Sociology 3308: Sociology of Emotions

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Overheads Classes 20-22: The Phenomenological Approach

* The phenomenological approach to emotions generally stresses:

- The subjective experience of emotions
- Links with perceptions, beliefs, and bodily ways of "being"

* In the next few classes we will discuss:

(1) Norman Denzin
(2) My work on happiness
(3) My work on metaphors of loss

Norman K. Denzin: Introductory Remarks:

Denzin's basic postulates:

1. Emotion must be studied as a *lived experience* by interacting individuals;
2. Emotion must not be studied as something incidental to social experience;
3. The natural scientific attitudes regarding emotions must be suspended;
4. Emotion must be grasped in its entirety;
5. The essence of emotion as a process must be captured, described, and its generic features of emotion then interpreted;
6. Emotion must be understood from within;
7. Emotion is a process that turns on itself, elaborates itself, gets out of hand;
8. The phenomenological understanding and interpretation of emotion will not be causal. It will be descriptive, interpretive and processual.
9. Phenomenological interpretation proceeds neither from strict induction nor from deduction, but moves forward through interrogation and understanding;
10. Theory testing is not the goal. The intention is descriptive interpretation.

Emotion and Social Interaction:

* The dwelling place of emotion is the self

* Emotion is *self-feeling* (this will be elaborated later)

* "*Emotions are temporally embodied, situated self-feelings that arise from emotional and cognitive social acts that people direct to self or have directed toward them by others*."

* Emotions are processes, not static things.

* Emotions can be seen as arising out of:

 (1) The self-interactions that individuals direct toward themselves; and
 (2) Out of the reflected appraisals of others, both imagined and real.

* General model (***see chart***: interactional and phenomenological streams*)

* The sequence of emotional self-interaction appears to have the following trajectory:

1. A person is interactively located in the world, engaged in interpretive practice;
2. An interaction occurs between the person and a social object (including persons), which brings the object into the person's phenomenological field;
3. The object is defined in self-feeling terms such as anger, fear or anticipation;
4. These are ratified through physical feelings/ sensations felt in the lived body;
5. The person imagines his appearance and actions in the eyes of his interactional fellow(s), real and imagined;
6. An interpretation of the other's judgement follows, as well as some sort of inner self-feeling that accompanies that judgement;

7. A feeling is built up toward the other regarding the feelings that have been imputed to her;
8. That feeling is incorporated into the feelings the person feels toward himself;
9. The person experiences a feeling of moral self-worth regarding himself and the other;
10. A summary or gloss emotional self-definition is produced.

Norman K. Denzin (1985): "Emotion as Lived Experience"

* Denzin now elaborates his concept of *self-feeling,* largely by focusing on how the experience of emotion is linked to the "lived body."

* Denzin argues recent sociological work on emotion has not benefited from the works of phenomenologists and existentialists.

* Denzin attempts to address this deficiency by outlining a phenomenology of the body and the emotions consistent with symbolic interactionism.

* Denzin argues that "lived experience" is unit of analysis for interactionist theorists as well as phenomenologists/existentialists.

* Self-feeling has three-fold structure:

    (1) A sense of feeling in terms of self-awareness;
    (2) A sense of the self feeling the feeling; and
    (3) A revealing of the moral, inner, interactional meaning for the self and its on-going plan of action.

* A *circuit of selfness* attaches the person to the world, where *emotionality, self, and meaning are revealed.*

* *Emotionality* is a *social process,* while *emotion* is *self feeling* grounded in social acts As such, there is a *double structure*:

- *A feeling of self* that emotion reveals to the self
- *Movement into a line of action that enacts emotionality& feeling*.

* *Emotion and emotionality* are located in the relationship one has with one's *lived body* (the body as *experienced*).

* The subject has a *three-fold relationship* to his body:

- S/he *is* his body
- S/he is *in* his body
- S/he is *outside* his body

* The social phenomenological approach begins with the "*lived experience*" of the subject in the social situation: emotion must be studied *from within*.

* Emotion's body = the point of reference for all lived emotional experience

* It has a fourfold structure:

- A physical body
- A lived presence (for subject)
- An enacted ensemble of action (for others)
- An ensemble of moving action (for subject)

* Each *corresponds* to a *different mode of lived emotion*:

(1) Sensible feelings;
(2) Feelings of the lived body;
(3) Intentional value feelings;
(4) Moral feelings of self

* Sensible feelings:

-Sensations felt in the lived body (e.g. physical pain)
-Not accessible to others

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* Feelings of the lived body:

    - Not located in any 1 part of body, but dispersed throughout
    - Express an orientation to world
    - Communicate a definition of situation (e.g. profound sorrow)
    - Possible foundation for shared feelings

* Intentional value feelings:

    - Feelings about feelings
    - Transcend particular episodes
    - Seek to isolate meaning of experience
    - Often draw on cultural meanings/ orientations to world

* Feeling of the self and moral person:

    - Entail inner feelings the person directs toward self as a moral object
    - Primarily originate in self/ references cultural ideals
    - Reflect self as lodged "in the world"

* Denzin outlines 2 levels of self in this regard: *surface* and *deep.*

    - Surface: seen by others/ presented/managed
    - Deep: revealed by self and moral feelings: (e.g. has self-respect)

* Denzin's work ultimately both interactionist and phenomenological:

    - Avoids positivist/ hard science approach/ emotion as variable
    - Examines emotion from within as experienced

**Application of Denzin's Approach:
Cultural Studies, Film & Emotionality**

* Denzin's work on emotional practices:

- Embodied, embedded actions (e.g. watching films, drinking, working)
- Connected to, and produce, sensible feelings, feelings of the lived body, intentional value feelings and feelings of the moral person
- Produce anticipated and unanticipated alterations in the person's inner and outer streams of emotional experience
- Are gender specific/ moulded by the ideological structures of domination and gender stratification in society

* Denzin's basic argument is:

1. The sociology of emotions must connect the emotions to the study of social relationships;
2. It must begin by focusing on specific, gendered relational forms (e.g. marriage, family and intimacy);
3. It must enter the field of cultural studies;
4. Film is an excellent research site for the merger of these three concerns.

* Five general theses organize Denzin's discussion. These deal with film and the cultural reading of emotionality and intimacy:

1. Emotionality is shaped by culture-making institutions. Each of the forms of emotional experience discussed earlier are influenced by cultural representations in film of emotional experience.

These relate both to (a) the viewers' biography; as well as to (b) the larger than life, symbolic representations of "real life"

2. Emotional practices represented in film are gender-specific, moulded by the ideological structures of domination and gender stratification that exist in the social structure.

3. It is necessary to study how culture-making institutions ideologically represent love, desire, sexuality, intimacy, marriage, emotionality and emotional bonding:

-Representations of desire connect self and other in real and imagined embodied interactional states

- Viewers often identify with the symbolic, the imagined, the ideal stories told on the screen

-Viewers emotions and self-understandings are often shaped by these cultural representations of love, desire and sexuality

-Film may shape the four elements of emotional experience as they relate to love, desire, and relationships

4. The contemporary study of emotionality must be historical and culturally grounded in the postmodern, postwar period of American life. Attention must be given to the structures of late capitalism including:

- Commodification
- Bureacratization
- The production of mass-mediated realities
- The decline in power of the metanarrative myths of truth, science, freedom, and democracy
-The rise of hyperreal media representations of "real life" experiences

Interaction must be examined between:

(1) Media representations
(2) Ideology
(3) These postmodern processes
(4) Emotional sites (e.g. home, work, leisure, sexuality)

Film is:

(a) An ideological apparatus that
(b) Represents imaginary relations between people, and
(c) Structures the meanings people bring to everyday interactional sites

By so doing, films:

- Undermine, even as they support underlying cultural beliefs
- Mould the inner emotional life of the person.

5. Emotional experiences are gender-specific and ideologically defined by the larger cultural order.

-Within any emotional site there are typically two separate structures of emotional experience: masculine and feminine.
-These emotional codes come together in the fields of sexuality and desire; that is on the terrain of gendered sexual relationships.
-These four terms (male, female, sexuality, and desire) are actualized in love, intimacy, friendship and family.

* Ultimately:

- Movies create emotional representations that draw upon the ideological structures of everyday life
-This creates a politics of emotionality and feeling that shapes real life, lived emotional experiences
-Cultural practices shape personal experiences, while, simultaneously, people seize these practices and turn them to their own emotional ends
- Analysis must also relate the components of feeling to emotional sites
-Films are interactional productions. They do not simply assert their truths, rather we interact with them in order to arrive at conclusions.

J.S. Kenney (1996)
The Experience of Happiness: A Sociological Investigation:

*In this paper, I attempted to synthesize a general system for understanding and interpreting human happiness.

* This is divided into four parts:

(1) Definitions;
(2) Interactional operation of these concepts;
(3) Types of belief
(4) Mechanisms of change.

(1) Definitions:

* *Emotion*= a perceptual judgement in relation to:

- Moral and interpretive beliefs
- Self-identity as a moral object occupying particular roles
- The social context of the present interaction
- Which *may* be accompanied by pronounced physiological sensations

* *Belief* = ongoing symbolic combination of:

- Internalized, involuntary systems of perception
- Conscious rules of moral evaluation *and*
- Meanings generated by the present interactional/structural setting

* *The self* = a combination of:

- Various *creative* I/me components or role sets
- Organized in a *hierarchy* of various internalized role designations
- Related to commitment to relationships, beliefs, and values.

* *Happiness*= that emotion that rates the overall *self* (past, present, and future) *positively* in relation to:

> -Internalized moral beliefs
> -The accumulation of past actions/ interactions;
> -Current definitions of the situation
> -That have not been disconfirmed

(2) Operational Illustration:

* Example of young executive:

> (1) Receiving praise from boss
> (2) Being reprimanded/ attempting to cope

* Starting point: Pre-internalized beliefs. These function to:

> - Define reality
> - Morally define identity
> - Act as repository of "identity maintenance strategies"

* Affirming interaction:

> - Positive congruency between beliefs, identity & moral self definition
> - Added to "me" in emotional memory/ self-identity enhanced/ happier

* Disconfirming interaction:

> - Inconsistency posed between beliefs, identity & moral self definition
> - Identity maintenance strategies invoked, such as:
>> 1. Conceptual "escape routes"
>> 2. Seeking out support
>> 3. Self-presentational micropolitics
>> 4. Emotion management strategies
>> 5. Changing self-definition

- Relative success reflected in moral self-evaluation/ level of happiness

* Happiest individual:

- Positive beliefs continually confirmed in interaction
- System of beliefs enable negative incidents to be defined away

* Unhappiest individuals:

- Self-perpetuating, negative self assessment of self that is continually reinforced in interaction and cannot be disconfirmed in experience
- Anomic individuals
- Individuals whose identities are based on conflicting roles, beliefs, and obligations

* Latter situations are more likely in societies approximating Durkheim's "organic solidarity," with an extensive division of labour, interdependence, and conflicting beliefs

(3) Types of Belief:

* Types of belief related to happiness are important

* Major dimensions:

(a) Present vs. future temporal orientation or "point of reference"
(b) "Individual centred" vs. "other directed" activity and involvement

* 4 major types of belief:

(1) Transcendental
(2) Egocentric
(3) Empathetic
(4) Crusader

* Transcendental beliefs:

     -Primarily future directed / self-interested
     -Individual-directed meanings telling one how to find happiness
     - Happiness seen as a state of mind, a noun, something that can either
       be received or ultimately achieved in future

* Egocentric beliefs:

     - Primarily present focused/ self-interested
     - Individual-directed meanings telling one how to find happiness
     - Conceived as a state of mind, a noun, something that can be received
       or experienced in present

* Empathetic beliefs:

     - Primarily present focused / other directed
     - Happiness not conscious focus/ an epiphenomenon
     - Happiness, if considered, seen as an activity, verb, something one
       does
     - Conscious expansion of the self beyond own body

* Crusader beliefs:

     - Primarily future focus / other directed
     - Happiness not conscious focus/ an epiphenomenon
     - Happiness, if considered, seen as an activity, verb, something one
       does
     - Conscious expansion of the self beyond own body

(4) Mechanisms of Change:

* We must examine:

     - How individuals *adaptively change their views*

- move closer to one type or away from another

* This occurs when:

    - Perceived *disconfirmation* occurs in interaction
    - *Identity maintenance strategies have broken down*

* Significant influences:

    - Frequency of disconfirmation
    - Intensity if disconfirmation
    - Whether occurring in interaction with significant others

* But consider variety of identities/ roles structuring the self: *most disconfirmations will be role-specific*

* Implications:

    (1) One may entertain and adaptively move between different types of belief for the different social roles that one occupies
    (2) One's happiness will consist in adapting the most favourable mix of these types of belief to the interactional roles one fills
    (3) One may merely make an adaptive change in emphasis within a given ideology rather than an outright change to another
    (4) One can tactically sacrifice one of one's "less important" role identities to disconfirmation

* Perceived *consistency* (to self and others) is vital to all of these strategies

* Ultimately, by remaining thus *internally consistent* and *externally harmonious*, one is happy.

J. S. Kenney (1998): Metaphors of Loss:

In 1994-1998 I conducted a study of the family and loved ones of homicide victims. This involved the collection, transcription, and analysis of:

(i) 32 interviews;
(ii) 22 surveys;
(iii) 108 Criminal Injuries Compensation files.

* Two of the questions I examined were:

(1) How such crimes impact on the selves of family and loved ones;
(2) The meanings disclosed to these individuals by their emotional experiences

I discovered that survivors articulated a rich series of metaphors to illustrate the impact of the crime, which were termed *metaphors of loss*.

* These attempted to convey, insofar as words may, the effect of homicide on those close to the deceased.

* They constitute *typical ways survivors use to express both their loss of self, and the existential meanings disclosed to them by the emotions inherent to their experiences.*

This section reviews and compares survivors' use of these typical metaphors as follows:

(1) The metaphors are discussed in *descending order of frequency.*

(2) The *contexts* in which survivors utilize these metaphors will be examined.

(i) Loss of Self:

*The single most common metaphors expressed by survivors were those

indicating a generalized *loss of self*. Subjects using such metaphors typically asserted that they "*lost part of themselves*" when the deceased was killed.

* It is significant to note that these general metaphors were frequently *generalized beyond survivors alone*

Examples: To family;
          To an intimate group that had included the deceased;
          To the community at large (e.g. "ripple effect")

(ii) Permanent Loss of Future:

        The various metaphors signifying a generalized loss of self related clearly to other metaphors where various *dimensions* of loss were elaborated.

* The next most frequent type of metaphor expressed by survivors were those signifying that they had presently suffered (a) a *personal loss of future* that was, (b) by its very nature *permanent*.

(iii) Violating Devastation:

        Survivors frequently expressed the view that they:

(a) Felt *personally violated* by the murder; and that this
(b) Left behind a *devastation* that penetrated to the very core of their being.

(iv) Being a "Different Person Now:"

        Survivors frequently noted that, since the murder, they had become "different people."

(v) Loss of Control:

        Going hand in hand with these other losses is the fifth metaphor: *loss of control*.

- While all of the other metaphors showed a clear majority - often an overwhelming preponderance - of expression by females, the *reverse* was true here, with men emphasizing a sense of personal failure.

(vi) Lost Innocence:

Finally, there is the metaphor of *lost innocence* which underlies radical changes in survivors' sense of reality. This appeared in *several variations*:

(1) Survivors' *shock and incomprehension that such a thing could happen.*

(2) In relation to the cherished characteristics of the deceased as a person, as in *"the loss of an innocent,"* and in relation to the effect of the murder on surviving children where they were characterized as having their "*childhood" taken* from them.

(3) In relation to one's *prior ideals of justice*, which were reinterpreted as being naive under the circumstances.

(b) Metaphorical Context:

Simply describing survivors' typical metaphors of loss tells us little if we neglect the *social contexts in which they are expressed*.

- It was clear that the *majority* of survivors expressed these metaphors either in response to specific *questions*, as in the interview and survey data, or in the context of certain specific types of *interactions with officials*, as in the Criminal Injuries Compensation data.

- With regard to the former, for example, the vast majority of metaphors were expressed in relation to questions:

Examples: asking respondents *how they would describe losing a loved one in this way,* or *whether they now saw themselves as victims of crime*.

With the Criminal Injuries Compensation data, metaphors were primarily expressed in response to either *requests for documentation*, or *in response to official skepticism or unfavorable rulings*. Indeed, respondents also expressed these metaphors in response to *interactions with the Board that they found inappropriate or unwelcome.*

- Survivors used these metaphors in *two ways*:

(1) To *express the unexpressible*, to convey, inasmuch as possible through the limited medium of language, their pain, loss, and the various meanings disclosed in their lives by same.

(2) When their status as *victims* was questioned, they enunciated these metaphors as a means of *reinforcing this definition of the situation* when something was at stake.

-While there was no pattern linking any *specific* metaphors more or less to *particular* losses (e.g. parental vs. sibling bereavement), it appeared that the metaphors as a group were expressed disproportionately by bereaved parents.

Discussion and Conclusion:

Each of these metaphors constitutes an existential meaning, disclosed in emotion, that sheds light on various, fundamental dimensions of the self. These signify a loss of not only subjects' relationship with the deceased and various integral aspects of their *prior* identities, but express the structure of a *fractured self struggling to make sense of itself* in a world where people get murdered.