Course work on socialization

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Sociological Perspectives

Structural functionalism is a perspective of sociology where the society is interpreted as a structure that has interrelated parts. It addresses the society holistically as related to the functions of elements that constitute it. According to this perspective society is made up of customs, norms, institutions, and traditions (Lawler, 2008, p 66). These elements are believed to be the ones working together to form what is viewed as a society. The functionalism perspective considers every part of the society as serving a purpose. If the interdependence of the elements of society is positive, peace and harmony is achieved but if it doesn't chaos and disorder may result. However sociologists advancing this theory believe that society has its own mechanism to auto adjust when there are changes in its elements. For example when there is a recession, product prices go up and the society learns to minimize its budget; this way a new order is achieved even though the times are difficult. According to this perspective, everything and everyone no matter how strange they are is considered important to the society. Sociologists advancing this approach believe that, for example, criminals are important in society as through their activities they provide

employment to police men, security guards and other related jobs. Structural functionalist believe that social consensus holds society together. This cohesion is agreed upon by the society and hence most members of the society work towards achieving it.

The conflict perspective aims at showcasing the inequalities in life. The conflict perspective is believed to have originated from the writings of Karl Marx on struggles within different social classes (Lawler, 2008, p 91). This perspective differs from that of structural functionalism as it focuses on attributes within a society that lead to negative things- functionalism focuses on attributes that bring about harmony in society. Structural functionalism avoids social change, protects the status quo, and also states that it is the cooperation of people that brings about social change. On the other hand, the conflict perspective defends social change, argues the status quo, and also states that it is the upper class in society who brings about social change by forcing the lower class to follow their principles. The conflict theory points out that in every society there is bound to be social conflict as long as there is a possibility of inequalities occurring. This theory notes that groups in society are conflicting due to their different agendas. Though conflict theory is similar to functionalism in that both agree that society is made up of smaller parts, the two theories differ as structural functionalism sees how the different elements interrelate to bring about social order while the conflict theory sees how the elements conflict to bring disorder. Unlike structural functionalist, conflict theorists do not believe that when there is some inequality in society the society will adjust to maintain order; rather

they argue that these inequalities will lead to the stronger element domineering over the weaker one.

Symbolic interaction is a sociological perspective which analyzes interactions between human beings. According to this perspective human beings attach an interpretation to symbols (Lawler, 2008, p 43). People then act according to how they interpret the symbols. For example, during the process of communication words exchanged have a meaning to the recipient and also had a meaning they were meant to convey from the sender. It is hence important that these meanings are similar to allow for effective communication. This theory differs from that of structural functionalism as the latter focuses on the holistic nature of society while this theory focuses on the individual parts. It is due to this that it critics argue that the interaction perspective may miss out on important aspects in the larger society as it focuses on the minor details of each individual.

Organization Culture and Socialization within the Organization

Organizations have a definable culture which is seen in elements such as the accepted behavior, norms and traditions that the organization holds. Based on the functionalism perspective, it can be noted that an organization is formed from various elements: people, machines, and a structure. It is these elements that combine to bring out order in the organization. The elements interrelate and when there is a change in the organization, the elements adapt to maintain the order. For example when there is a leader who is absent, the staff members appoint a leader to take over the job. This way they are able to maintain the order in society. Organizational culture is a

construct of many managers to reduce the inequalities in the organization; this way they are able to avoid the conflicts in the organization (Schein, 2010, p 365). The organization is thus able to utilize the conflict theory to avoid conflicts in it. Organization culture is also dependent on the symbolic interaction perspective for its sustainability. This is because managers have to ensure that the way members of the organization interpret different things is the same. This reduces the possibility of inefficiency due to misinterpretation of instructions. Organizations have hence learned to have one culture to bring about harmony in their organization.

Socialization is the process by which continuity of culture and beliefs is achieved in society. In a society it is through the process of socialization that new ones or visitors learn the culture of the society which they are born or live in. For example boys learn to be fathers from their fathers while daughters learn their role in society from their mothers. The process of socialization occurs in a similar way in an organization setting. This is because new employees learn the organization's culture and values from employees who they find there. According to Kramer (2010, p 137), a new employee takes up the culture they find and assumes that that is the official culture of the organization.

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