**SOC 3120 Social Psychology**

**Prof. J.S. Kenney**

**Overheads Lecture 14.2: Emotions, Constraint and Social Interaction**

\* Today we will discuss:

- The role of emotion in the formation of conduct

- Constraint in social interaction

**(1) Emotion:**

\* Emotional dimension equally important as cognitive in conduct formation

- definitions of situations specify emotional tone

- roles have an emotional component

- departures from emotional expectations call for aligning actions

\* How do emotions operate? Grief an example:

- sadness of bereavement not just human nature

- pure cultural explanation insufficient (unrelated to physical sensations; inability to explain varying levels of grief)

- S.I. says death loss of part of self of those left behind (varying by

closeness to deceased)

- Lyn Lofland: 7 “threads of connectedness” between people:

widely spread=little impact

closely concentrated=significant impact

- Definition of the situation of death (routine vs. exceptional) -Increased privacy/ individual focus on private feelings intensifies

\* Physical sensations:

- Rooted in loss of self

- Blocked human acts/ expectation of routine conduct

- Physical sensations result

\* Cultural labels, sensations and meanings:

- cultural label precedes label for feeling (e.g. Tahitans label feelings

illness, not grief)

- cultural vocabulary of emotions linking situations, sensations and

meaning as particular emotions

- cultural similarities and differences (physical sensations vs. meanings)

\* Emotion work:

- cultural expectations of certain emotions also exist (constraint by

situation, self-image and feelings of others)

- people manage impressions by acting sad at funeral (even if not)

- people manage feelings by getting into mindset/ evoking feelings

- “surface” vs. “deep acting” in response to “feeling rules”

- emotions = socially constructed meanings (e.g. sympathy and social expectations; emotional labor in the workplace)

\* Experience, display and regulation of emotions a key aspect of social life:

- guides actions

- informs role-taking and role-making

- helps define situations/ selves

**Constraint and Social Interaction:**

\* To understand formation of conduct, must look at constraint in social life:

- S.I. accused of overemphasizing the freedom of individuals

- S.I. accused of overlooking ways in which conduct is constrained.

\* Response:

- there is both freedom and constraint in social life

- people are not merely cultural robots, but thinking, acting creatures

- there are real limits to human problem solving/freedom

\* Constraints rooted in:

- definitions of situation/ interpretations made with limited knowledge

- power differentials

- obligations

- others’ behavior/purposes

\* Several forms of constraint in social life:

**(1) Altercasting:**

\* Other side of self-presentation: roles often reciprocal/ lines of conduct fit

together

\* Stresses effects of one person’s act on other’s capacity to make a role/ preserve valued conception of self

\* One person’s act constrains and limits what the other can do (e.g. putting on defensive)

\* Treating another *as if* they are making particular role: response in kind is telling

\* Altercasting relies on imputation of roles, action toward people on the basis of such imputations: A powerful constraint on conduct

\* Explanations:

- advantage seeking

- norm of reciprocity

- defining situation/ objects

- power differentials

\* Effects of altercating may accumulate over time, as with self-presentation

\* Not limited to negative behaviors: may have positive uses.

**Power:**

\* Power= the capacity of one person to achieve purposes without the consent or against the resistance of others (e.g. altercasting).

\* Power depends on:

- the control by one party of resources

- authority/ formal rights to control

- informal inequalities

\* Exercise of power utilizes role-taking and role making:

- powerful must size up others’ resources/ likely response/ role make a convincing performance “I’m someone to be reckoned with”

- subordinates must determine if other’s power real/ not hot air and role make in ways that do not yield more than necessary

\* Accurate role taking is itself a resource of power (ability to act/ allocate resources to best advantage).

\* Power may be exercised through control of physical setting/ social objects

\* Power may also be exercised by changing people’s interpretation of expected social settings.

**Awareness Contexts:**

\* Many situations in everyday life characterized by ignorance, suspicion or pretense, and not by openness

\* Awareness contexts: the total combination of what each person knows about the identity of others, and about his/her own identity in their eyes

\* Types of awareness context:

(1) *Open*: each participant knows the others’ true identities - the roles they intend to make in a situation - and his or her identity in their eyes.

(2) *Closed*: one party is ignorant of either the others’ identities or his or her situated social identity.

(3) *Pretence*: interactants are aware of one another’s identities, but pretend not to be.

(4) *Suspicion*: participants suspect that one another’s identities are not what they appear to be.

\* Awareness contexts essential to a full understanding of how people interact and of the outcomes of their interaction

\* Generally, when the awareness context is not open:

- considerable energies devoted to either open it up or keep it closed.

- a great deal of interaction is focused on the definition of the situation

\* Awareness contexts constrain interaction on the basis of what people know, don’t know, suspect or pretend with respect to one another.

**Conventional and Interpersonal Roles:**

\* There is a distinction between interaction on the basis of:

(1) Conventional roles (standardized, known, and labeled positions);

(2) Interpersonal roles (unique embodiments of a role fleshed out with a history).

\* In some situations, people simultaneously make conventional and interpersonal roles (e.g. parents and children; co-workers)

\* Responsible for complexity of life/ behavior:

- role-taking/making typifies on basis of both/ must decide which

- not mere role-strain - while unpleasant, also adds spice to life

\* Each type of role is constraining, but in a different way:

- Conventional roles are the source of our most basic images of social structure and our place within it (e.g. gender roles)

- Interpersonal roles link us to unique ways, over time, we come to see ourselves in relation to particular others in structure