

Sociology 3308: Sociology of Emotions

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Overheads Class 4-5: The History of Emotions:

- * Historical work on emotions is expanding rapidly.
- * Principal foci:
 - Processes of change in emotional standards and experience;
 - Emotional continuities amid changing historical contexts;
 - The characteristic emotional styles of a particular period
 - Establishing baselines for comparison.

(1) The Development of Emotions History:

- * Norbert Elias (1938):
 - Changes in emotional expression and “civilization”
 - Focused attention on constructivist theory
 - Focused attention on emotion as linking culture and the function served
 - Largely ignored by historians
- * Historians moved into area hesitantly (explicit focus lacking):
 - Lucien Febvre urged “historical psychology”
 - Cultural historians dealt with styles/rituals
 - Social history initially emphasized rationality

* Psychohistory:

- Erik Erickson
- Focus on biography
- Freudian approach
- Historians not accepting

* Maturation of social history (1970's):

- Increased focus on ordinary value systems/activities
- Less focus on politics/ military events
- Strong interest in family history led to emotions
- Change in family affection/ romantic love in 17th - 18th centuries
- "Mentalities" research (French historians)

* Analysis of emotions/ impact inescapable by late 1970's

(2) A Maturing Field:

* Field of emotions history matured in 1980's

* Emerged as explicit historical subfield

- * Changes:
- Explicit focus on history of emotions itself (not an addendum)
 - Expanded list of emotions examined (e.g. jealousy)
 - Contexts of emotional change elaborated (e.g. workplace)
 - Recognition that stark contrasts oversimplified/ continuities possible (e.g. love relationships)
 - Distinction between emotions and "feeling rules"
 - Increased interdisciplinary collaboration.

* Historians more aware of relevant work in other fields/ theoretical argument

(3) The Findings:

- * Research generated in a variety of areas.
- * Richest developments in modern Western history (1500 forward)
- * Three periods stand out:

(1) The early modern period (17th - 18th centuries)

- Identification of emotional self
- Changes in parental/marital love
- Fear and spontaneity
- Expansion of emotional range
- Changes in emotional values

(2) The 19th century

- Overshadowed by earlier changes/ amplified them
- Apotheosis of mother love/ sanctity of family
- Ideal of romantic love/ jealousy reinterpreted
- Grief redefined/ anger condemned
- gender linkages/ social class divisions

(3) The 20th century

- oscillations in standards
- increasing openness in expression
- continuities: gender
- contradiction between increasing informality/need for self-control: idiosyncracies now telling - not codes
- Changes in emotional standards governing

(4) Problems and Responses:

* Issues of concern:

- Coherently integrating findings/ filling gaps
- Integrating social science research
- Little research on non-Western emotional history
- Assumptions of continuity between Europe/ America
- Working out interdisciplinary linkages (e.g. psychology)
- Finding appropriate data
- Debates in other social science fields (limits of biological influence)
- Judging past emotions from present perspective?
- Issues of timing emotional changes/ influences on cultural lags?
- Relationship between recreations and emotions (training vs. expressive outlets?)

(5) The Strengths of the Historical Approach:

* Generates important findings about:

- changes in emotional standards
- changes in emotional experience

* Evidence generated:

- Add new issues
- Generate theoretical problems
- Exploration of causation (not just cross-cultural comparisons)
- Impact of change on emotional standards/ vice versa
- Interaction between emotional change/ family life/ reveal gender and power relations
- New evaluative tools/ theoretical perspectives on change

- Part of comprehensive interdisciplinary inquiry

(6) Growing Momentum:

* The field of emotions history is gaining ground:

- Cross-fertilization with other fields
- Impact on the field of history itself
- Inquiry into consequences of emotional culture/ change
- Meeting internal/external challenges