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Social Psychology of Social Order

An Introduction

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A person dropped into downtown Manhattan in the middle of the day for the first time would face an unpredictable, disorderly world: fast-walking people dodging around one another on sidewalks; pedestrians and cars contesting for street access at every corner; bicyclists running red lights; trucks double parking and blocking access to and from sidewalks; rampant herdlike jaywalking; horns honking; cabbies shouting; sirens of fire engines and ambulances blaring; and ever-present construction projects posing obstructions to most everybody. Yet, it would not take long for our visitor to sense a semblance of social order – in the form of repeated, predictable patterns of behavior. This patterned local world exists "on the edge of chaos," with order and predictability eroding and re-emerging moment-to-moment and situation-to-situation (see also Lawler 2013). Very soon this immediate, local social order would reveal both resilience and dynamism. This is a fundamental insight of sociological theories of social psychology on the emergence and maintenance of social orders (e.g., Rawls 2004; Turner 2007; Burke and Stets 2009; Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2009; Fine 2012; Ridgeway 2011). Sociological social psychologists (micro-sociologists) construe patterns of regularity as social constructions that people create and sustain under conditions of uncertainty, instability, or tension.

The regularity, repetition, and predictability of everyday social lives are constitutive of social orders, at both macro and micro levels (see Collins 1981). However, without the "edge of chaos" or ever looming prospect of disorder, social order as such would draw little interest or have little meaning. Repetitive, predictable patterns of behavior are meaningful to people because of the contrast with disorder, real or hypothetical. Repetitive patterns that constitute order enable people with vastly different social backgrounds, conflicting cultural ideas or material interests, or diverse social affiliations to navigate close proximities, work around or take advantage of interdependencies, and produce joint goods of mutual value. To micro-sociologists, micro (local,

immediate) orders are taken for granted; they are subtle, obdurate, pervasive, and often invisible features of social life (Maynard 2003; Fine 2012). People do not consciously observe or ponder social order unless it is somehow disrupted or threatened. By contrast, disorder and conflict are generally salient, discomfiting, and often stressful or threatening. There is a fundamental asymmetry in the ontological status of social order and social disorder.

Modern treatments of the problem of social order are traced to Hobbes (1651). Hobbes starts from the premise that humans are prone to malfeasance, aggression, and force. People pursue passions (desires, ends) through rational means and do so without self-imposed limits, seeking to overwhelm, dominate, or destroy each other in pursuit of their own desires. Elements of human nature cannot be relied on to protect individuals from one another's avarice and power-seeking, because the social world is composed of individuals single-mindedly pursuing narrow, immediate individual ends in a context of interdependence and scarcity. The result for Hobbes is an inherent tendency to descend into "a war of all against all."

The Hobbesian solution to this fundamental problem of social order is straightforward: Individuals create and sustain order by consenting to some sort of social contract under the direction of a sovereign authority (i.e., the state). They accept limits on their freedom and discretion in exchange for security and safety. Thus, the human species is essentially saved "from itself" by human capacities for reason. For Hobbes the locus of the problem of order is the micro level, because this is where the "war of all against all" takes place, but the solution is at the macro level (e.g., a sovereign, government). A binding social contract regulates and enforces social order at both micro and macro levels but does so "from above." The implied consensual norms or rules are based on rational consent.[1] The emergence and pervasiveness of social order at the micro-sociological level, however, raises serious questions about the theoretical scope and adequacy of Hobbesian framing for the problem of order.

In modern parlance, the Hobbesian problem of order can be conceived in social-dilemma terms, that is, as an inherent tension between individually-rational action and collective or group interests (security). Individuals are motivated to rationally pursue their own individual desires or interests even when such actions generate collectively irrational results, and this underlies the hypothetical descent into the "war of all against all." In contrast, a convergent though generally implicit claim of disparate sociological theories of social psychology is that people have vast, almost unlimited, capacities to impose or find order in their social worlds and to resourcefully manage or resolve uncertainties and tensions. People take account of each other, not simply because they

[1] Parsons (1937) critiques the utilitarian basis for social order presumed by Hobbes, arguing that the ends (desires) and rationality (choice of means) are normative elements and embedded in a larger shared normative order. For Parsons, the problems of social order are to be found in the larger normative order (conflicting norms, anomie) as are the solutions.

have to, given structural interdependencies, but because they want to or are wired to do so (Condon and Sander 1974). Increasingly, theory and evidence affirms that people are naturally responsive to each other, empathic, and group or community oriented (e.g., Waal 2008; Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomas 2010; Turner, this volume). One implication is that descent toward a Hobbesian "war of all against all" would likely be short-lived, because people reconstitute regularity and predictability rather quickly, especially when they are "on the edge of chaos." Even in the context of large scale disorder or conflict at the macro level, one often observes stable social orders emerging and being sustained at local, micro levels.

Contemporary analyses of the problem of social order are found especially in rational-choice theories (e.g., Hechter 1987; Coleman 1990; Fehr and Gintis 2007). The social dilemma is generally a defining element, and this clearly resonates with the classic Hobbesian statement of the problem, though the assumed malevolence of the human species is left behind in favor of individual self-interest (profit maximization). The crux of the problem is recast as self-interested or under-socialized individual actors, as reflected in free-riding, ineffective norm enforcement, or failures of socialization (i.e., internalization of norms). Virtually all variations on this social dilemma theme presume that people, if left to their own devices, will follow their own individual, self-interested, hedonistic, and often ill-informed ways (see Hechter 1987; Coleman 1990). That this framing has limits is well-known and recognized. People cooperate more than expected in prisoners dilemma settings; share more than expected in ultimatum games; process information in imperfect or biased ways, and often act pro-socially despite personal costs (Piliavin and Callero 1991; Batson 1991). The cumulative evidence on the limitations of the "self-interest" assumption suggests a dualistic concept of the human species, placing capacities for self-interest and for altruism on an equal plane. As a result, the key question becomes: Under what structural, cultural, or situational conditions are these dual capacities activated, in what proportions, and with what driving mechanisms? This is the theoretical juncture at which sociological approaches to social psychology (microsociology) have something important to say about the Hobbesian problem.

Sociological theories of social interaction and group processes contain a wide array of micro mechanisms of social order, that is, micro structures or processes that generate, sustain, or change social orders. This volume explicates and illuminates mechanisms for social order found in contemporary sociological theories. Some theories from sociological social psychology have not explicitly addressed the problem of order, whereas others have adopted social order as a central or overarching theme. This volume includes leading scholars from different theoretical traditions who develop and make more explicit the implications of their theories for the problem of social order, use Hobbesian framing as a backdrop. A central message is that micro structures and processes mediate macro level phenomena, as articulated in the now famous

"Coleman boat" (Coleman 1990), but the nature of these micro processes are more varied, more interactional, and more relational than the individual rationality mechanism assumed by Coleman. This volume is designed to explicate, amplify, and systematize "bottom-up" processes of social order, as well as reveal how "top down" processes are contingent on micro level structures and processes. Understanding the micro level dimensions of the problem of order in these terms seems especially vital in a highly complex and changing social world on the edge of chaos.

MICRO THEORIES OF SOCIAL ORDER

Microsociology (sociological social psychology) is marked by many well-developed theoretical traditions that address a wide variety of micro level processes. This volume represents a wide range of theories or theoretical traditions in sociology selected on the basis of several criteria: (*i*) how well-developed is the theory; (*ii*) the strength of its empirical foundation, and (*iii*) the creativity of its implicit or explicit message about the role of micro-level social processes in the construction and maintenance of social order. Specifically, we chose ten theories from sociology to address the following topics: evolutionary foundations, choice or rational choice, identity, social exchange, status and power, expectation states, trust, emotion, meaning, morality, and legitimacy. We will characterize in broad terms the implicit or explicit approach to social order for each theoretical tradition, and then explain briefly how one or more chapters elaborate the micro foundations of order for that theoretical tradition.

Evolutionary Theory

Evolutionary theories ask how humans developed the capacity to form groups and communities larger and more encompassing than local, kin-based groupings. There are cognitive and emotional interpretations of how this happened. The former is based on the "large brain" thesis that as homo sapiens evolved, their brains developed a larger and larger neo-cortex in response to selection pressures. A larger neo-cortex expanded cognitive capacities and enabled people to store more in memory, develop more intricate categorizations or abstract thoughts, and imagine further into the future and also into the past. As cognitive capacities grew, the ability to envision or conceive of collaborations and communities beyond kin groups also grew. An alternative explanation emphasizes the earlier growth of the brain's limbic system and associated human capacities to convey, interpret, and read a range of emotional states, states that signaled and allowed cooperative nonkin relations to form.

Two chapters examine the evolutionary origins of social order. The chapter by Jonathan Turner on "The Evolutionary Biology and Sociology of Social Order" makes a case for the role of the fine-grained emotional capacities in human evolution. The central argument is that emotions are the primary

foundation for social order, and the human capacity to form larger, nonkin groupings can be traced to evolved capacities of the human limbic system. Natural selection produced an elaborate emotional repertoire that made it possible for humans to read others emotions and express emotions in detailed, fine grained forms. These evolved emotional capacities allowed them to develop forms of cooperation and affiliation in local but also larger communities especially as their cognitive capacities also grew.

The Lindenberg chapter on "Social Rationality and Weak Solidarity" argues it is the co-evolution of dual human capacities – for rationality and sociality – that made larger groups and communities possible. These capacities are rooted in humans "advanced brain power" in particular the cognitive and motivational conditions for the joint production of social order. Growing rationality was manifest in capacities for complex mental representations, for pursuit of both egoistic and collective goals and for self-regulation. Growing sociality was manifest in evolved capacities for empathy that are necessary for the collaborative production of joint goods. Turner and Lindenberg have somewhat different emphases but they each explain how the evolutionary foundations for mental and social capacities enabled humans to form ties beyond and larger than kin groupings. They also imply inherent limits on individual egoism or self-interest.

Choice Theory

"Choice theory" is not a standard label in sociology but it is useful to capture theorizing that takes human choice as central, yet departs from rational choice assumptions. This class of theories tends to assume that behavior is "choice," that options in choice sets are constrained by institutions, and that subjective inferences about consequences (gains, rewards) shape choice behavior. The individual-collective rationality problem frames choice theories. The problem of order therefore stems from the fact that peoples' choices affect each other due to structural interdependencies, and capacities to collaborate are limited by incentives for free riding. The solution typically is found in norms, informal or formal, and enforcement, also informal or formal.

This volume contains three chapters that analyze how and when choice processes generate social order. Lindenberg argues that "goal frames" are the key to understanding social order. Three goal frames shape perceptions and guide or orient behavior: (*i*) hedonic goals, oriented to fundamental human needs, (*ii*) normative goals, oriented to collective goods, and (*iii*) gain goals, oriented to individual resources. Situations activate goal frames; goal frames specify what goals are most important in the situation; and rational action occurs in the context of how these goal frames are weighted. Social order is problematic in part because, in evolutionary terms, hedonic goal frames are advantaged. The prominence and combination of normative and gain goal frames are most critical to social order. However, normative goal frames at the micro level generate

high levels of ingroup solidarity and outgroup hostility, which tends to fragment the social orders. At the macro level, a dominant gain frame moderated by a normative frame promotes cross-cutting, expansive ties that hold together large, complex social orders. Lindenberg characterizes this as "weak solidarity;" he argues it is the strongest foundation for social order at the macro level. Overall, normative goal frames are crucial to social order, but they have different consequences at the micro and macro level.

The Esser and Kroneberg chapter presents a "frame selection" model for understanding the rational and nonrational foundations for social order. The model integrates elements of institutional and rational choice analyses of the norms and norm enforcement. The theory argues that dual process theory from cognitive psychology specifies different cognitive routes through which norms operate as taken for granted, unconditional imperatives or as conditional, deliberative, and incentive based. Situations activate automatic or deliberative information processing and this determines whether adherence or compliance to norms is spontaneous and taken for granted or deliberative and based on incentives attached to norm adherence. The general conclusion is that the strength of the cognitive frame is crucial. A strong frame (meaning the strongest weight is given to the automatic parts of cognitive or information processing) generates social order regardless of the incentives for norm adherence; whereas a weak frame (meaning the strongest weight is given to the deliberative parts of cognitive processing) generates variable degrees of social order contingent on the strength of the incentives for adhering to norms. Thus, this chapter suggests the role of norms in social order is conditional on situation-based cognitive framing.

DellaPosta and Macy approach the problem of order from a slightly different "choice" perspective. They look not at how deliberate and individual choices or frames impact preferences (akin to the Hobbesian problem of order) but, instead, on how strategically aligned preferences can motivate choices and how these choices, in turn, impact social order. They and others note that polarization – the tendency for preferences to become more extreme and aligned – is inherently threatening to social order. The typical response is to rely on "common ground" models of consensus or "split ground" models of pluralism. Yet, both solutions can be problematic. DellaPosta and Macy show how pluralistic opinion distributions, which are widely regarded to be stable and conducive to tolerance and order, can destabilize through homophily and social influence processes. Whereas consensus models focus on conformity around a common issue pluralists models allow for individuals to agree on one issue (e.g., abortion), while they disagree strongly on another (e.g., the death penalty), yielding a stable equilibrium. DellaPosta and Macy show that through homophily and social influence processes both cultural and political preferences can become aligned, and over time, these destabilize social order. This chapter traces the consequences of fundamental social processes for pluralism as a solution (or lack thereof) to the problem of social order.

Social Exchange Theory

In social exchange theory, social interactions entail an exchange of rewards or gains. The theory assumes self-interested actors who seek exchange partners in networks of three or more actors; in this context, relations form and are sustained to the degree that each individual actor receives valued rewards that are not readily available in alternative exchange relations. By implication, social orders are inherently instrumental but also relational because in *social* exchange, structures tend to generate repeated exchanges among the same actors (Emerson 1981). Understanding the relational dimension is key to the problem of order, and two interrelated questions are central: How do network structures promote repeated exchanges? And, in turn, how does repeated exchange generate ongoing relational ties? Two micro mechanisms are known to promote relational ties in repeated exchange: uncertainty reduction/risk (Kollock 1994; Molm 2003) and positive emotions (Thye, Yoon, and Lawler 2002; Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2008). Repeated exchanges can reduce uncertainties but also arouse positive (or negative) emotions or feelings.

The chapter by Lawler, Thye, and Yoon explicates and critiques ideas about social order found in social exchange theory. They argue that the purely instrumental conception of actors and relational ties is an important weakness of social exchange theorizing, because with such a conception it is not possible to account for relational ties that become noninstrumental objects or take on intrinsic value. Their argument is that emotions are unintended byproducts of social exchange processes that lead actors to feel good (or bad) about their exchanges. If these feelings are attributed to local, micro or larger, macro social units (from relations and groups to organizations and communities), actors develop affective, noninstrumental ties to those social units and are more willing to make sacrifices for the collective welfare. The chapter elaborates structural and cognitive conditions under which affective social-unit ties are likely to develop and when they are directed at local, immediate social units (relations, groups) and/or larger more removed social units (organizations, communities).

Trust Theory

Trust theory is based on the idea that social interactions often entail substantial uncertainty and risk. Trust encourages people to cooperate and generate collective goods that involve risk of exploitation or malfeasance; it also promotes efforts to reach beyond existing affiliations and transact with new partners or form new social ties (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994; Fukuyama 1995). Trust is essentially an "expectation of cooperation by others" and one finds three forms of trust in the literature: (*i*) generalized beliefs about the trustworthiness of people in the abstract (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994), (*ii*) expectations based on knowledge of particular others, and (*iii*) relations of trust based on mutual

perceptions by each actor that the other will take their interests into account, that is, trust as "encapsulated interests" (Cook, Hardin, and Levi 2005). Each form of trust is a potential source of social order because it strengthens the regularity and predictability of cooperation in transactional ties, making collective goods possible if not probable. Sweeping claims have been made about trust being the fundamental "glue" that holds together large, complex societies, but Cook in this chapter questions these claims.

The chapter by Karen Cook argues that trust generates or sustains social order at the micro level in ongoing interactions or relations, but it is not sufficient to generate order beyond the micro level (see also Cook, Hardin, and Levi 2005). The reason is that relational trust requires too much information about the other, more than is likely to be available in macro contexts characterized by "arms-length" social ties. Beyond the micro or relational level, alternative institutional or organization mechanisms are necessary to promote trusting behavior. Examples are the spread of reputations for malfeasance, informal sanctions, professional certifications, alignment of individual and organizational interests, and the like. Such institutional or organizational practices work only if they serve as "assurance mechanisms" that essentially substitute for trust as a mechanism for resolving uncertainties associated with cooperative social ties.

Identity Theory

Identity theory posits that social interactions produce or reproduce stable orders through consensual self-other definitions or identity meanings. People enact and seek to verify identities in social interaction. If self-other identity meanings do not converge, the result is some sort of disorder, and the behaviors enacting identities are adjusted to bring in line an actor's own definition of who they are in the situation with how others define them. Discrepancies are uncomfortable and stressful and people are motivated to resolve them. In sociology identity theory tends to focus on structural foundations. Social structures (interconnected roles or positions) frame or set broad standards for how to enact identities, as is clearly the case with identities attached to social or organizational roles (e.g., parent, neighbor, manager, coworker). The key point is that stable and predictable interactions with others are contingent on identities being sufficiently shared or consensual, as people seek to affirm or verify situational self-definitions.

Two chapters in the volume represent variants on this theme: identity control theory (Burke and Stets 2009) and affect control theory (Heise 2007). The Burke and Stets chapter, "Identity Verification and the Social Order," highlights the role of self-verification as a central motivational force in the construction and reconstruction of social orders. Social structures consist of roles that interweave identities, and resources that enable the enactment of behavior consistent with identity standards (expectations). Identity standards

have both a local, micro dimension and a larger macro organizational or cultural dimension. Burke and Stets posit that when people verify their identities, they feel good and form stronger social bonds with each other or with larger units; where they fail to verify identities, the reverse occurs. The capacity to verify identities in organizations is contingent on the availability of resources. In sum, identity verification processes serve as the critical link between micro and macro orders. Cultural or organizational roles (macro structures) contain generic identity standards to which actors compare identity enactments; and these identity standards are fleshed out in more concrete terms at the micro level where actors also look to particular others to affirm or verify their situational (role-based) identities.

The chapter by Heise, Mackinnon, and Scholl emphasizes cultural sentiments attached to institutional roles and identities. The chapter identifies distinct ways that macro level cognitive and affective meanings together shape consensual role identities that underlie order and stability. Cognitive meanings incorporate "practical knowledge" about the enactment of identities, and affective meanings incorporate "cultural sentiments." At the macro level, cultural sentiments are intertwined with semantic systems that name or label identities. People strive for consistency between sentiments at the institutional level and behavior enactments at the micro, interactional level; inconsistencies ("deflections") cause adjustments. Overall, the paper argues and offers empirical data in support of the idea that identity meanings are consensual, because the semantics of those identity meanings (macro) are manifest in how individuals define their identities in local social interactions. In this sense, the institutional level filters downward to individual minds à la Durkheim.

Expectation States Theory

Expectation states theory addresses how status structures generate and sustain social orders. Status inequalities in the larger organizational units are activated at the micro level when two or more people interact around a collective task and once established, these status structures operate as self-fulfilling prophecies. This happens because people infer performance expectations and attribute competencies to others based on status characteristics, such as race, gender, class, education, and skills (Berger, Fisek, Norman, and Zelditch 1977). Those higher on a status dimension are given more opportunities to contribute in a collective task and their contributions are evaluated more highly. Once a status order develops in an ongoing group, the same status structure tends to reemerge time and again in concrete task interactions addressed by the same actors. For such reasons social order, based on differentially evaluated status characteristics, are highly resilient.

Cecilia Ridgeway develops the idea that the performance expectations underlying status orders are often grounded in "widely shared cultural

beliefs" about the competencies or social worth of those in certain social categories (gender, age, education, etc.) (Ridgeway 1991, 2011) This idea creates an explicit connection between the macro cultural beliefs and the emergence of resilient status structures at the micro level. When local status orders comport with status ordering presumed in cultural beliefs, it creates a tighter connection between the cultural and the interactional level; among other things, this establishes the conditions for status orders to be generalized and interwoven across multiple institutional or organizational domains, from households to communities to jobs, workplaces, and organizations. The chapter by Ridgeway develops the argument that among status characteristics, gender is a wide-ranging and pervasive foundation for stable, convergent structures of inequality across institutional domains because gender beliefs operate as a "primary cultural framework" for organizing social interactions. The "gender frame" is highly adaptable; thus, it tends to survive social change by being "rewritten" into new social arrangements as they emerge, even though the changes may represent opportunities to leave behind gender status beliefs.

Emotions Theory

There are multiple theories of emotion in psychology and sociology. Sociologists tend to emphasize the structural (Kemper 1978) and interactional (Collins 2004; Turner 2007; Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2009) foundations of emotions. One important idea is that people read, feel, and sometimes express emotions in social interaction, but the nature and expression of emotions are contingent on power and status positions. Positive emotions generally promote strong social ties and social order, negative emotions such as anger and shame undermine social order, but some forms such as guilt generate restorative behaviors that repair a damaged social order. Status and power positions shape the types of emotion experienced and the collective effects on social order.

The chapter by Theodore Kemper approaches the order inducing effects of emotion via the behavioral dimensions of power and status. His status-power and reference group theory suggests that individuals continually assess their own status and power standing in relation to others and to reference groups. The theory locates three forms of social order: order based on mutual conferral or status, order based on technical activity in which the parties abide by procedures for resolving task-related differences, and finally, order founded solely on power relations. Kemper sees emotions flowing from the interactions framed by these structural dimensions. The key insight is that emotional reactions stem from the power or status outcomes of social interaction. Kemper catalogues both the positive and negative emotional experiences that result from shifts in one's relative power or status. Importantly, the chapter traces mechanisms through which order may be restored when emotions create disorder. This chapter links well-understood dimensions of social structure (i.e.,