

WEEK TEN

Mon, Nov 16, 2009

Tues Nov 17, 2009

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF AND IDENTITY

LECTURE OUTLINE

- 1. REVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF SELF**
 - A) SELVES AS EVER-CHANGING SOCIAL OBJECTS**
 - B) SELVES AS EVER-CHANGING SOCIAL OBJECTS**
 - C) SELVES AS EVER-CHANGING SOCIAL OBJECTS**
 - D) SELF AS OBJECT**

- 2. ACTION TOWARD SELF**
 - A) SELF-COMMUNICATION**
 - B) SELF-PERCEPTION**
 - i) The development of self-concept**
 - ii) Self-Judgment**
 - C) SELF-CONTROL OR SELF-DIRECTION**

- 3. POWER AND SELF-JUDGMENT**
 - A) TOTAL INSTITUTIONS**
 - B) MORTIFICATION OF THE SELF**

- 4. IDENTITY AND SELF**

- 5. CONCLUSION: REVIEW OF CENTRAL IDEAS ABOUT SELF**

QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK

*What is the relationship between self and identity?
How do we come to know ourselves?
How do we come to regulate ourselves?
To what extent are all institutions 'total institutions?'*

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DETAILED LECTURE NOTES

1. REVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF SELF

A) SELVES AS EVER-CHANGING SOCIAL OBJECTS

- the self rests on interactions with other people
- to some extent, we have several different selves, but because our interactions overlap, because our significant others and reference groups probably form a relatively consistent whole, our
- self is not as segmented as it may seem
 - this means that while selves are numerous and complex, multiple selves often overlap
 - Obama: interacts with the entire US, many different groups from the Democratic Party, to the 'American people', to the business groups, religious groups, the old and young
 - Whoever's perspective is assumed in the definition of Obama's self will be critical to how he acts

EG: if one of the above groups defines him as 'caring', then when Obama is with this group, he will act 'caring' and define himself as 'caring'

B) SELF AS OBJECT

- the self is an object, a social object to itself and as such, it is pointed out and shared in interaction
- as Blumer told us, the self as object means that the individual can act toward herself/himself as she/he acts toward all other people
- because we talk to other people, we can also talk to our self
- because we judge other people, we can also judge our self
- because we can point out things to our self about other people, we can actually point out things to our self about our self
- because we have emotional feelings towards others, we also have emotional feelings about our self

EG: we criticize others and we criticize our self, we praise others and we praise our self, we get angry with others and we get angry with our self

2. ACTION TOWARD SELF

- action includes behaviour, thoughts and feelings
- achieving 'selfhood' means we act, think and feel towards others and to our self
- there are three kinds of action we need to consider to understand self

A) SELF-COMMUNICATION

- this means we talk to ourselves ie our self is an object we talk to

B) SELF-PERCEPTION

- this means we see ourselves in situations ie our self is an object we take note of, or notice
- self-communication allows us to symbolically communicate with others because we simultaneously both give off meaning to other people AND understand what they are communicating
- self-communication makes it possible to see ourselves, to establish and form a self-concept and identity, and to direct and control ourselves as we act
- because we can recognize and understand our relationship with other objects in a situation, we are able to assess and understand our own actions in situations and therefore able to develop a self-concept, self-judgment and identity

KEY ELEMENTS OF SELF-PERCEPTION

i) Assessment of our own actions

When we communicate with ourselves, what are we able to say?

- we can see ourselves in a situation, reflect on ourselves as objects and make judgments about how we are behaving
- we call this 'identifying' our self
- our self-concept 'anchors' us in the many different situations in which we enter precisely because the self is present in every situation in which we enter

EG: we are with a loved one, holding them, whispering sweet nothings in her/ his ear and all the time, acting toward this person and also assessing how we are acting

Are we being manipulative, are we being tender, are we being immoral?

- how we assess our actions is important for guiding how we act the next time
- over time, self-perception develops some stability because we develop knowledge about who we are and what we do
- we carry that understanding into situations in which we enter
- and we come to expect how others will act toward us in situations because we know from previous interaction
- over time, we become increasingly familiar with our own actions
- 3 important consistencies emerge from this self- perception over time: self-concept, self-judgment and identity

ii) The development of self-concept

- self-concept refers to the fairly stable 'picture' we have of ourselves over time
- defined as: the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to her/himself as an object
- it is what we see when we look back on ourselves
- the picture changes over time in every situation because self is a process not an entity BUT to some extent, the picture is stable over time and across situations
- this consistency we call 'self-concept' which is different from self-image which shifts in different situations
- our self-concept is enduring and built up over time
- even when others behave toward us in unusual ways or surprise us, the self-concept continues without a great deal of change because of its stability
- self-concepts change if confronted with serious confrontations and if that confrontation continues to be central in our lives but mostly we keep a fairly consistent, general view of ourselves

iii) Self-Judgment

- we assess others and we assess ourselves all the time
- we like, blame, reject others and ourselves
- we appraise others and ourselves because the self is something we judge, evaluate, love or hate

EG: Good boy, stupid girl, beautiful lady, insensitive child

- this is what Cooley meant when he talked about the LGS

EG: *He sees that I'm talking a lot and he likes that about me. I like me too!*

They hate me for being so cool. Maybe I shouldn't be so showy?

- what we think of ourselves results from social interaction
- what I end up liking or not liking about myself is, to a great extent, the result of the actions of others toward me and of my own actions towards them

Shibutani (1961): describes the interrelationship between our self-judgment and social interaction

- through role taking, a proud person is able to visualize him/herself as an object toward which others have feelings of respect, admiration or awe so that if others address us with deference, we come to 'take this for granted' that we deserve to be treated this way
- in contrast, if we are constantly mistrusted or ridiculed, we are influenced to reject ourselves and come to think of ourselves as worthless
- once such responses have crystallized, they become more independent of the responses of others
- **reference groups** also come to provide feedback/judgment of self
- so, it is not just the judgment of others that affect our self-judgment but also our perception of other people's judgments that becomes important

EG: they may actually like us but we define their acts as negative toward us

: they may think of us as stupid but we may think they are kidding when they say we are stupid

BUT SELF- JUDGMENTS AND APPRAISALS OF OTHERS DO NOT MATCH PERFECTLY

- we do not always accept the judgments of others if we think of their assessment as unfair, inaccurate or close-minded

EG: *“They do not really know me!” “Who cares what they think of me?”*

- we do not always accept the judgments of others if we think their assessments are correct but they are just being kind or polite

EG: Others tell me I am thin, intelligent, smart, and ambitious but because I do not like what I am, I find it useful to label these others as polite, kind and easily taken in

We select from whatever others may think of us and ignore or alter whatever fits what we think about ourselves

We might even select our significant others in order to enhance or reaffirm our self-judgment, thus making self-judgment a factor in influencing what others think of us

C) SELF-CONTROL OR SELF-DIRECTION

- we tell ourselves what to do in situations meaning we can direct our futures by reflecting on past actions and altering future ones

ie our self is an object we use to control our own actions, to direct ourselves forward in the future

Defn Self-Control: individual is able to control her/himself

Defn Self-Direction: individual is able to point to her/himself and direct what is to be done

Consequences of Self-Control and Self-Direction:

a) allows us to cooperate with others

EG: BB game: we exercise self-control through cooperation with others to achieve the end of winning the game

b) allows us some freedom

EG: *“Stop! Don’t engage in that behavior with those guys/gals!”*
We can talk to ourselves and change direction. We are not passively controlled by structures but determine our own action within the limits of social structures.

Mead:

“Self and Society are two sides of the same coin.”

What did Mead mean by this statement?

- our self is pointed out by others and our self-control is in large part guided by others
- we direct/control our action according to those whose perspectives we assume in the situation we encounter, those who are in the situation, and those outside of it
- we are thus not ‘free’ to direct/control self in any complete sense but we are guided by the perspectives of others
- the guides to our behaviour, the guides we use to determine ‘right’ action, appropriate action rational action, depend on the perspectives of significant others and reference groups
- thus Mead means that society’s perspective becomes the individual’s, the rules of society become the standards by which the individual controls her/his own action
- socialization is self-regulation and an individual’s conscience is the assumption of a social world’s perspective just as use of conscience is acceptance of this perspective as a guide for one’s actions

the individual uses perspectives not to determine response but to
CONVERSE WITH SELF, GUIDE SELF, CONTROL SELF AND DIRECT SELF

3. POWER AND SELF-JUDGMENT

Goffman:

- describes situations in which the individual's judgment of self is almost completely in the hands of other people who have very great control over the physical and social environment the individual is in
- Goffman calls these instances **total institutions**
- **EG:** prisons, mental hospitals, army, some religious orders = institutions that are set apart from the wider society isolated, where for a length of time the individual's life is in an enclosed, regimented space
- he describes the process through which total institutions systematically manipulate the individual's world so that the individual comes to redefine self to reject or question the conceptions of self brought in from the outside which resulted from interactions in various social worlds

EG: Mortification of the self = abasements, degradations, humiliations and profanations of self, isolation, dispossession of property, loss of one's name, stripped of privacy and the ability to present themselves to others in the way they choose; clothes, cosmetics, haircuts all restricted; ask permission to do anything; bow to those in authority = all represent ways to replace old self-judgments with new self-judgments

Key elements of creating a new self-judgment:

- i. isolation from significant others and reference groups outside the institution
- ii. total control of the individual's environment by a few powerful individuals
- iii. constant interaction within a social world whose perspective is assumed, including perspective on self

EG: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

4. IDENTITY AND SELF

- as we look back on ourselves and see who in the world we are, we develop an identity

Defn: *Identity is the name we call ourselves. It is socially recognized and validated. It is usually the name we announce to others that tells them who we are as we are acting.*

- we have names for all social objects because naming allows us to identify and classify our world
- we attribute names to other people and they in turn name us
- naming allows us to understand our environment and to understand ourselves within that environment
- identities are part of what we mean by self
- self is the object we act toward
- identity is the naming of that self; the name we call ourselves
- defining who the self is, as are all other actions the individual takes toward his/her self, is carried out in interaction with others
- as other come to label me, so I come to label myself
- the names given us become our names, our social addresses, our definitions of who we are in relation to those with whom we interact
- the identities are labels used, not by all others, but by the reference groups and significant others of the individual
- and these labels become central to us over time as our interactions reconfirm them over and over

Peter Burke (1980):

“Identities are meaning a person attributes to the self”

- they are relational, social and placed in a context of interaction and they are a source of motivation

EG: *“I am a woman!”*

: means certain behaviours, feelings and thoughts are available to me

Harold Garfinkel (1967):

- he said that sexual classification is especially important for societies dividing people and placing them into 'natural' categories of male and female because the original sense of the 'real me' begins with sex identity

EG: children know sex identity (we call it gender identity now) by age 2 and have incorporated it into their sense of self

TWENTY STATEMENTS TEST (TST)

- the central importance of identity to the individual is the subject of a great deal of empirical work at the State University of Iowa

Kuhn: developed the TST which simply asks individuals to answer the question "*WHO AM I?*"

5. CONCLUSION: REVIEW OF CENTRAL IDEAS ABOUT SELF

- a) The self is social, arises in interaction and changes or remains stable because of interaction.
- b) The self arises in childhood through symbolic interaction with significant others. Each reference group influences a different view of self and makes the self somewhat different in each situation.
- c) The meaning of self is found in TROTS.
- d) Much of our action toward others is symbolic communication which is based on talking to ourselves (thinking).
- e) We develop a self-concept through communicating with self and others.
- f) Self means that the individual is able to be active in relation to the world because self makes possible self-control/direction thus allowing cooperation or refusal to cooperate.