

SOC 347

CHARON, CHAPTER 3

How is society Possible?

Learning Objectives

- Society, social organization, social order
- Social interaction and social patterns
- Culture, social structure, and institutions
- Socialization, commitment, social conflict

Question

How is it possible for any bunch of individuals to put aside their differences and agree to work together?

What is the role of...

- Force
- Interdependence
- Socialization
- Human nature

Thomas Hobbes

“How is order possible?”---the question that created the discipline of sociology

- use of force
- miracle
- voluntary

Question

Can humans survive without political order?

Without Political Order

- Unlimited natural freedoms
- The right to all things
- Endless war of all against all
- Anarchy

Social Contract Theory

- Individuals consent to surrender freedoms
- Leads to establishment of the state
- Authorities provide protection
- Remaining in the territory equals consent
- US Declaration of independence—“the consent of the governed”

Society as a Social Organization

- Government
- Laws—to regulate social interaction
- Army
- Physical boundaries

Society a Social Organization of People

- groups
- formal organizations
- communities
- history
- culture
- identity
- language
- social patterns

Nations

- political organizations
- created or changed by war
- formal law prevails
- Treaties
- Anarchy—state without leadership (e.g. Somalia)
- States organized by self-interest
- Leads to conflict between states

Possibility of Society

- social interaction
- cooperation
- communication
- sharing
- arguing
- compromising
- understanding one another
- If social interaction ends—society ends
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Social Interaction

- we take account of one another
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- acting with others in mind
- Action and reaction e.g. greetings
- a pattern of crisscrossing interaction
- intensity with outsiders

Why is interaction important to society?

- human interaction is symbolic
- people's actions are usually meant to communicate something
- Reciprocity
- ability to share interests, values, concerns, ideas, feelings, etc.
- ability to learn from others

Significance of Symbol Communication

- a means of knowing one another
- makes possible a shared understanding
- a basis for cooperation—and solving problems together
- a way to socialize others
- set boundaries for unacceptable behavior

“Thinking like an American”— involves acceptance of:

- individualism
- equal opportunity
- time is money
- achievement and success
- materialism
- science and progress
- democracy and free enterprise
- freedom
- racism and group superiority

Society depends on Social Patterns

Social patterns

- Culture
- Beliefs—true or false
- Values—good or bad/ (important/less)
- Norms—Right or wrong

Karl Marx's critique

- rules, values, beliefs exaggerations of reality
- culture is ideology for defending society
- Ideologies—set by powerful groups
- ideas of the powerful and for the powerful and taught to the less powerful
- cultural ideas work to keep society

Karl Marx

- Culture works because it defends inequality
- By accepting cultural ideas—social order is established
- If disagreement is widespread—it challenges the dominant group—and undermines society (e.g. civil rights protests)

Social Structure—interactions

- Interactions based on position and rank.
- structure occurs as interactions become regularized in relation to one another's position
- People learn what is supposed to be done in each position
- Positions then create order

Social Structure

- positions bring roles, identities, expectations and inequality
- roles taught at early age
- perspectives—how one is supposed to see reality
- identity—brings a name others call us, we call ourselves, and a name to present to others

Social Structure

- positions are ranked—power, prestige, and privilege
- builds interdependence and creates commitment
- common morality evolves to balance against individual self-interest
- structure leads to control over the individual

Social Structure Sorts People

- labor is divided, & inequality is established
- people learn to think according to their positions*
- people inherit positions they have no talent for—resulting in waste of talents
- the system creates injustice
- we become conscious of our place

Social patterns

- Routines
- Common expectations
- Predictable behaviors
- Ways of thinking and acting
- Makes cooperation possible

Social Institutions

- ways of dealing with ongoing situations.
- grooves that people have to follow
- ways to produce and distribute goods
- ways to control disruptive behavior
- socializing the young
- regulate sex

How do we create willing, hardworking individuals who accept society's ways?

- Family
- Political/Economic system
- Educational & Religious institutions
- Media/Television
- Computer/web based applications
- Law/Criminal justice system
- Military
- Health

Loyalty to society

- Feeling positive about society
- Willingness to cooperate with society
- Willingness to defend society
- Sense of belonging
- Individualism weakens commitment to the society
- Use of force for conformity—if widespread leads to disloyalty

US Problem

- **How much individualism and freedom?**
- **Can freedom exist without commitment to the whole?**

State Society Relations

- Institutions fabricate to maintain commitment
- People are socialized to feel good about being part of the society?
- National symbols
- Defining people as outsiders serves to bring loyalty

State Society Relations

- Punishment to those defined as threats
- Rituals & reverence to the state
- State presented as wielding redemption
- Sense of belonging bind peoples together
- Institutions “deliver” to produce conditional loyalty
- People perceive that the society works

Elements Forced Loyalty

- Surveillance of the population (e.g. East Germany)
- Consensus of the powerful
- Social control
- Production of fear
- Constant punishment

Conflict and Change

- change depends on social conflict
- people affected assert their will
- conflict can become violent or peaceful
- the conflict of wills produces an outcome
- slavery and civil war
- after war conflict continued through Jim Crow laws and segregation

Society is possible because of...

- Social interaction
- Symbolic interaction
- Social patterns (culture, structure, institutions)
- Institutions solve problems & socialize people
- Loyalty to society
- Response to change and conflict