**SOC 3120 Social Psychology**

**Prof. J.S. Kenney**

**Overheads Lecture 11: The Self and Motivation:**

\* Two issues central to link conduct and the self:

(1) How persons come to be what they are:

- acquisition of identities

- identification with certain others

- how others' treatment affects self

(2) The influence of the person's conceptions of self on conduct, including:

- personal and social identity

- others appraisals and expectations

**Motive and Motivation:**

\* Such questions require talking about motives and motivation.

\* *Motivation* refers to the forces, drives, urges, and other states of the organism that impel, move, push or otherwise direct its behavior.

\* A necessary but conceptually problematic concept:

- Complexity of behavior

- Few acts can be explained by a single motivation.

- Tempting to substitute one’s own account for real circumstances (“motive mongering”)

- Innate drives violates idea that people act on basis of meanings.

\* S.I. has been wary of traditional conception of motivation.

\* Yet, S.I. has also found a way to discuss motivation related to the "I" phase of the act:

-motivation refers to the varying sensitivities of the organism to the environmental stimuli/one’s impulses at a particular time.

- influenced by organic states, conditioning, and imagined responses of

others.

- operate at preconscious level/determines impulse - but not act

- experiencing impulsive response/ becomes part of “Me”

- impulse then brought under voluntary control.

\* *Motive* refers to what people say about their conduct, not the forces that shape their impulses:

- verbal phenomena (e.g. explanations, accounts, excuses,

justifications).

- self-reference closely linked with the "Me."

\* Motives may become motivations, and vice versa.

\* Today we will focus on motivation: motives will be dealt with later.

\* Central principle = that a person's conceptions of self influence motivation.

**Identity and Motivation:**

\* Generally, situated identity organizes a person's sensitivities to events in a given situation.

\* Social and personal identity are more deeply rooted motivational states that shape the way we respond to situated roles and form situated identities.

\* Situated identities highlight subset of wants, needs and inclinations, backgrounds others (e.g. doctor/patient; mechanic/motorist, etc.)

\* Identities organize one's attention and relevant impulsive responses in a situation/excluding others.

\*Ordinarily, this process is a quick, almost unconscious one/ the identity itself becomes taken for granted.

\*However, people become more conscious of their situated identities when they are uncertain or when they undergo change. This simultaneously reorganizes or transforms motivation.

\* Social identity and personal identity also have significance as motivation and motive:

-One doesn't ordinarily make each role with equal energy or define

each situated identity as equally important to oneself as a whole.

- Some identities energize us more than others.

-The force with which we act seems to depend on the identity that we

have in a particular situation.

\* Situated identities are always linked to social and personal identities. We tend to choose situated identities depending on the way they contribute to our social and personal identities.

\* We carry social and personal identities with us all the time, and these organize our receptivity to certain events at the level of impulse.

\* Under some circumstances people do make a point of announcing their personal and social identities or focusing on these inwardly:

-When identities are socially devalued, attempts are made to

maintain a positive sense of social or personal identity

- Some organizations not only provide identities, people use these as

vehicles to achieve particular success, distinction, and validation in

those terms.

\* Personal and social identity also appear in role distancing behaviors (e.g. people sometimes make light of their situated roles). This:

- eases tensions

- reminds people of responsibilities

- keeps situated identity from overwhelming self

\* Social identities are also elicited when an event occurs that is not relevant to the situated identity, but very significant to another one.

\* Each time one announces a social or personal identity, one reorganizes the self at a motivational level. One reorganizes one's impulses and alters the environment to which one will henceforth be sensitive.

**Self-Esteem and Motivation:**

\* Self-esteem = major motivational link between person and social order.

\* Humans seek positively valued identities. They look for ways of behaving that will enable them to both secure goals and earn the approval of others.

\* Even when we appraise ourselves, we do so for the most part in relation to the standards or values of the community.

\* Yet it’s wrong to lay too much stress on the determining nature of group:

-humans are active, self-conscious creatures with a degree of autonomy

-we seek not only approved social identities, but personal identities

with projects or goals of our own that put us in opposition to others.

- to some self esteem to the extent that one’s efficacy in pursuit of

personal identity is successful.

- we may consciously seek to deceive others rather than emulate them

or live up to their expectations

\* Self-esteem is a social product, but also something we bring to each new situation: a motivational state affecting the way we are sensitive to others in the situations we find them.

\* Examples: Low self-esteem is associated with:

(1) Anxiety

(2) Clinical depression

\* Both are motivational states:

-anxiety sensitizes one to others in a particularly painful way, making

one more vulnerable to others’ negative judgements and verbalizations

-depression has a similar effect, encouraging one to see the social world

as a negative, unpleasant place.

- can work together in vicious cycle.

- make it harder to behave in ways that result in positive evaluations.

\* Most people don’t have extremely low or high self-esteem.

\* In the end, most have self-esteem:

-high enough to keep anxiety from paralyzing them

-low enough to make them receptive to others' evaluations.