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An Introduction to "CO-ORD"

By Jack Parsons

CO-ORD collects in an accessible form some of the key studies and ideas from the existing wealth of material available on the problems of managing societies containing conflicting elements.

CO-ORD arose from a suggestion by this author at the 17th U.S. Writer's Workshop on immigration problems, held in Washington, D.C., October 21, 1993. It seemed that, though the contributions were interesting and valuable, there is a lot of basic sociology, social psychology, anthropology, etc. (by such authors as Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Merton, and Blalock) that — though very relevant to our work — tended not to be brought into play. We thought it useful to put some of this material together and make it more readily available to members of the Workshop and other researchers and/or activists.

Funding was secured and a young research assistant, Justin Savage — newly graduated in psychology from Cardiff University — spent three months winnowing through my library and research notes for concepts, references, and quotations. We hoped to expand into Cardiff University's library and databases but there proved to be little time for this.

As Mr. Savage is good with computers we put the material into a database, for which the new WordPerfect "Works" package was chosen. This operates in IBM PC format for DOS, and CO-ORD users can customize and expand it. Additions, corrections, etc, could be shared between colleagues and/or centrally collected and farmed out to subscribers.

Of course this task could never be "complete" in the full sense of the term. There is a vast and rapidly expanding literature and all we could achieve in the time available was a reasonable coverage of some of the basic readily available material.

Basic Postulates

1) Societies are goal-seeking systems which must somehow be kept functional and continuously be guided toward the realization of their more or less agreed aims and values. This is the fundamental and inescapable process of social control, or coordination. (Hence, the name: CO-ORD.)

2) There must be at least a minimum amount of homogeneity and consensus on both the goals of the system and the means of attaining them, otherwise it cannot be controlled and must disintegrate. In the light

of mass-colonization by people of different racial, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic identities, the main focal points were the two opposed concepts: sociocultural homogeneity and heterogeneity.

3) On the question of social homogeneity/heterogeneity *vis-a-vis* the social control process, only two hypotheses are possible:

- a) No homogeneity whatever is required to permit a society or other social system's social control process to function adequately.
- b) Some homogeneity is required for the purpose.

If (a) is an absurdity and can therefore be ignored, then (b) must be valid and this raises four basic questions:

- 1) How *much* homogeneity is needed for a social system to function adequately?
- 2) What *kind(s)* of homogeneity can help with this purpose?
- 3) How can the requisite kinds and amounts of homogeneity be *identified* and *quantified*?
- 4) How can these be made *acceptable*, put into *effect*, and *maintained* or suitably *modified* into the indefinite *future*?

Possible Solutions

No amount of academic evidence or analysis can ever provide final solutions to these weighty problems. Solutions must somehow be created and maintained by the sociopolitical control system of each and every society if it is not to lose its identity, be taken over, or even disintegrate entirely. This is a "tracking" task which, as long as the group exists, can never end.

The best that would-be "opinion-formers" can do (with the aid of evidence and theorizing) is to draw attention to key facts, give pointers, criticism, and encouragement to those in power and as many as possible of those who put and keep them there. A cooperatively tended CO-ORD might turn into a useful tool for these purposes.

Part of a Typical Entry

There are about 650 entries in Version 1. Here is a fairly typical excerpt:

"Concept; adaptation. Main discipline; sociology.

Merton, R.K. (1967) Social Theory and Structure. New York: The Free Press. p.139ff. (JP)

Merton considers five modes of adaptation.

1. Conformity.
2. Innovation.
3. Ritualism.
4. Retreatism.
5. Rebellion.

p.141. "I. CONFORMITY

To the extent that a society is stable, adaptation type I — conformity to both cultural goals and institutional means — is the most common and widely diffused. Were this not so, the stability and continuity of the society could not be maintained. The mesh of expectancies constituting every social order is sustained by the modal behavior of its members representing conformity to the established, though perhaps secularly changing, cultural patterns. It is, in fact, only because behavior is typically oriented toward the basic values of the society that we may speak of a human aggregate as comprising a society. Unless there is a deposit of values shared by interacting individuals, there exist social relations — if the disorderly interactions may be so called — but no society." [Continues...]

Access to CO-ORD

Inquiries may be sent to Dr. John Tanton c/o The Social Contract Press, 316½ E. Mitchell St., Suite 4, Petoskey, MI 49770, (616)347-1171, FAX (616) 347-1185; or to Jack Parsons, Treferig Cottage Farm, Llantrisant, Mid-Glam, United Kingdom, CF7 8LQ, Phone/FAX 0443-222294. ■

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