**SOC 3120 Social Psychology**

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**Overheads Lecture 16: Understanding and Constructing Social Order 1**

\*Our theory of action and coordination of conduct must be linked to broader questions of social organization.

\* The question of social order is rooted in several questions:

(1) How it’s possible for individuals to subordinate their interests/ goals to those of groups/ society, such that they accept social guidance & constraint.

(2) How various groups, organizations, communities and other elements of society are linked together in a coherent, organized way.

(3) How conflicts that arise between various groups shape the social order.

\* Several explanations exist:

- structural functionalism (society = self-regulating system)

- conflict theory (social order=maintained by power/subordination)

\* Symbolic interactionism:

-more microscopic/social psychological view

-must integrate theory of action consistent with social order

-focus on how social order produced in everyday activities

-notes problem of reifying social order/society

-the fact that people often do so is starting point

-emphasizes how people collectively define order/ uphold definitions

**Social Order as a Constructed Reality:**

\* People view society as having existence independent of themselves, even though it depends on them

\*Society is an object toward which its members act. This defines it, constitutes it, and causes it to persist

\* What is true of society as a whole is also true of its smaller groups (e.g. institutions, groups).

**Influence**

\* People employ tactics of influence to persuade others to comply with their wishes.

\* Robert Cialdini’s 6 principles of influence:

(1) Reciprocation

(2) Scarcity

(3) Authority

(4) Commitment/Consistency

(5) Liking

(6) Social Proof

\* All seek to gain compliance by getting others to enter into coordinated actions and bind them to social order.

**Creating Social Bonds**

\* People coordinate social activities by establishing stable interpersonal attachments/bonds.

\* These must be constantly tested/renewed, sometimes with difficulty.

\* Each must view the other as a legitimate participant.

\* Social bonds provide both motivation and context for activity.

\* Over time, they serve as the basis for more enduring roles.

\* Yet today’s society is quite impersonal and many lack strong bonds. Not the whole story either.

**Problem Solving/Trust**

\* Patterned and repetitive behaviors forming a common stock of knowledge can be overstated in today’s increasingly complex social environment.

\* Today people are more often required to interpret and respond creatively to events to succeed.

\* Some institutions/organizations specialize in problem solving.

\* Trust is necessary for the collective solving of problems/risky.

\* Contemporary social life requires people to develop means to control trust.

**The Negotiated Order:**

\* Sociologists often portray social order as people habitually following rules resulting from adequate socialization

\* Inadequate account as:

-coordination/order results as much from peoples’ conscious efforts

-bargaining, negotiation, unofficial practices, etc. are common

\* Anselm Strauss: Negotiation in the coordination of individual/group activities around practical problems is common:

- developed in studies of complex organizations (e.g. bureaucracies)

- analysis can be extended to societal level to explain social order

\* Theoretically, organizations coordinate the activities of their members by inventing formal rules and procedures (e.g. role specific duties, rights, limitations, etc.) centered around an abstract goal.

\* These are generally insufficient:

- abstract goal offers little guidance in day to day details

- different players’ roles conflict/ compete

- some see their roles as more important than others

- some overworked, asked to take on things “outside job description”

- individual interpretations of goals

- divided loyalties

- internal disagreements over resources

- no set of rules clear enough or comprehensive enough

\* Thus, by common consent, rules are broken from time to time - even by the people pledged to uphold them

\* Social order is accomplished through an ongoing process of negotiation

\* Unofficial “working agreements” are often made among various members of the organization from time to time, renewed or allowed to lapse, and serve as the basis for coordinating activities.

\* Circumstances influencing frequency/ importance of negotiation:

- teamwork vs. working alone

- public vs. private activity

- novelty required vs. routine roles

- organizational size and complexity

- broad vs. narrow dispersion of power

- feelings of equality or efficacy

- delegation of authority

- changes that require existing arrangements to be renegotiated

- the presence of autonomous professionals

\* Negotiation also exists at societal level (e.g. political/economic arrangements). Two important elements at this level:

(1) Self-interest

(2) Power

\* Both inherent in the problem of maintaining social order

\* Manifested in a variety of ways and contexts:

- ethnic vs. societal loyalties

- provincial funding formulas vs. federal budget

- union vs. management

\* Negotiation employed to reach agreement among contending parties

\* During negotiation, power exerted to achieve goals:

- at least cost, or

- without the consent of others

\* Power exercised through manipulating resources ranging from:

-naked force

-control of information and knowledge

-the dispensation of financial/occupational rewards

-manipulation of symbols

\* Power =an important determinant of social order. It influences:

- who will be able to bargain successfully

- whose definitions of the rules will prevail

- how individuals & collectivities define and pursue their self-interest.

\* Power, negotiations and self-interest are central to interactionist conceptions of social order. At all levels they influence:

-the situations people define

-the roles they take and make

-the objects towards which they act

-the routine and problematic situations they confront

\* The dynamics of Canadian society, for example, exhibit historical patterns of competition, conflict, and cooperation that have developed between various ethnic and religious groups (e.g. French Catholics, British Protestants, and, increasingly, other groups).

\* Canadian negotiated order (over time):

1. French / British conflict

2. Accommodation of cultural/religious differences

3. French/ British hegemony breaking down / multiculturalism

\* Each of these historical views constitutes a different negotiating position/ social order. Can also result in conflict

\* Vigorous pursuit of minority civil, economic and political rights has:

-helped reinforce consciousness of ethnic affiliation

- encouraged pluralism and multiculturalism

- increased negotiating position of some/ reduced others

\* In the end, the position of the individual in society or any of its constituent units cannot be grasped apart from the negotiated order.

**Boundaries:**

\* Social activity also coordinated by social boundaries dividing people/groups (e.g. gender, race, class, controversial opinions, media creations)

\* Social boundary = fence/border governing relationships between those on either side: establish separate worlds

\* Frequently arise out of conflict and negotiation within/ between organizations

\* Come to be seen as natural features of the social landscape/ points of reference enabling social distinctions to be made

\* Boundaries have four main characteristics related to coordination of social activity:

(1) They rest on the application of a principle of social classification - a simplistic, clear cut criterion on the basis of which people can be divided into categories(e.g. sex and race). Treated as if real and valid.

(2) Boundaries count, pervading almost every aspect of social life (e.g. gender and race often establish one’s credentials for participation in a variety of social activities);

(3) Boundaries tend to promote identification (e.g. gender identity identified, announced and assumed; in/out group solidarity promoted on either side of boundaries).

(4) When not taken for granted, boundaries entail social controls that help maintain the boundaries, as well as sanctions for departure from them or efforts to cross them.

\* Boundaries provide significant reference points in the coordination of conduct and the construction of social order.

\* Two sides to this:

(1) For some:

- a stable way of imagining and talking about the social order

- a standard for conduct

(2) For others:

- oppressive

- a reference point for challenging actions

\* Next class: explaining disorder, social problems, creating and joining social movements.