Sociology 3308: Sociology of Emotions

Prof. J. Scott Kenney

Lectures 7-8: Social Models in the Explanation of Emotions 1:

While emotions may be seen by many as the domain of psychologists, the scope of the area necessitates legitimate concern from other disciplines. Today we will begin looking at how sociologists examine emotions. Specifically, we will provide a general overview of several major social models of emotion in contemporary sociology. In the next class, we will follow up this general introduction with a more thematic review. After that, we will be considering each individual theorist and researcher in an in-depth fashion.

The sociological interest in emotions covers many topics. These include, for example:

- the emotional foundation of solidarity in social groups
- the determination of emotions by outcomes of social interaction
- the normative regulation of emotional expression/ management of emotional deviance
- the socialization of emotions
- the linkage of emotion to socially derived conceptions of identity and the self
- variation in emotional experience according to structural variations (e.g. race, class, gender)
- the role of emotions in large-scale societal stability and change

As we can see from the above, while the sociological approach may complement psychological or physiological approaches, they produce valid topics of study in their own right.
Moreover, there can be no Aindividual@ as the subject of psychological inquiry without the social, and survival itself is socially dependent. Things like motives and personality are in large part social products (e.g. socially caused variance), while identity, self, and self-esteem are social outcomes. Even the capacity of mind to reflect, rehearse and choose between alternative courses of action is socially given. Somewhere in the midst of these significant elements of the person are emotions.

Although a significant part of emotion is biological, the social overlay in every culture is so substantial that, without it, we would not identify the person as fully human. Groups and group categories such as class,

occupation, gender, community, family, etc., provide the individual with identity, motives, goals, roles, and interaction partners.

Given that we cannot measure emotion anywhere but in the individual, we must consider that the containment of the individual in the social matrix determines *which emotions are likely to be expressed when and where, on what grounds and for what reasons, by what modes of expression, and by whom.* As the social matrix changes, so do all of the parameters of this formula. Sociological models of emotion each theorize this social matrix a little differently. While diverse in scope and comprehensiveness, they display the broad range of inquiry that a sociological approach makes possible.

Social Relations and Emotions:

It cannot be disputed that social relations produce emotions. Indeed, emotions functioned evolutionarily by allowing individuals to adapt to contingencies in the social environment. The major argument in this area is over how to characterize social relations. Kemper proposes that social relations can be usefully expressed in terms of *power* and *status*, arguing that many human emotions can be understood as reactions to their meanings and implications in social situations.

Power is a relational condition in which one actor actually or potentially compels another to do something s/he does not wish. The means include threatened/actual use of force or deprivation of valued material or symbolic goods/experiences. These include noxious gestures, expressions, raised voice, lies deceit and manipulation. Status, on the other hand, is a relational condition of voluntary compliance with the wishes, interests and desires of another. One accords status to another through acts of recognition of the other=s value (e.g. considerateness, sociability, respect, esteem and love).

Support for Kemper=s power-status formulation comes from a large number of factor analyses of small-group interactions; ethological analyses of primate behavior; studies of cross-cultural roles and behavior; semantic analysis, studies of interpersonal vectors of personality, and the dimensions of learning theory. He argues that these are perhaps the theoretically optimum dimensions by which any relationship may usefully be seen.

Given this, Kemper proposes that *a very large class of human emotions results from real, anticipated, imagined, or recollected outcomes of social relations*. Any interaction may increase, decrease or maintain the individual=s power and status relative to the other, as well as do the same

for the other. This means that there are 12 possible outcomes, only 4 of which will occur. Emotions will ensue depending on the particular power and status outcomes, and the attribution as to who is responsible (self, other, or a third party).

Research in this vein (surveys and lab experiments) has led to the following conclusions:

1. *Own power*: power increase leads to feelings of security because one can better protect oneself of necessary from the other. However, excess use of power leads to feelings of guilt, fear and anxiety about possible retaliation. Power decrease leads to feelings of fear/anxiety because the other has greater ability to compel one to do unwanted tasks.

2. *Other=s power*: Increase in the other=s power creates fear and anxiety; its decrease pumps up one=s own sense of power and security.

3. *Own status*: Status increase in the amount felt one deserves leads to satisfaction, happiness or contentment. If the individual was the agent, pride may be added as well; if another or a third party, one will feel gratitude. Increase in status beyond what was expected results in joy, and the other effects of agency are amplified. Yet, to accept more status than one feels one deserves leads to shame/embarrassment. Decrease in status also leads to anger if the agent is the other, shame if the agent is the self, and depression if the situation is defined as irremediable.

4. *Other=s status:* One=s own emotions in respect to the other=s status depend on one=s liking for the other. If one likes the other (i.e. the other has conferred sufficient status and not used excessive power against you), increase in the other=s status, regardless of agency, leads to satisfaction. If one dislikes the other, this leads to envy or jealousy depending on whether the other has something one desires or has taken away something of one=s own. If one likes the other, and other=s status decreases, agency by the self leads to either guilt or shame, depending on what one did or failed to do according to one=s status standards. If the agent of the decrease is the other or a third party, one feels pity or sorrow. On the other hand, if one does not like the other, being the agent of their status decrease leads to satisfaction; if the agent of such loss of status is another, then one feels righteous satisfaction - that it was deserved.

Kemper points out that in addition to such occurrent emotions, there are anticipatory emotions. These are based on a combination of past (power and status) experience affecting optimism-pessimism, one=s estimate of present relational conditions, and some degree of confidence/lack thereof.

Taken together the two sentiments give rise to 4 feelings:

(1) optimism + confidence = serene confidence or happiness/contentment
(2) optimism + lack of confidence = guarded optimism or anxiety
(3) pessimism + confidence = grudging optimism or anxiety
(4) pessimism + lack of confidence = hopelessness or depression.

Within his framework, Kemper has proposed a socialization paradigm for guilt, shame, anxiety and depression as characteristic moods and dispositions. It centers around punishment types: (i) power oriented; (ii) proportionality; and (iii) affection-oriented. This leads to a set of 8 possible outcome hypotheses about how each of the negative emotions above are socialized as a characteristic personality trait, as well as the usual coping response when the negative emotion is activated (e.g. status based punishment proportional to seriousness of act = shame. If punisher is a source of affection, compensation = coping response).

Finally, Kemper=s power-status model affords an insight into love relations and the difference between loving and liking. Love relationships include 7 situations where one gives, or is prepared to give, extremely high amounts of status to another (romantic, brotherly, unrequited, parent-infant, etc.), and these vary according to whether one or both confer such status, as well as in relation to the power positions of each actor. Such relationships evolve or devolve in light of power-status dynamics therein. Liking is distinguished from loving on the basis that one=s standards may not exactly match, the other gives adequate status and uses very little power.

Kemper conducted an empirical test of the power-status approach (an 8 nation study) to the determination of emotions and found a good fit between the theory and the relational conditions antecedent to the Afour primary emotions@ (anger, fear, sadness and joy).

Interaction-Ritual Chains: Making Social Class:

A second structural approach to emotions focuses in on what keeps a social group together. Rather than mere coercion or self-interest, Durkheim proposed that the force of cohesion resides in shared emotions experienced in ritual. This idea was taken further by Goffman, who focused on interaction surrounding the self as object, where there was a mutual need to protect the esteem and standing of all participants. Where this fails, the result is a commonly felt emotion of embarrassment, and interacting individuals will often go to great lengths to avoid loss of face to self or other. One will often go to great lengths to preserve intact the ritual object

of group coherence - the self - even when annoyed (e.g. when you think someone is Afull of it@).

These ideas have led another leading theorist, Randall Collins, to formulate a theory of emotion surrounding the idea of Ainteraction ritual chains.@ This concept is designed to explain emotion both at the micro (small group) and macro (large group) levels. This is linked to the idea of Aemotional energy@ - a feeling of confidence/ enthusiasm that is experienced after successful ritual interactions. Such interactions require several elements:

1. Group members= attention must be focused on a common object of ritual interest (e.g. work; a football game).
2. A common emotion is engendered by whatever activities members are engaged in (e.g. frustration, if the work is difficult; the game not going one=s way). Members begin to resonate in tune with each other=s emotional frequency, both cognitively and physiologically.
3. The result is a feeling of solidarity with other members. While the initial emotion may be transient, longer term satisfaction remains: those who emote together tend to stay together.

According to Collins, solidarity is not an abstract thing, but rooted in the body in the form of emotional energy. Such energy, derived from such ritual interaction, provides the emotional capital with which to undertake other interactions where one has again the opportunity to renew one=s stock of emotional resources or gain even more.

In optimum interaction episodes, all members gain emotional energy since the proper respect has been accorded to the common symbols all hold dear, or to the self. Yet interactions are optimum only some of the time. More frequently, some people come away with surplus emotional energy, while others experience a deficit. Each comes to the interaction with his or her stock of emotional energy, and the group organizes the interactions in a variety of ways - not least of which reflect relational conditions of power and status. By virtue of power and status, opportunities for emotional energy are stratified, and individuals are able to accumulate greater or lesser amounts of emotional resonance with the group and its sacred objects.

For example, interactions in the power domain occur between order givers and order takers. The former (whether bosses, teachers, superior officers, etc.) is ordinarily able to enforce his or her view as to how the interaction should proceed, and more likely to derive a charge of emotional energy from the interaction. The order taker assists by assenting to the

other=s instructions, and will simultaneously lose emotional energy as his/her sacred symbols are being violated or ignored. The former gains enthusiasm and confidence to proceed to other interaction ritual occasions; the latter not so much. Taken together, Collins asserts such chains of ritual interaction in which there is differential power add up to the stratification system of society: each interaction reenacting and reinforcing the existing patterns of differential benefit.

As for the status domain, this refers to one=s position in groups in which one shares an identity with others (e.g. race, class, gender, peer groups, etc). Each group provides members with a sense of inclusion - a valued enhancement of self. Yet, group members differ in the amount of emotional energy they derive from their status group memberships. Some members are central; others peripheral. Some are the focus of much interest and attention; others not. Some come to personify the group's values and interests and their emotional energy is constantly being renewed; others are isolated, rarely seen, and not as likely to stir interest in other members by their actions. They derive only minimal emotional energy from their membership.

Collins asserts that, taken together, power and status constitute a grid of social relations that underlie all interactions, providing the individual with greater or lesser amounts of emotional resources of a relatively stable nature (i.e. at the high end confidence, enthusiasm and trust; at the low end depression and distrust). The more intense, short-term or dramatic emotions such as fear, anger, joy, etc., are superimposed on a baseline of emotional energy that is characteristic of the socially-situated person (e.g. joy = sharply heightened experience of successful ritual interaction). Such short term emotions are governed to a great extent by the tide of emotional energy upon which they ride (e.g. those high in emotional energy are not likely to experience anger, except perhaps the righteous kind; those low in emotional energy are more likely to experience fear because of their subordination).

Shame and Social Order:

While Charles Horton Cooley noted, in his famous depiction of the Alooking glass self,@ that self-feeling such as Apride or mortification@ arises in our imagining of how others see us, sociologist Thomas Scheff has formulated this into an emotional theory of social control. Scheff contends that we are continually in either a state of either pride or shame with respect to the judgments of others about our adherence to their and society=s moral strictures. When we obey, we experience pride; when we disobey, we experience shame. These pleasant and unpleasant emotions act

like a carrot and stick to produce conformity and stability in society without the need for extensive surveillance and regulation.

To deal with the potential criticism that pride and shame are not that prevalent in everyday social life, Scheff argues that shame actually takes two forms: (1) overt, undifferentiated shame (with which we are familiar); and (2) Abypassed@ shame. The former includes the familiar signs of stammering, lowered head, averted gaze, blushing, and self-depreciating comments. The latter, however, exhibits no overt disturbance of communication, but rather an obsession with the disturbing incident, continual internal replay and absorption in the event, to the exclusion of required concentration on presently ongoing events.

Scheff points out that even when aware of one=s shame, one may become ashamed of one=s shame, angry at oneself for feeling this, and then ashamed again of this self-directed anger (Athe shame spiral@). Indeed, a shame-anger spiral may engage two parties, leading to cycles of vengeance, humiliation and counter vengeance - all because the original shame experience was unacknowledged.

Shame is consequential in practical contexts and has an important locus in the socialization experiences of childhood as well as in psychotherapy. For example, teachers, of varying skill levels, may feel uncertain of their own skills, inadvertently shame the children, and impact on their learning. Similarly, psychotherapists may bring clients to the realization that a shaming counterattack in response to insult may serve momentary needs, but ultimately lead to a deterioration in the social bond.

For Scheff, such unacknowledged shame is the emotional pivot of social life, underlying the social order. Conversely, Michael Lewis distinguishes a Awe-self@ and an AI-self.@ The former came first historically in societies with strict social hierarchies, where relatively undifferentiated individuals were submerged in their social roles, and failure to abide by rules resulted in guilt. As the grip of traditional social controls loosened over time, the AI-self@ emerged, claiming more territory for itself in consciousness, and thereby carrying with itself the more global burden of shame. In a comparative sense, for Scheff shame operates to support the social bond, whereas for Lewis the absence of the social bond is an important foundation for shame.

Emotion Work and Emotion Management:

In the tension between social structural (power-status) and cultural (values, norms) approaches, theorists like Kemper and Collins favor the

former as explanatory factors, while others prefer the latter. Among these individuals, whose conceptions increase the explanatory impact of social norms in the experience, management or change of emotion, can be included Arlie Hochschild, Steven Gordon, and Peggy Thoits.

Hochschild views emotion as having a Asignal function@ - indicating to us where we stand in the world, defining relationships to others, and to our own goals, motives and interests Alike a sense@). Emotional experience is a compound of how we feel, how we wish we felt, how we try to feel, how we classify feelings, and how we express them. Much of this is based in appraisals of the situation and social structural considerations. However, cultural Afeeling rules@ and Aexpression rules@ soon enter the picture, informing us, for example, that what we feel may be inappropriate or that the our manner of expression is unacceptable. Thus, emotional life requires a good deal of emotional management in order to stay within cultural bounds.

According to Hochschild, managing emotions requires Aemotion work,@ consisting of Asurface acting@ and Adeep acting.@ The former is accomplished when one purposely puts on a suitable emotion in order to change one=s feeling. The latter is done when the person tries to change one of the determinants of the feeling itself (e.g. one=s mental appraisal, heart rate, etc.) Hochschild has detailed these concepts in her studies of airline flight attendants, bill collectors, and couples trying to balance work and housework. She claims that many jobs (and relationships) require large amounts of emotional labor, and that the amount of emotional labor falls more heavily on women. That this is so is linked to what she calls Agender ideologies@ containing the feeling rules deemed to apply by gender in work and relationship contexts.

Hochschild=s approach brings into play many of the cognitive elements in the creation and expression of emotions (e.g. culture, norms, rules and ideologies). As these help define what is acceptable or deviant, it is not surprising that Peggy Thoits has used Hochschild=s framework to examine Aemotional deviance@ (i.e. lack of adherence to feeling or expression rules). In a study of college students, she argues that this is relatively infrequent (about 20% of her sample reported it, with only about half reporting guilt or shame over their deviation from emotion norms). Thoits asserted that emotional deviance is more likely to occur in conditions of multiple role occupancy, sub-cultural marginality, occasions of role transition, and when ceremonial or other rules govern. Such discordant emotions evoke the need for emotion management or coping strategies, and Thoits proposes a typology of behavioral and cognitive strategies applied to either the evoking situation, or to the physiological, expressive or labeling

aspects of the emotion (e.g. a behavioral expressive strategy might be to work it out in hard exercise, engage in relaxation techniques or take drugs). Such management strategies are important, since where emotional deviance continues unabated, the label of mental illness may be assigned (e.g. nearly half of the disorders in the DSM are identified by deviant emotions). This suggests that to a large extent treatment of mental illness involves the acquisition of techniques of emotion management.

Emotions, Selves and Roles:

Going hand in hand with Cooley=s classic formulation of the looking glass self is the theory of self proposed by George Herbert Mead. Mead proposed that the self is a social creation formed through the process of Arole-taking@ (i.e. putting oneself in the position of another and looking back at oneself - and acting with reference to oneself - as if one were an object). This role-taking capacity enables individuals to formulate courses of action by providing advance understanding of how a particular course of action will affect the self. Language and symbols are utilized cognitively in this interactive, role-taking process. A distinct sociological position on emotions has emerged from this Asymbolic interactionist@ perspective.

Rosenberg has proposed that the ability to act back on oneself (Areflexivity@) is necessarily involved in such fundamental processes as emotional identification, emotional display, and emotional experience. Role taking and reflexivity enable us to interpret ambiguous situational and physiological conditions of our emotional state by attending to: (1) cause and effect logic in a given culture; (2) recognition of social consensus about meaning in the responses of others; and (3) cultural scenarios providing information about emotions.

Reflexivity also operates in decisions concerning appropriate emotional display, since the actor must gauge the views of others in order to persuade them, through impression management, that one is displaying a given emotion rather than just Aputting it on.@ Indeed, failure to display the proper emotion may sometimes be grounds for being seen as morally deficient or mentally ill.

As well, it is important to recognize that reflexivity enters emotional experience in the process of moderating or inhibiting one=s response to the initial stimulus. For example, one may act to change the stimulus, or to modify one=s thoughts about these conditions - thereby actively partaking in the alteration of the content of emotional experience.

Finally, Shott applies role-taking directly to the identification of

9

specific emotions. She distinguishes between Areflexive@ role-taking emotions and Aempathic@ role-taking emotions. The former include guilt, shame and embarrassment where, in order to experience them, one must put oneself mentally in the place of another to obtain his/her view of oneself, and ostensibly motivate efforts to regain the god opinion of others through compensatory acts. The latter, empathic role-taking emotions go further by providing vicarious emotional experience as well (e.g. putting oneself in the position of another=s suffering and finding oneself motivated to help).

Affect Control Theory:

Here we have an attempt to bridge the gap between structural and cultural approaches to explaining emotion. Lynn Smith-Lovin and David Heise focus in on the semantic dimensions of word content, calculating what they call EPA profiles (E=evaluation or goodness; P= potency or power; A=activity or arousal). They attempt to develop mathematical representations of these particular dimensions in response to specific stimuli. When confronted with words signifying statuses, behaviors and emotions, equations are calculated that predict the emotions that result.

Derived in part from a S.I. view of the self, affect-control theory argues that individuals act in more or less consistent ways to maintain their identity. Thus, if a parent assists a child, this conforms to the basic cultural notion of how a parent should behave. But if the parent for whatever reason ignores the child, this represents a deviation from the culturally approved identity of a good parent for both parties. This creates a transient identity for both parent and child. Both the original and transient identities can be represented by EPA profiles, such that the mathematical distance between the original and transient identities opens the door to emotions having their own EPA profiles. The arousal of emotions is the direct result of the discrepancy between the original and the transient identities.

The basic motive remains the maintenance of the original identity, and the emotion is a cue and a source of energy for certain reparative behaviors to restore it. A new set of equations provides a set of possible restorative actions (with the appropriate EPA profiles) that, when applied to the discrepant identity, will restore it to the original EPA values (e.g. apologizing, consoling). If not undertaken, both parties may have to recast their identities in the direction of the transient ones elicited (e.g. neglectful parent/unloved child).

This approach is interesting in that it takes into account both structural and cultural elements in the determination of emotions, as well as

incorporates fundamental issues in the S.I. perspective, namely, concern with the maintenance of identities.

Research on emotions and identities suggests that identities with certain EPA profiles are likely to manifest emotions with comparable profiles (e.g. high potency and anger; low potency and anxiety).

This approach also differentiates between emotion and mood. Original identities that are combined with emotions define a mood and likely consistent behavior; transient emotions that reflect the distinction between an original and a transient identity are simpler.

The affect control model has been extended beyond simple mathematical modeling of identity, behavior, and emotion outcomes. A number of studies lend empirical support to some of its fundamental notions (e.g. predicting the effect of emotional displays on identity attributions in the sentencing recommendations of confessed criminals: displaying remorse reduced the sentence through its impact on the assessed identity of the offender). Similarly, it was found that both low and high self-esteem subjects acted to maintain their levels: both felt good when praised, but the low self-esteem people liked people who criticized them more - feeling that it was justified. Both tended to choose interaction partners who confirmed their view of themselves.

Emotions and Macroprocesses:

Most sociological examinations of emotion are social-psychological: social structures, processes or outcomes are seen to produce emotions in individuals, differing according to where in the structure, process or outcome they stand. However, Jack Barbalet provides an important exception: conceiving of emotion is integral to social relations and processes themselves. Emotion is felt as an *aspect* of societal patterns of social organization (race, class, gender, etc.) Moreover, rather than see social processes and relations as the independent variables, Barbalet examines how emotions cause or produce social processes and social relations at the macro level. For example, members of the working class may be expected to feel social resentment against those better off, but this is actually quite rare and poorly organized. Indeed, different sectors of the working class exist in different industries and sectors - some expanding and some contracting - and hence experience different emotions rather than a common sense of alienation.

Barbalet has also examined the emotion, mood, or feeling of confidence as an important feature of social process. In the business

11

community, this is a necessary condition of investment, dominating over rational calculation. Because the information required for rational business decisions is always in the future, it is necessary to examine how intuition is utilized by members of the business community to confidently assess whether a given investment will be profitable. The same goes for business response to government policy - whether it is seen to reflect Aacceptance and recognition@ of the business community or is seen as a Aslight.@

In both of Barbalet=s examples, the emotions are aggregated products of many individuals, which then act as a discrete force in society at large.

Expectations and Sanctions:

In a fairly new approach, Robert Thamm has built a theory of emotions on Parson=s functionalist theme for a general theory of action. In this, social actors are linked in reciprocal forms of action and response: expectations and sanctions. Individuals in social situations have expectations of each other, and in light of these they reward or fail to reward each other=s behavior. This leads to 4 questions:

1. Is the self meeting expectations?
2. Is the self receiving rewards?
3. Is the other meeting expectations?
4. Is the other receiving rewards?

This constitutes the fundamental social matrix for the production of emotions, since the answers vary from yes, no, to don=t know, and different emotions result for each. This results in a series of permutations representing the many possible states of the expectations-sanctions system. Thus far, Thamm has tested his hypotheses by asking college students to imagine that they and a friend were expected to do something and planned to share the rewards, and then to select a suitable emotion from a list of hypothesized emotions. Results have been statistically significant.

Other Models:

As we will see, the increasing interest in emotions among sociologists does not end here. There are also sociobiological models attempting to explain social stratification in terms of the need for emotional gratification (Hammond); phenomenological analyses of emotion as Alived experience@ (Denzin); a sociology of knowledge approach (McCarthy); a model of the social construction of emotion via socialization into emotional culture (Gordon); and an examination of how emotions and sympathy are employed

as political strategies in microinteractions determining social rank (Clark). There are many sociological approaches to emotion - the foregoing simply gives a rough overview of the work being done.

In the next class we will proceed to dissect many of the approaches introduced today - and a few others - in terms of various thematic elements of overlap and difference. In this way, we will not only get a more well-rounded overview of the sociology of emotions, but become more aware of some of the debates that divide it.