

Sociology 3308: Sociology of Emotions
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Overheads Class 8-9: Themes & Variations
in the Sociology of Emotions:

- * Today we review themes/variations in the sociology of emotions
- * Theorists/researchers vary on eight sub-themes:

(1) Micro vs. Macro:

- * Randall Collins:

- Macro-processes rest on micro-foundation of emotion (e.g. order, conflict, and stratification)
- Interaction rituals/common activity/mood at micro-level
- Power and status=increase/decrease of emotional energy
- Interaction ritual chains cumulate across time/space

- * Michael Hammond:

- Human inbuilt need for dependable emotional gratification
- We rank various sources of “affective maximization” by experience
- Historically little economic surplus/all share problem
- Over time, hierarchies develop/ some deprived/ others gain
- Time differentiation: future designated as repository of a superior level of affective maximization for deprived
- Belief systems invoked to allow elite affective maximization/alleviate emotional deprivation for rest

- * Thomas Scheff:

- Shame (disapproval) and pride (approval) regulate social conduct like auto-pilot
- Accumulating across society = micro basis for macro effect: social control
- Overt vs. bypassed shame explains how present but infrequently noticed

* Norman Denzin:

- Focus on media depictions of class, gender and emotion
- Define proper and legitimate emotions
- Serve to shape individual desires / self definitions underlying cultural experience of emotions

* Steven Gordon:

- Link through social structure and personality
- Social structure influences emotional behavior/motivation
- Culture influences emotional quality, intensity, object, & setting
- Questions re: content
 - intermediate elements
 - social change
 - cultural relativity

- Key distinction:

(1) Emotion=inborn/undifferentiated bodily arousal

(2) Sentiment=socially learned composite (i.e. sensations/gestures/relationships/labels)

- Questions re: long term character
 - social constraints overriding physiological
- Emotions transformed into sentiments by:

(1) Differentiation (2) Socialization (3) Management

- Analysis of micro-macro goes in both directions.

(2) Quantitative vs. Qualitative Methods:

* Whether emotions can be measured/quantified or by nature qualitative

* Smith-Lovin and Heise: affect-control theory:

- Argue false dichotomy: both aspects evident
- calculate EPA profiles based on linguistic meanings of cultural behaviors, identities, objects, and emotions
- enables prediction of emotions in particular situations
- assumes actors behave to maintain fundamental identities signalled by emotional discrepancies

* More qualitative approaches: Hochschild, Thoits, & Clark

(3) Positivism vs. Anti-Positivism:

* Two opposing views:

- (1) Emotions as objective phenomena determined by structural/interactional conditions;
- (2) Impossible to measure emotions objectively/ subjective, cognitive constructions inseparable from perceptions

* Former (positivist) view:

Kemper: Physiological basis of emotions

Social determination

Four primary emotions (fear, anger, joy, and depression)

Evolutionally adaptations to social-environmental contingencies

Emotional outcomes predicted by power/status in any culture

Smith-Lovin & Heise: EPA profiles predict emotions

* Opposite view:

Norman Denzin:

Inappropriate to treat emotion as variable
Opposes positivist theory (explanation by prediction)
Emotion examined as “lived experience”
Focuses on forms of emotional feeling

(4) Political Economy of Emotions:

* Whether need to examine historical/economic/political context of emotion

* Norman Denzin:

-emotions fundamentally rooted in:

History, Political economy, race, class and gender

- expressed in cultural effects (e.g. media):

bureaucratization
commodification
mass-mediated reality
deconstruction of major sustaining myths/ relativism

- examines of how emotion “lived” in such a context:

ideological endorsement of certain emotions as suitable/desirable

* Arlie Hochschild:

- focus on “emotional labour” in response to feeling/expression rules
- methods: surface vs. deep acting

- employment situations: studied emotional labour of flight attendants
- emotion has become commodity: feeling rules set by employers

(5) Gender Analysis:

* Hochschild:

- Gender ideologies: justifications for maintenance or change in social relations in working families: women bear brunt of "Second shift"

(1) Traditional families

(2) Egalitarian families

(3) Transitional

- Discrepant gender ideologies = powerful emotions

* Peggy Thoits:

- In face of distressing emotions, men and women choose different management strategies:

Women: catharsis, social support, reevaluation & expression

Men: think through, exercise, and stoic acceptance

* Other theorists: Denzin, Clark, and Gordon

(6) Managing vs. Accounting for Emotions:

* Management vs. explanation of what causes emotions

* Management approach popular:

- Anti-positivist/ interactionist

- Hochschild, Thoits and Clark
- Emotions not irrevocable/biologically guided
- Emotions subject to social direction/enhancement/suppression
- Construction via expression norms/ feeling rules
- Individuals can control/manage emotion in line with these

* Peggy Thoits:

- Accepts Hochschild's 4 part definition of emotion:
(cues, physiological reactions, expressive gestures and label)
- Postulates behavioral and cognitive management
- Emotional deviants can work on any 1 part of emotion in either behavioral or cognitive fashion to cope/conform

* Candace Clark:

- Emotions and "place" (relative rank on power/status/intimacy)
- Place claims limited by self concept/emotions signal divergence
- Emotion functions: (1) signal function; (2) place marker (both inter and intra-personally)
- Emotional micropolitics: emotions as tactical weapons:
 - (i) expressing negative/withholding positive emotions
 - (ii) expressing positive/withholding negative emotions
 - (iii) controlling another's level of emotional arousal
 - (iv) eliciting feelings of loyalty and obligation
 - (v) patronizing

* Management approach also evident in Gordon and Smith-Lovin/Heise

(7) Prediction vs. Description:

* Positivists favor both description and prediction:

Kemper

Hammond

Smith-Lovin & Heise
Thoits

Collins

* Favor descriptive approach (reflect interactionist view):

Gordon Clark
Hochschild Denzin

(8) Biosocial vs. Social Construction:

* Role of biological /physiological influences in approaches varies

- Gordon denies importance: essentially social constructionist
- Hochschild: "interactive" approach: biology part of emotion complex, but manageable
- Kemper: emphasizes links between physiological/sociological processes in emotion formation

Conclusion:

* The sociology of emotions is very broad

* These differences provide opportunities for research, debate, and synthesis.