I. The Social Construction of Reality

A. Origins of Modern Social Constructionism

1. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s The Social Construction of Reality

2. Main goal: To explain how social order is possible with millions of people interacting every day at the micro level.

3. Argument: Human beings create the social world in which they live by means of a dialectical process and constantly reproduce that social world through `interactions at the micro level.

4. Theoretical sources: social psychology (George Herbert Mead), phenomenology (Alfred Shutz), and conflict theory (Marx) and functionalism

5. Summary of main points and terms

a. human beings engage in intersubjective interactions that produce and reproduce a world.

b. through time these interactions become habituated and when this happens institutions emerge (externalization)

c. these habituated interactions (typifications) and institutions are the social world, a real world out there (Durkheim)

d. however people don’t recognize the world as one that they have created they experience as something out there that shapes and determines their lives (alienation and reification)

e. while interactions at the interpersonal level become shaped and controlled by habituation and institutional demands there is still an ongoing dialectical process between micro and macro forces

f. but most importantly social order is maintained

B. Postmodern Social Constructionism: Critique

1. Main argument is Durkheimian.

a. society is real and the ultimate good

b. social order is the ultimate value

c. “neuters” Marx’s critique: alienation and reification

d. “it is what it is”

2. Ignores:

a. structures of society, institutions, systems of stratification, norms and values and how they justify inequality and its consequences.

b. for example, it offers no tools for critique of totalitarian societies, Nazi Germany

c. or why, arguably, an entire population in a supposedly democratic

d. power and its function in creating a world (and much more)

3. PMSC and power

a. goal:

b. argument

c. theoretical sources: Foucault, Baudrillard, Marcuse

a. power is coercive

b. power is institutional

c. power is ideological

d. power is embedded in typifications/in everyday life and reproduces itself

e. power can produce subjects

f. power can produce “unreality

I. The Social Construction of America

A. American Exceptionalism: Idea and Myth.

1.

2.

B. Political Economy

1. “Free Market”

a.

b.

2. “Democracy”

a.

b/

C. The Social Construction of Unreality

1. Mass Media and Creation of Unreality

a.

b.

2. Creating inhabitants of Unreality

a.

b.

3. Social Media: The Avatar as Self

a.

b.