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Sociology for Nursing & Health Sciences



GS Purushothama

2nd Edition

Foreword
S Harish

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CHAPTER

3 Social Processes

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INTRODUCTION

Social process is a group related activity involved in the transition from our social condition to another, sociologists viewed society as an ongoing process as a series of interactions between human beings, each person stimulating another person and responding to the stimuli.

Interaction refers to an action done in response to another persons action. Social interaction is the essence of social life. Without interaction there would be no social or group life. It is the basic ingredient of social relationships, which are the basis of the formation of society.

DEFINITIONS

A social process is a group of related activities involved in the transition from one social condition to another.

Hurton and Hunt,"The term 'social process' refers to repetitive forms of behavior which are commonly found in social life."

MacIver and Page, "Social process is the manner in which the relations of the members of a group, once brought together acquire a certain distinctive character".

Gillin and Gillin (1948) wrote, "By social interaction we mean the mutual or reciprocal influence resulting in the modernization of behavior, exerted through social contact and communication which, in turn, are established by interstimulation and response". This definition emphasized on two main conditions of social interaction:

a. Social contact
b. Communication

Social contact refers to the connection between persons and groups may be direct or indirect and positive or negative. Direct contacts involve immediate presence of persons (face-to-face). In the exchange of ideas or things, indirect contacts may be established through any means of communications (telephone, TV, internet, newspapers, etc.). Positive contact means associative interaction, which gives rise to the feeling of hatred, rivalry, jealousy, indifference or lack of response.

Communication may be language, script, gestures, words or symbols, etc. language is a symbolic communication it consists of conventional cues or signs. Gestures and facial expressions and speech play a significant part in communication at human level. Handshake, head-nodding, waving the hand are good examples of gestures. Communication in either form of material or sensory medium is a necessity for social contacts. Communication plays an important role in personality formation, transfer of social heritage and social experience from generation-to-generation.

CLASSIFICATION OF SOCIAL PROCESS

We shall here discuss only five fundamental types of interactions (social processes), viz. cooperation, competition, accommodation, assimilation and conflict.

COOPERATION

It is a basic process of social life. Its nature is associative. Cooperation generally means working together in the pursuit of common goals or common interests. It is a joint activity carried out for shared reward. Cooperation is a coordinated effort to reach mutual goals.

Cooperation involves sacrifices, effort, subordination of private interests and inclination to the joint ends of the community, the existence of social constraint. The tendency to cooperate seems to be fundamental. The word cooperation

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derived from Latin words 'CO' meaning together and opera meaning to work, literally cooperation mean joint work or working together for common rewards.

Definitions of Cooperation

1. Merrill and Eldrige, "Cooperation is a form of social interaction wherein two or more persons work together to gain a common end".
2. Fairchild, 'Cooperation is the process by which individuals or groups combine their effort, in more or less organized way for the attainment of common objective.
3. Robert A Nisbet, "It is joint or collaborative behavior toward some goal in which there is common interest".

Types of Cooperation

1. **Primary Cooperation**
   Cooperation by members of small groups (family, recreation groups, work associates) is very common in society. The nature of this type of cooperation is personal and direct. Playing together, worshipping together, tilling the fields together are the instances of direct or personal cooperation. In the direct cooperation individuals do like things together.
2. **Secondary Cooperation**
   Secondary cooperation is found in the secondary groups such as large organizations, industry, government, trade unions, etc. consumer and producer cooperation are its good example. The nature of such cooperation is generally indirect and impersonal. This type of cooperation is based on the renowned principle of division of labor and specialization.

   Indirect cooperation is the main characteristic of modern society. The individual of modern industrialized society increasingly separated from face-to-face direct cooperation.

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Importance

1. *Cooperation—A social necessity*: Cooperation is so essential that it has made our life livable. It surrounds us on all sides. It is a basic condition of our continued social existence.
2. *Cooperation is essential for biological survival also*: Cooperation is so important for man to survive. It is considered as "mutual aid". The continuation of the human race requires the cooperation of male and female for reproduction and upbringings of children.
3. *Cooperation helps society to achieve progress*: Progress can better be achieved through united action. Progress in science and technology, education and research, agriculture and industry, transport and communication, etc. would not have been possible without cooperation. It gives strength in union. It builds, conserves.
4. *Cooperation provides solutions for many international problems and disputes*: Cooperation is capable of helping parties to develop harmony and understanding. In democratic countries, co-operation has become a necessary condition of people's collective life and activities. In fact, one of the main pruposes of the UNO is to promote cooperation among its member nations.
5. *Cooperation and interdependence go hand-in-hand*: Since interdependence is widespread in all walks of life cooperation is all the more needed. Society advances through cooperation and declines in its absence.

All social groups from the smaller family to the large international organizations also based on the cooperation of their members.

COMPETITION

Competition is an elementary, universal and impersonal form of social interaction. Each individual is involved in countless ways of which he is generally unaware in the vast web of competition. It is the constant struggle for life that exists everywhere in the world.

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Definitions of Competition

1. Horton and Hunt, competition is the struggle for possession of rewards which are in limited supply—money, goods, status, power, love-anything. It is a process of seeking to obtain a reward by surpassing all rivals.
2. Sutherland, Woodward and Maxwell, "Competition is an impersonal, unconscious, continuous struggle between individuals or groups for satisfaction which because of their limited supply all may not have".

Characteristics of Competition

1. ***Competition is culturally patterened process***: It is present to some degree in all societies but it differs greatly from society-to-society.
2. ***Competition is impersonal***: The competition is usually not directed against any individual or group in particular. Competition may be personal when the competitors know one another but generally its nature is impersonal.
3. ***Competition is unconscious***: Competition takes place on the unconscious level. Competitors at many times are not aware about and even if they are aware, they do not pay any heeds to the activities of their competitors. Candidates appearing for IAS or any other competitive examination, do not know one another and their whole attention is focused on their studies (reward or goal) rather than on competitors.
4. ***Competition is universal***: Competition though an important characteristic feature of modern society is found in all societies—primitive, traditional, modern or in pre-historic eras and in every age.
5. ***Competition is continuous***: It is a never ending process. It goes on continuously or unconsciously all the time. It is unstable and frequently yields either to cooperation or to conflict.
6. ***Competition is restrained***: It implies that there are rules of the game to which all competitors must follow. When the competitors break the rules or when it turns into cut-throat

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competition (unrestricted), the situation transforms into conflict.

7. ***Competition is for scarce goods***: If the object of competition is an abundance there would be no competition. There is no competition for sunshine and air, which are unlimited.

Types of Competition

Sociologists have mentioned the following types of competition:

1. ***Personal competition***: When two competitors contest for elections, it is called personal competition. In this competitions, competitors know each other.
2. ***Impersonal competition***: When contestants are not aware of one another's identity as we find in university or civil service examinations, it is called impersonal competition.
3. ***Social competition***: People always compete to get into higher status and position. Wherever individual ability, merit, talents and capacities are recognized, competition for status is acute. Democratic nations encourage such competitions.
4. ***Economic competition***: It is witnessed in the process of production, distribution and consumption of goods, e.g. men compete for jobs, customers, clients, patients, profits, wages, salaries, increments and promotions, money, wealth, property, etc. Man always struggles for a higher standard of living.
5. ***Political competition***: Political parties are always engaged in competition to secure power. Similarly, at the international level, there is a keen diplomatic competition among nations. Nations like Russia and America which are wedded to different political ideologies.
6. ***Cultural competition***: This type of competition takes place between two or more cultural groups to establish cultural superiority. For example, competition that prevailed between the Indians and Western culture.

   Competition may also take place between racial groups religious groups and linguistic groups.

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Importance of Competition

Competition is indispensable in social life. It performs many useful functions in society some of the main functions are as follows:

1. Competition serves the functions of allocating scarce rewards among the competitors.
2. It has stimulating both individual and group activity in manner to increase the total productivity of the competition. It furnishes motivation to excel or to obtain recognition or to achieve reward.
3. It assigns place to each individual in the hierarchical social system and provides for social mobility.
4. It tends to enhance one's ego and helps in satisfying it.
5. It is conductive to progress and welfare of the society.
6. Competition increases efficiency.

Negative Functions of Competition

1. Competition shapes the attitudes of competitors when person or group compete, they normally develop unfriendly and unfavorable attitudes towards one another.
2. It may turn into conflict.
3. It may create emotional disturbances.
4. Unlimited competition may lead to monopoly.

Max Weber saw competition as a peaceful form of conflict but Karl Marx argued that competition among capitalists and workers were major sources of contradiction and struggle.

ACCOMMODATION

Life cannot go long if individuals or groups are engaged in conflict continuously. It must be resolved as early as possible for making life peaceful and worth living. The conflicting parties arranges for alternatives to conflict to bring termination of hostilities or conflicting relationships and to enable some forms of cooperation. The cessation of hostilities usually occurs by means of two social processes of interaction-accommodation and assimilation.

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The term "accommodation" is derived from experimental psychology, where it denotes how individuals modify their activity to fit the requirements of external social world.

Definitions of Accommodation

Accommodation is a form of social interaction in which it involves conscious and tentative forms of subordinations and superordination.

1. Gillin and Gillin, "Accommodation is the term used to describe a process by which competing and conflicting individuals and groups adjust their relationships to each other in order to overcome the difficulties which arise in competition, contravention or conflict".
2. Ogborn and Nimkoff, Accommodation refers to "a permanent or temporary termination of rivalrous parties to function together without open hostility at least in some respects".

Accommodation is both a condition and a process. As a condition, accommodation is the recognition and acceptance of a set of relationships that defines the status of person in the group or social organization. The state of accommodation does not represent a state of complete harmony. It is rather an acceptance of conditions in order to avoid or terminate conflict. It continues to exist as a kind of potential opposition. In some cases, conflict appears in a disguised or sublimated form. Indifference, reticence and cynicism are some of the forms of accommodation.

As a process, it refers to the adjustment between husband and wife that enables each to realize personal wishes in a measure and with a minimum of friction to carry on a tolerable common life. e.g. a bride. In order to accommodate herself in the family of her husband, she has to make many adjustments.

Nature and Characteristics of Accommodaton

From the above description, we may sum up the nature and characteristics of accommodation as follows:

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1. Accommodaton is the natural result of conflict.
2. It is a universal process.
3. It is a continuous process.
4. It is a state in which the attitudes of love and hate coexist.
5. It is generally a subconscious process.
6. It is an agreement to disagree.
7. Accommodaton involves changes in habits, attitudes, patterns of behavior, techniques, institutions and traditions, etc. according to the changed conditions of life.

Forms or Methods of Accommodaton

Accommodation takes a number of forms. Some are deliberately planned, others arise or unplanned products of group interaction. The most important of these are described below.

1. ***Yielding to coercion***: Coercion means the use of force or the threat to terminate a conflict. It usually involves parties of unequal strength, the weaker party yields and submit itself to the wishes of the stranger group, because of the fear of being overpowered.
2. ***Compromise***: Compromise is the adjustment of the opposed wishes of people in which each contender gives up part of his demands.

   It involves a limited surrender by all groups in order to end or avoid conflict. In compromise, each party agrees to make some concessions and yields to some demands of others in order to reach an agreement. In this type of accommodation, the spirit of 'give and take' prevails. Politics may be seen as a continual round of shifting power position and changing compromises. Family differences are often settled through compromises.
3. ***Arbitration, mediation and conciliation***: The technique of arbitration, meditation and conciliation are generally used in arranging compromises. These involve the third part to bring about an end of the conflict between contending parties.

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The labor-management conflicts usually are resolved through the intervention of an arbitrator or a mediator. The UNO frequently serves in the role of arbitrator at an international level.

Arbitration differs from mediation in that a definite decision is drawn by the arbitrators and the decision is regarded as binding. In the mediation, the suggestions made by the mediator have no binding force. Compromise is rarely an ideal solution because it does not lastlong.

4. ***Toleration***: In this form of accommodation, interacting parties may agree or disagree. People accept each other's right to differ without demanding settlement. Each party holds its position, but respects the fact that the other party has an opposing view point. Religious conflict are classic example of this situation. Both parties to this issue 'tolerate' each other, despite the fact that the basic issue is not eliminated.
5. ***Conversion***: In this form of accommodation, one of the acting parties accept and adopts the views of the other on the ground that is has been wrong and its opponent is right. Conversion is frequently related to religious beliefs but it may also occur in politics and other fields.
6. ***Rationalization***: Accommodation through rationalization involves plassible excuses or explanations for one's behavior instead of acknowledging the real defect in one's own self. Recently, the American government has justified its attack on Iraq on the ground that Iraq has nuclear weapons and weapon of mass destruction (WMD) and threat to international peace and democracy.
7. ***Superordination and subordination***: The fundamental pattern of accommodation is of reciprocal superiority and subordination. The whole web of relationship between two persons is commonly complex series of subordinations in which one or the other is subordinated according to the character of the situation in which they are jointly involved. For example, in legal matters, the physician is subordinate to the lawyer whereas in medical matters the lawyer assumes

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the subordinate role. The organization of all societies is essentially the result of such a type of accommodation. From family to larger groupings (political, economic or religion), we can see such types of relationships.

8. ***Truce***: A truce is an agreement to cease rivalrous interaction for a definite or indefinite period of time. The purpose is usually to give both parties time to review the issue in the light of proposals or suggestions for settlement. This form of accommodation is temporary, usually giving way to more permanent form.
9. ***Displacement***: Displacement involves termination of one conflict by replacing it with another. Use of a 'scapegoat' is a displacement technique; the problem of a group (a nation or a village) may be blamed on an individual or on a minority or an imperialists, etc.
10. ***Institutionalized means***: The structure of various societies may provide institutionalized means for release of tensions. They work as safety valves for resolving of hostility. Community sports, wrestling and other tournaments, special feast days, religious and other festivals are its few examples.

ASSIMILATION

A term synonymous, which acculturation used to describe the process by which an outsider, immigrant, or subordinate group becomes indistinguishably integrated into the dominant host society. Acculturation therefore, implies modification but not complete assimilation. Assimilation is also different from the analogous phenomenon. It is a process of cross-breeding to the production of hybrid offspring and the blending of racial stocks through inter-marriage and intermating. Assimilation on the other hand is a cultural social and psychological phenomenon.

Definitions

1. Ogburn and Nimkoff, "Assimilation is the process whereby individuals or groups once dissimilar become similar, i.e. become identified in their interests and outlooks".

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2. Horton and Hunt as "The process of mutual, cultural diffusion through which persons and groups become culturally alike".

Summarizing the above views it may be said that assimilation is the process of fusion or blending, whereby cultural differences tend to disappear. It results in the modifications of attitudes, values, patterns of thinking and behavior.

Nature of Assimilation

1. Assimilation takes place slowly, and gradually to a considerable extent without conscious effort and direction.
2. The speed of the process of assimilation depends upon the nature of contacts. It takes quite sometime before individuals or groups dissimilar become similar, i.e. becomes identified in their interests and outlook.
3. Assimilation occurs through the mechanisms of imitation and suggestion.
4. Assimilation of an individual into a culture takes considerable time and is seldom if ever achieved within his lifetime.
5. Assimilation is a two-way process when it happen between two cultural groups. Each group contributing varying proportions of the eventual blend. The alien group not only contribute to the host culture but retain many of their own ways.

Types of Assimilation

1. ***Cultural assimilation***: Assimilation as said above is a two-way process: persons such as immigrants must want to be assimilated and the host society must be willing to have assimilated. The immigrant must undergo cultural assimilation learning the day-to-day norms of the dominant culture pertaining to dress, language, food, recreation, games and sports.
2. ***Structural assimilation***: It involves developing patterns of intimate contact between the 'guest' and 'host' groups in

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clubs, organizations and institutions of the host society. Cultural assimilation generally precedes structural assimilation although the two sometimes happen simultaneously.

Factors Favoring of Assimilation

1. ***Tolerance***: Without the attitude of tolerance assimilation is not possible. Tolerance requires the feeling of sacrifice and elimination of strong prejudices. It is a democratic virtue which fasters sympathy.
2. ***Intimacy***: Frequent close social contacts and communication are a prerequisite for the start of assimilative process. Intimacy dissolves the ultraindividualism which separates man from man.
3. ***Cultural homogeneity***: Culturally homogeneous groups easily assimilate the values and goals of one another. Mutual similarity creates mutual affinities which bring two individuals or groups nearer to each other.
4. ***Equal economic opportunity***: It would create conditions favorable to the growth of assimilative process.
5. ***Association***: Various associations, clubs, and other places of public meetings help in the assimilative process. When people live in the same vicinity, meet and come together, there is every possibility of the start of the process of assimilation.
6. ***Amalgamation or inter-marriage***: Amalgamation, though a biological process of cross-breeding helps in cultural assimilation. Through inter-marriages members of different racial stocks come together and adopt the cultural traits of other groups.

Factors Retarding or Hindering Assimilation

There are certain factors which retard or hinder the process of assimilation.

1. ***Cultural dissimilarity***: Extreme differences in cultural background act as the most powerful impediment in the way

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of assimilation language and religion. Customs and beliefs are other cultural characteristics, which can hinder assimilation.

2. ***Racial differences***: Differences in racial traits present a formidable barrier to assimilation. This we can see between white and Negro races in which discrimination is practiced almost everywhere in the world.
3. ***Feeling of superiority and inferiority***: Such feelings along with the exploitation of the weaker section (minority group) of the population by stronger one, are contradictory to the assimilation process.
4. ***Prejudice***: Prejudices (prejudgment) may create a social distance between the alien and dominant cultures.
5. ***Isolation***: It is a situation deprived of social contacts. Isolation signifies detached position or the act or process of attaining a detached position. It may be spatial separation or organic.

Importance of Assimilation

1. Assimilation is a process of mutual interchange or diffusion of culture through which persons and groups come to share a common culture.
2. It is a process of decreasing differentiation and increasing unification among people.
3. It reduces group conflict by blending differing groups into larger culturally homogeneous groups.

CONFLICT

It is said that human beings are, for the most part, quite selfish and that chaos and strife are both common and natural. This is why conflict is the fundamental form of disassociative interaction or oppositional oriented relationship. It is inherited in all social relationships and is also inevitable and universal.

Bottomore observed that "conflict is an instrinic, modifying or destroying the social groups in which it takes place".

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Definitions of Conflict

1. AW Green Conflict as "the deliberate attempt to appose, resist or coerce the will of another or other".
2. Gillin and Gillin, "Conflict is the social process in which individuals or groups seek their ends by directly challenging the antagonist by violence or threat of violence".

To sum up, it may be said that conflict refers to the struggle in which competing parties attempting to reach a goal strive to eliminate an opponent by making the other party ineffective or annihilation.

Characteristics of Conflict

On the basis of foregoing discussion, the following characteristics of conflict in brief may be cited;

1. It is a universal process found in every society.
2. It is the result of deliberate and conscious efforts of individuals or the groups.
3. The nature of the conflict is personal and direct. In conflict the incumbents or participants know each other personally.
4. It is basically an individual's process. Its aim is not directly connected with the achievement of the goal or an objective but is rather directed to dominate others or to eliminate the opponent.
5. Conflict is of brief duration, temporary and intermittent in character. But once begun the conflict process is hard to stop. It tends to grow more and more better as it proceeds. Being temporary, it gives way to some form of accommodation.
6. It may be latent or overt. In the latent form, it may exist in the form of tension, dissatisfaction, contravention and rivalry. It becomes overt when an issue is declared and a hostile action is taken.
7. It is mostly violent but it may take the form of negotiations, party politics, disputes or rivalry.
8. It may emerge as a result of opposing interests.
9. It has both disintegrative and integrative effects. It disrupts unity in a society and is a disturbing way of settling issues.

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A certain account of internal conflict, however may serve indirectly to stimulate group interaction, external conflict can have positive effects by unifying the group.

Forms of Conflict

In all societies, there are at least two sorts of conflicts. First, there is conflicts between men contending for positions of power. Second, there is conflict between the powerful and the powerless.

Conflicts can be distinguished in so many ways. It may involve intense personal animosities. It may take the form of a brute struggle on the physical level to destroy or eliminate the opponent. Personal conflicts arise on account of various motives-envy, hostility, betrayal of trust being the most predominant.

Direct and Indirect Conflict

Direct conflict occurs every where individuals or group thwart or impede or restrain or injure or destroy one another in the effort to attain the goal.

Indirect occurs where individual or group do not actually impede the efforts of one another but nevertheless try to attain their ends in ways which abstruct the attainment of the same end by others.

Gillin and Gillin have classified conflict in five groups:

1. Personal conflict 2. Racial conflict 3. Class conflict
4. Political conflict 5. International conflict.

Group or Corporate Conflict

It takes place between two societies or groups. In a group conflict, individual feelings become irrelevant. Groups attempt to impose their will on other groups in order to gain power, prestige, wealth and commodities of value. Such conflict is impersonal, communal or race riots, religious persecution, labor-management disputes, and wars between two or more nations are some of the examples of corporate conflict.

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George Simmel (1955) distinguished four types of conflict:

1. ***War***: George Simmel attributed war to deep-seated antagonistic impulse in man. For him, antagonistic impulse is a foundation of all conflicts.
2. ***Feud or factional strife***: Feud is an intra-group form of war which may arise because of injustice alleged to have been done by one group to the other.
3. ***Litigation***: Litigation is a judicial form of conflict when an individual or group asserts its claims to certain rights on the basis of objective factors.
4. ***Conflict of impersonal ideas***: Conflict of impersonal ideals is a conflict carried on by the individuals not for themselves but for an ideal. In such a conflict, each party attempts to justify truthfulness of its own ideals.

Role of Conflict

George Simmel observed that a conflict free harmonious society is practically an impossibility. There is no denying the fact that society requires for its formation and growth both harmony and disharmony, association and disassociation. Generally, conflict is regarded as disintegrative and its dysfunction are highlighted but conflict plays constructive role also and it has positive function for the individual and society both. Conflicts prevents the ossification of the social system by exerting pressure for innovation and creativity. Horton and Hunt have distinguished the effects of conflict as follows:

1. ***Integrative effects***: Conflict defines issues, leads to resolution of issues, increases group cohesion, leads to an alliance with other groups, keeps groups alert to members interests.
2. ***Disintegrative effects***: Conflict increases bitterness, leads to destruction and bloodshed, inter-group tension, disrupts normal channels of cooperation and diverts members attention from group objectives.

Lewis A Coser has also analyzed the role of conflict in promoting unity in a following manner:

1. Conflict determines the status of the individual in the social organization. Rivalry, war and other forms of personal

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struggle determine superiority and subordination of men and groups.

2. Conflict is a chief means of group contact, and it has played an important role in the development and spread of culture.
3. Conflict may eventuate in peace through victory of one contestant over others.
4. Conflicts helps to define issues and brings about a new equilibrium of contending forces. It may lead to the working out of non-violent techniques for resolving crisis. The end result of conflict is that the issues are resolved at least for a time.
5. Conflict tends to stiffen the morale, promotes unity and cohesion within the group and may lead to expanding alliances with other groups.
6. Conflict keeps groups alert to members interests.
7. It generates new norms and new institutions. It happens mostly in economic and technological realms. Technological improvement has resulted from the conflict activity of trade unions. It leads to redefinition of value system.
8. Conflict within and between bureaucratic structure provides man of avoiding the ossification and ritualism which threatens their form of organization.
9. Conflict leads not only to ever changing relations within the existing social structure but the total system undergoes transformation through conflict.
10. Conflict between vested interests and new strata and groups demanding share of power, wealth, and status have proved to be productive of vitality.
11. Conflict may lead to a new consensus.
12. Conflict theorists believe that conflict is necessary for progress. They contend that societies progress to a higher order only if opposed group improve their lot.

Dysfunction of Conflict

1. Conflict as we know disrupts social units
2. It is highly disturbing way of settling issues.
3. Conflicts within a group makes it hard for members to agree on group goals or to cooperate in pursuit of them.
4. It leads to group tension.

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ISBN 978-93-5152-616-2

9 789351 526162