

Sociology 3308: Sociology of Emotions
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Overheads Classes 10-11: Randall Collins:
Stratification, Emotional Energy & Transient Emotions

- * Classical sociologists *implied* an emotional basis to social order:
 - Durkheim: social solidarity rests on shared ritual sentiment
 - Parsons: order rests on values
 - Weber: legitimacy, status groups and religious world views
 - Marx: class conflict and alienation

- * These emotional implications need to be drawn out re: 3 central questions:
 - (1) what holds a society together?
 - (2) what mobilizes conflict?
 - (3) what serves to uphold stratification?

- * Classic macro-focus didn't explicitly focus on emotion: need reverse focus

- * Many contemporary micro approaches also lacking: symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and exchange theory.

- * Exceptions:
 - (1) Goffman's interaction ritual theory: social order generated in fleeting encounters;

 - (2) Garfinkel's ethnomethodology: strategies used to construct everyday realities to avoid emotional implications of arbitrariness.

Disruptive & Long-Term Emotions Dramatic Emotions & Emotional Energy:

* Both Garfinkel and Goffman imply long-lasting, undramatic tones/moods permeating group life:

Garfinkel: accomplished feeling “nothing extraordinary is happening”

Goffman feelings of solidarity, membership, and feelings about self.

* Constitute the backdrop, or baseline, against which the more dramatic emotions shine.

Interaction Ritual and Emotional Energy:

Collins’ basic model of ritual interaction has the following elements:

1. A group of at least two assembled face to face;
2. Focus of attention upon the same object or activity, and mutual awareness of each other’s attention;
3. Members share a common mood (short term emotion);
4. The production of feelings of solidarity as a result of this emotional coordination (long term mood).
5. Rituals shape cognitions.

* Long-term outcomes= “emotional energy”

- continuum: confidence/enthusiasm/self-esteem to depression/lack of initiative/negative self feelings
- social group = point of reference

Stratified Interaction Rituals: Power Rituals and Status Rituals:

- * Interaction rituals may be successful or unsuccessful. Depend on:
 - (a) ecological factors;
 - (b) motivational factors; and
 - (c) material resources necessary for staging rituals.
- * Variations in these conditions lead to the stratification of interaction.

Power Rituals:

- * Power = all factors that bring people together who are unequal in their resources such that some give orders and others take orders.
- * Order givers take the initiative and gain emotional energy
- * Order takers may be required to take part and have feelings of weakness, depression, and fear.
- * Each share an orientation toward dominant symbols:
 - order givers, often politically conservative, identify symbolic ideals
 - order takers alienated from them: “negative sacred objects.”
- * Between extremes: order transmitters and egalitarian exchanges

Status Rituals:

- * Status: refers to continuum of centrality or peripherality in groups
 - People at center experience more emotional energy
 - People on fringe the opposite
 - Types of status groups: same/local/exclusive vs. several/loose

network/cosmopolitan (former stronger emotional energy)

Effects on Long-Term Emotions: Emotional Energy:

* Interaction ritual model: people acquire/lose emotional energy in both power and status interactions

* Interaction rituals connected in chains, feeding back on each other

* Emotional energy accumulates positively or negatively over time.

* Emotional energy needs greater elaboration:

- A general feeling of being “up” or “down”
- Also readiness for action/initiative in contexts
- Varies by groups/ contexts
- Involved in motivation/avoidance of actions
- Manifested physically/ psychologically, but basis cognitive
- Symbols “spark off propensities” (possibly subconscious)

* The main long-term emotional energies resulting from stratified interactions are:

(a) High levels of enthusiasm, confidence and initiative, resulting from either power or status dimensions;

(b) Low levels of the same (i.e. depression, shame) resulting from either power or status;

(c) anger, which results from moderate levels of negative experiences, particularly on the power dimension (i.e. when there are sufficient possibilities of fighting back.)

Short-Term or Dramatic Emotions:

- * Short-term, dramatic emotions derived from baseline of emotional energy
- * Positive emotions (e.g. enthusiasm, joy, humor) become intense largely because of a contagious buildup during a successful interaction ritual, but happen against a baseline of previous emotional energy.
- * Negative emotional energy can similarly bring the group down, reflecting the baseline of emotional energy (e.g. varieties of anger; fear).

Transformations from Short-Term Emotions into Long-Term Emotional Energy:

- * Various short-term emotional feed back into long-term emotional makeup: emotional energy.
- * Emotional energy doesn't depend solely on the dramatic emotions (e.g. uncontested domination)
- * Clinical tradition emphasizes emotional crises: this model background levels of emotional energy as well.

Questions for Further Research: Testing the Interaction Ritual Model:

- * Must show an empirical relationship between:
 - (1) the amount of focus of mutual attention;
 - (2) the amount of coordination of activity; and
 - (3) the buildup of a common emotion.
- * Must empirically test the aftereffects of a successful IR on emotional energy and attachment to symbols.

* Need to find better ways of measuring power and status.

Testing Power and Status Effects on Emotions:

* Suggests multivariate design independently measuring:

- the amount of order-giving and order taking that happens daily life
- the amount of time in the presence of other people versus alone
- the amount of diversity of communications/focus of attention.

Measuring Emotional Energy:

* Suggests adapting methodologies available for studying short-term, dramatic emotions:

- hormone levels
- “affectual loadings” of various social categories on power, status, and activation).

* Desirable to follow people’s experiences across a chain of interactions.

* For *independent* variables Collins suggests measuring:

- experiences of order giving, order taking, and egalitarian interaction
- the social density of interaction (focus/contagion)
- the variety of interaction patterns (local/cosmopolitan).

* For *dependent* variables, use unobtrusive measures such as:

1. *Voice*
2. *Eyes*
3. *Facial Expression*
4. *Bodily postures/movements*

* Study a combination of these factors, find those most correlated, then concentrate on most efficient measures.

Conclusion:

* Once good measures become available, we could:

- Carry out unobtrusive emotion surveys
- Construct spatio-temporal map of “emotional ecology” of society
- Aggregate this and see impact on macro-structure of society
- Use this to explain/predict/engineer (?) social order and change