**SOC 3120 Social Psychology**

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**Overheads Lecture 15**: **Themes & Variations in the Sociology of Emotion**

\* Today we review themes/variations in the sociology of emotions

\* Theorists/researchers vary on eight sub-themes:

(1) Micro vs. Macro;

(2) Quantitative vs. Qualitative Methods***;***

(3) Positivism vs. Anti-Positivism;

(4) Political Economy of Emotions;

(5) Gender Analysis;

(6) Managing vs. Accounting for Emotions;

(7) Prediction vs. Description;

(8) Biosocial vs. Social Construction.

\* Each will be dealt with in turn.

(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 approach:

- 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 & 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 favour both description and prediction:

Kemper

Smith-Lovin and Heise,

Thoits,

Hammond,

Collins

\* Favor descriptive approach (reflect interactionist view):

Gordon

Hochschild

Clark

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:**

\* Field very broad

\* Differences provide opportunity for research, debate, and synthesis.