research process that is publishing our research findings. Here again we can take the help of ICT for choosing the right place for publishing our scholarly work and following the allied processes. Instead of manually submitting our manuscripts we generally go for online submissions, for such digital platforms are both convenient and time-saving. We choose journals according to our interest areas and usually visit their website. We have to follow their instructions strictly for submitting our manuscripts online. Besides a variety of journals available at our disposal, we now have the strict instructions of UGC to publish journals as prescribed in their CARE List. The University Grants Commission has established the Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (CARE) for creation and maintenance of a reference list of quality journals. The UGC has also constituted an Information and Communication Cell for its journal analysis. The Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU) had been entrusted with this responsibility of journal analysis. The UGC has established its ICT cell for journal analysis and verification at SPPU. INFLIBNET Centre, Ahmedabad serves as the supporting agency for this ICT approach of the government of India. Besides, four regional universities have been identified as the CARE Universities which functions under the supervision of the CARE empowered committee. ICT had set up the journal analysis protocol for the CARE system which gives the detailed information about these journals on the UGC website. Proposals of manuscripts to be submitted by the researchers can only be done through the CARE Portal established by the ICT Cell of the UGC at Pune. The same process is also adopted while including a new journal by the publisher of a journal in the CARE list.

11.10 LET US SUM UP

We thus have seen how ICT has helped us in each of the stages of our research. Right from selecting a topic for our research to publishing our works in distinguished journals and other platforms, digitization had immense support. Even people can enroll themselves for a course or a MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) to equip themselves with the fundamentals of research before undertaking their own research project.

We have started with our objectives of the chapter. Then we have introduced the theme to our learners. After this, spoke about the evolution of ICT in academia and deliberated briefly on the history of ICT both across the national and the international panorama. Then we moved in the core of research and discussed the steps one by one. Then we made three broad phases such as pre data collection and analysis, data collection and analysis and post data collection and analysis. Then we saw the detailed application of ICT in each of these phases and examined their vitality in carrying out the research.

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GLOSSARY

Action Research : This form of research counters the conventional social science paradigm by going against the reflective form of knowledge created by the external theoretical experts by observing respondents or decisions. It is in fact based on immediate observation of the social situations where the respondents are not mere observers but active participants of the research. They inform the research questions and help take major decisions.

Positivism : A philosophical theory that recognizes only those facts as scientifically valid, which are objective and can be perceived, and therefore discouraging all forms of metaphysics and theism.

Post-Foundationalism : The Post-Foundationalist model of rationality has come

out of the ongoing conflict over the Foundationalist and the Non-Foundationalist models. Post-Foundationalism is the search for a middle way between the objectivism of Foundational-ism and the relativism of many forms of Non-Foundationalism. (Denzin,2010:29). Each of these moments not only have distinctive characteristics, what make the qualitative research rich is its distinctive strategies of enquiry which are both diverse and unique. Let us now look into these strategies of enquiry.

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