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## THE SOCIOLOGY OF EMOTIONS

ALLISON WISECUP

*Duke University*

DAWN T. ROBINSON

*University of Georgia*

LYNN SMITH-LOVIN

*Duke University*

Social psychology in the first half of the twentieth century was dominated first by behaviorist principles and then by a cognitive backlash to that behaviorism. By the 1970s, the disciplines of sociology and psychology were ready for a new intellectual agenda, this one focused on the central role of emotions. Since emotions are experienced as internal, physiological states, a sociology of emotion might seem like an oxymoron. But influential works published almost simultaneously by several major sociologists in the late 1970s and early 1980s showed that a major intellectual movement was afoot (Collins 1975, 1981; Heise 1979; Hochschild 1983; Kemper 1978; Scheff 1979).

By the second half of the twentieth century, there were several major reviews of the cumulating sociological work on emotions (Gordon 1990; Scheff 1988; Thoits 1989). Two themes were common in those early overviews. One was a developing definition of emotion as incorporating several features: (1) cognitive assessment of a situation; (2) the arousal of a physiological response; (3) the labeling of that response using culturally available concepts; and (4)

the expression of that feeling, moderated by cultural prescriptions. Such a definition clearly implies an underlying metatheoretical view, as well as an agenda for research.

The second theme present in early reviews was the classification of sociological perspectives on emotions into several major schools of thought. Conflicts between cultural and positivist approaches dominated the first years of the field. “Positivist,” in this context, meant scholars such as Kemper (1979), who developed theories about structural situations that systematically evoked physiologically distinct emotional states. For example, an interaction with a powerful other that led to status loss would result in sadness and depression. “Cultural,” on the other hand, was the dominant view of emotions in the discipline—as socially constructed, culturally prescribed features of social life. Some theorists, such as Hochschild (1983) and Scheff (1979), seemed to assume a physiological substrate on which sociocultural processes were overlaid. Others explicitly argued that emotional response was an undifferentiated arousal that was *nothing* until it was labeled within a cultural frame (Schacter and Singer 1962).

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The distinction between these two positions was appropriately blurred when Theodore Kemper (1987) proposed a compromise. He argued that while some emotions are instinctive and physiologically distinct, others are differentiated from these basic emotions by cultural forces. The number and character of emotions that are experienced in a culture are determined by the social relationships that were central to that group's social fabric. This position was acceptable to most sociologists of emotion, so long as we left open the question of how many emotions are basic: The most culturally determinist position would argue for just one—undifferentiated arousal; Kemper argued for four basic, physiologically distinct emotions—anger, happiness, fear, and sadness.

Later reviews of the sociological literature on emotions differentiated theories to a somewhat greater extent, distinguishing among cultural/normative, symbolic interactionist, psychoanalytic, structural, and evolutionary theories. The latest comprehensive review groups authors into the following areas: dramaturgical theories, symbolic interactionist theories, interaction ritual theories, power and status theories, and exchange theories (Turner and Stets 2005, 2006). To some extent, this classification exercise may have outlived its original purpose. Like most theoretical divisions, these categories do not often contain opposing theories that make competing predictions about the same phenomenon. Instead, they focus on *different* phenomena, conceptualize different features of emotional life, and theoretically describe different sociological processes that shape those features. As such, it is more accurate to say that the sociology of emotions has developed an understanding of a wide array of emotional phenomena than to say that there are several competing theories of emotions.

In this chapter, we will summarize what sociologists know about emotions, their production, and their impact on other facets of social life. This catalog of theoretical development and empirical findings from the fruitful end of the twentieth century will provide a template for the contributions of the sociology of emotions to the discipline and to social science more generally in the twenty-first century.

## THE CLASSICAL ORIENTATIONS

The classic treatments of emotion in sociology were macrolevel in their focus. Durkheim's anomie, Marx's alienation, and Weber's charismatic leadership all represented social facts that were characteristic of certain system configurations. Emotions might be experienced by individuals (just as suicide is an individual act), but the classic theorists used emotions to link social positions to the common experiences of large numbers of people who occupied those positions. For example, Marx (1983:156–78) saw emotional life as molded by social structures of production typical of different eras. Material economic arrangements led to alienation and disenchantment in the laboring classes;

one's emotional experiences were heavily determined by one's class position. Alternatively, the religious fervor produced by ideological structures could work to support a repressive class system and therefore might be propagated by the elite for mass consumption (Marx 1983:287–323).

Weber (Gerth and Mills 1946) and Durkheim (1912) focused on emotional responses to religion as powerful forces for the maintenance of social forms. Weber argued that capitalism arose partially because of ubiquitous emotional responses encountered by new Protestants during the Reformation. Experiencing anxiety over their predetermined status as saved or damned, individuals strove to acquire external accouterments of material success that might signal a favored status. Once capitalism was in place, Weber argued that rational bureaucracy required emotional management to isolate emotional response to private rather than formal institutional spheres.

Durkheim emphasized that religious ecstasy was a social fact rather than a private experience. He analyzed emotional responses as societal constructions in which the moral sentiments of the group are reaffirmed. Such emotional experiences had a strong coercive element in Durkheim's view. Individuals were not free to resist such emotional forces, since they were obligatory for true group membership. The ritual nature of social forms that produced these group-affirming emotions is the topic of later works by Goffman (1967) and Collins (2004) on interaction ritual.

Simmel (1950) emphasized the microstructures of social interaction rather than the macrostructures of the economic and religious institutions. His discussion of the emotional instability of dyads created the basis for modern theories about how social interaction leads to emotion. Simmel discussed how emotional expression in interactions could be a bridge to knowledge of another person. This insight led to Erving Goffman's analysis of impression management in public encounters.

Goffman (1956, 1959) argued that negative emotions like embarrassment and shame resulted from the inability to support one's desired self-presentation. Goffman greatly expanded our understanding of the place of emotion in social control, viewing feelings as a force motivating the individual to conform to normative and situational pressures. In addition, Goffman introduced the idea of the emotional deviant, the actor who is unable or unwilling to maintain the appropriate affective orientation to the situation in which he is enmeshed. In his work, we see the emotional responses of the actor as a cue indicating his or her allegiance to the group; rules of social order prescribe feelings as well as actions.

These classic theorists showed how emotion is a social rather than individual phenomenon, but they fell far short of developing a coherent, systematic view of the place that emotions hold in social life. Furthermore, much of the classical work and theorizing about emotions usually took a secondary or tangential position to some other social phenomenon such as religion or class conflict. Much of the

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classic theoretical treatment of emotion was couched at the macrolevel as either bonding or binding forces within a collectivity. The superficial treatment of emotion in classic works failed to fully develop the inherently social nature of emotion. In the 1970s, however, a dramatic shift in focus permitted sociologists to develop a more comprehensive treatment of emotion.

Despite debates among positivists and social constructionist, early work in the sociology of emotions shared a common goal—carving a distinctively sociological niche for the empirical investigation of emotion. Epistemological conflicts withstanding, these theoretical camps collectively argued against a biological basis for understanding emotions. With the exception of Kemper (1978, 1990), early theorizing rooted emotion in social and cultural foundations rather than the biological and physiological foundations argued for by psychologists and evolutionary biologists. We will now turn our attention to the major theoretical contributions that emerged during the last 30 years, as well as providing a review of the corpus of empirical knowledge regarding the sociology of emotions.

## CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

### Emotion Culture: Feeling Rules and Emotion Work

Arlie Hochschild's (1983) study of Delta flight attendants, *The Managed Heart*, was perhaps the most influential of several monographs that marked the beginning of the modern sociological inquiry into emotions in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Hochschild identified four central concepts—feeling rules, emotional labor, surface acting, and deep acting—that defined the modern sociology of emotion for most nonspecialists and are featured in most sociological research on emotions. Sociologists embraced Hochschild's insight that emotions were governed by feeling rules and controlled through culturally guided management.

Hochschild (1983) built on the work of Goffman and Marx. *Feeling rules* are cultural norms that specify the type of emotion, the extent of emotion, and the duration of feeling that are appropriate in a situation. For example, our culture requires that a grieving spouse feel intense unhappiness immediately after the death but “snap out of it” after a few months. When what we feel differs from the cultural expectation, Hochschild argued that we actively engage in emotion management to create a more appropriate response. Such management can take several forms. *Surface acting* adjusts our expression of emotion to normative patterns. By pretending an emotion we do not feel, we elicit reactions from others that bolster our performance and may eventually transform it into a genuine one. Flight attendants that Hochschild (1983) studied reported pretending to be cheery so that passengers would respond to them as if they were friendly. The passengers' responses then led

to an authentic positive emotion. *Deep acting* involves a more basic manipulation of one's emotional state. Through physiological manipulation (deep breathing), shifting perceptual focus (concentrating on a positive aspect of a bad situation), or redefining the situation (thinking of a drunk passenger as a frightened child-like person), actors can change their feelings to conform to their ideas of appropriateness. In many cases, occupations have well-developed feeling rules. When emotion management is done for a wage, Hochschild (1983) called it *emotion work*. She linked this type of labor to class position, arguing that middle-class service jobs often involve managing one's own feelings to make clients feel good. Alienation from authentic feelings may result when emotion management becomes a pervasive part of occupational life.

*The Managed Heart* permanently changed the way readers and interested analysts viewed emotions. While before the smiling faces of service workers were perceived as a pleasant *lagniappe* of an economic transaction, it is now recognized that these are an element of the worker's job. Furthermore, we see a parallel between the type of effort required of a public face and the emotion management required of people in low-power positions everywhere in nonwork life. She defines emotion as “a sense, like the sense of hearing or sight” (Hochschild 1983:17). In the first two appendices, Rothschild clarifies her theoretical position in the context of classic literatures drawn from Darwin, Freud, and Goffman. It is clear that Hochschild has a strong sense of emotion as a basic response to events that occur in the social environment and of their signal function about the implications of those events for the self experiencing the emotion.

Hochschild was often viewed as the leader of the social constructionist school in the sociology of emotions, with *The Managed Heart* as its classic statement. Certainly, the emphasis of the monograph on the management of emotion put culture in the central role; however, the appendices made clear that Hochschild took a more mixed, inclusive approach. She challenged the organismic view only to the extent that it would have totally “wired in” emotions, without room for social interpretation. Perhaps, Hochschild's most important contribution was that she clearly defined emotions as a worthy area of study because emotions are central to organizations, institutions, and individual experience of social interaction. Moreover, her discussion of the “signaling function” of emotion, while it emerges from Freud, is highly compatible with structural symbolic interactionist views like Heise's (1979) and Kemper's (1978) social interactional theories. Hochschild, like Heise and Kemper, recognized that social events give rise to spontaneous emotion in a way that signals their import for the individual; only then does she proceed to detail how these spontaneous emotions can be transformed through emotion management.

Listed below are the six primary propositions stemming from Hochschild's (1983) seminal research on emotion management:

1. People actively manage emotions by controlling their display (surface acting) and by manipulating their thoughts and experiences (deep acting) to make their feelings correspond to norms (feeling rules).
2. Some occupations require emotion management as a condition of employment (emotional labor).
3. Emotional labor jobs are more common in service work, in middle-class work, and in women's work (e.g., in the service of major corporations and other capitalist institutions).
4. Emotion management as labor alienates workers from their true feelings by destroying the emotions' signal value about the self's relationship to the social environment. (The book also suggests this deleterious effect is more problematic when it is created for profit by a capitalist employer than when created in the context of other social relationships.)
5. Middle-class parents socialize their children for emotion management more than working-class parents do, to prepare them for emotional labor jobs.
6. Women are socialized for (and do more) emotion management because of their emotional labor jobs. When men have emotional labor jobs, their higher status buffers them from some of its effects.

*The Managed Heart* spawned a remarkable variety of work on emotion culture, emotion socialization, emotional deviance (and its consequences for labeling of self and others), emotion management, and the role that emotion plays in constituting and sustaining institutions (and revealing the strains in those institutions when there are functional disconnects within them). Indeed, it is one of the very few works these days that bridges the gap between social psychology and culture in sociology. However, it is striking how much of the research in the past 25 years since its publication has focused on some aspect of the first two propositions and how little has been done to follow up on the last four. Hochschild based *The Managed Heart* on Marx as well as Goffman, but we've largely ignored the creative synergy that she got from melding the two perspectives. We return to this point in our discussion of agendas for future progress in the sociology of emotions.

### **Emotional Deviance: Labeling and Consequences for Mental Health**

Sometimes, of course, emotions fail to match our cultural expectations and management efforts are ineffective. Peggy Thoits (1985) argued that persistent emotional deviance is interpreted as evidence of mental illness. In particular, she noted that self-labeling is likely to occur when an individual frequently is confronted with unmanageable, counternormative feelings. For example, a person who is filled with rage at minor slights might interpret these responses as signs of a deeper mental problem.

Such emotional deviance could be created by inadequate socialization or by structurally induced stress. When children are not taught (through modeling and reward) appropriate emotional responses, they display behavior problems. But even competently socialized actors are likely to experience emotional deviance under some structural conditions when they (1) occupy inconsistent roles; (2) belong to subcultures; (3) undergo role transitions, especially if they are nonnormative in timing or sequence; and (4) follow rigid rules associated with rituals or especially restrictive roles. For example, weddings are supposed to be times of joy, but the stresses of coordinating a complex social ritual often lead to negative emotion.

In a qualitative study of preschool-age children, Pollack and Thoits (1989) find support for sociocentric models of emotion socialization. This model, developed by Harris and Olthaf (1982), argues that children primarily learn about emotions through social interactions involving formal or informal verbal instruction rather than modeling or self-observation. The findings of Pollack and Thoits indicate that while children are "instructed" about emotions, this instruction often involves the construction of cognitive emotion maps that include connections between actions, contextual factors, and emotional responses. Unfortunately, much of the emotional instruction received by children fails to complete the cognitive emotion structures by making connections between these factors and physiological states. These incomplete maps render emotions less generalizable in the minds of young children and may account for the findings of Harris and Olthaf (1982) that indicated that older, but not younger, children were able to associate physiological sensations with emotion. The research by Pollack and Thoits supports a cultural perspective on emotion wherein individuals are actively socialized to attach cultural labels to emotions as well as learning the appropriate emotional responses to myriad situations. While the research of Pollack and Thoits indicates that formal and informal socialization processes contribute to the emotional socialization of young children, Hochschild's work reminds us that emotion socialization may be modified by occupation or socioeconomic position.

### **Emotion and Self-Identity**

The groundbreaking work of Hochschild (1983) and Thoits (1985, 1986) emphasized the extent to which the cultural milieu influenced how an actor experienced and managed emotional responses. Empirical work using this perspective has focused on the cultural norms that we use to interpret our experiences. Authentic emotion is there to be labeled, judged deviant, and managed. But what causes the authentic emotional response in the first place? Symbolic interactionists have tried to answer this question by examining the relationship between emotion and identity.

In identity theory, Sheldon Stryker (1992) conceptualized the self as a hierarchically organized set of identities. The identities represented commitment to social roles like

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wife, mother, lawyer, and athlete. Social acts internalized identities to the extent that they are central to frequently enacted, positive role relationships embedded in the networks created by social structure. Emotions serve as motivators in this identity system: Role relationships that generate positive affect are enacted more frequently and move upward in the self-hierarchy. Identity enactments that routinely cause dissatisfaction move downward in the hierarchy. Therefore, if a manager found himself blocked in his career path at work, he might reorient his activities toward rewarding interactions with family and community organizations.

Emotions, in this theoretical perspective, result from adequate or inadequate role performances. Emotions, therefore, serve a signal function, indicating how well interactions are supporting one's sense of oneself in the situation. If a professor feels elation after a classroom interaction with students, the emotion signals that the performance in that identity is above normal expectations for the role. Since adequate role performances require coordinated action with others, we can get angry at others as well as ourselves for failed role enactment.

A final insight from identity theory is the sense in which emotions signal the importance of relationships to the self. Stryker argued that the strength of our emotional reaction to events is a way that we can gauge the centrality of an identity in the self-structure. A mother's depression at leaving her child for a return to work signals the higher salience of the parental compared to the worker role.

Affect control theory (Heise 1979; Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2006; Smith-Lovin 1990) uses a control system to specify which actions make up an adequate role performance. Its mathematical structure allows it to predict which emotional reactions will accompany adequate and inadequate performances. Affect control theory maps identities, actions, and emotions into three dimensions of cultural meaning—evaluation (good vs. bad), potency (powerful vs. powerless) and activity (lively vs. quiet). The identity of mother, for example, is fundamentally nicer, more powerful, and livelier than the identity of clerk. In affect control theory, emotions are signals about the extent to which events confirm or disconfirm identity meanings. When events are confirming, an actor's emotional response is determined by his or her identity and its cultural meaning. When things are going smoothly, mothers feel good, powerful, and lively because they occupy a positive identity. However, when events are disconfirming, the nature of the situation (and the deflection it caused) heavily determines the character of the emotional response. A mother who has hurt her child typically feels awful. In this case, emotions are powerful motivating forces, signaling the need for social action to restore fundamental meanings.

Emerging from the confluence of symbolic interactionism and identity theory, identity control theory (Burke 1991) represents another theoretical statement regarding the origin of identity-relevant emotions. Burke (1991) argues that individuals attempt to maintain the meanings

associated with their identities and that any disruption of these attempts will result in stress and negative emotions. Identity control theory follows Stryker's identity theory in conceptualizing the self as a theoretical construct comprising multiple identities organized into a salience hierarchy. Each identity has an associated meaning that serves as the standard reference by which incoming messages or reflected appraisals are measured. Confirmation of identities that are highly salient and important to an individual will produce strong positive emotions and serve to reinforce the identity's position near the top of the hierarchy. Conversely, repeated disconfirmation of salient identities results in strong negative emotions and causes individuals to reposition these identities in the salience hierarchy. Identity control theory predicts that identity confirmation always results in positive emotions, while disconfirmation results in negative emotion (Burke and Harrod 2005). However, recent work in this tradition has determined some inconsistencies in these predictions (Stets 2003, 2005).

While the two control theories, affect control theory and identity control theory, differ in the manner in which identities and emotions are conceptualized and measured, they share important symbolic interactionist principles. The theoretical overlap between the two theories, created by their common heritage to the influence of George Herbert Mead (Burke 1991; MacKinnon 1994) and their mutual dependence on control models (Powers 1973), results in many similar predictions. However, despite these similarities, they also generate some competing hypotheses permitting a critical test of the theories. The need for further work on the relationship between identity meanings and emotion is discussed in the final section.

### **Emotion and the Structure of Interaction: Micro- and Macrolevel Approaches**

In contrast to the symbolic interactionist theories that focus on identities and their cultural meanings, Kemper (1978) proposed a theory of emotions based on social exchange principles. He argued that two dimensions of social relationships—status and power—are universal. Relative positions on these dimensions define the key aspects of a relationship and determine its emotional character (Kemper and Collins 1990). Kemper argued that the emotion caused by status and power changes depends on the perceived source of the change and, in some cases, on whether or not the other person in the interaction was liked or disliked. For example, he said that status loss would result in anger if the loss appeared to be remediable; such anger would be functional in that it motivated action to regain the lost status. If the loss was irredeemable, however, it would lead to sadness and depression, saving energy and acclimating the individual to his or her new lowered state of resources. Status loss by another, if caused by oneself, led to guilt if the other was liked (facilitating group survival by preventing in-group insult). If the other was not liked, his or her status loss would cause happiness.

Kemper's work has been among the most prolific in generating new empirical work. He tested his own ideas in Kemper (1991), using his power-status model to "predict" a set of 162 emotions reported by respondents in the eight-nation study of emotions by Scherer, Wallbott, and Summerfield (1986). Hypotheses about four emotions—fear, anger, sadness, and joy—were supported in those studies. More recent work by Robinson (2006) confirms this result, showing that Kemper's model has greater specificity in predicting emotional outcomes than affect control theory (although affect control theory's formal, abstract formulation allows wider applicability). The most wide-ranging use of Kemper's model, however, has been the extent to which it has informed research outside the sociology of emotions, both in survey analyses of emotional well-being and distress and in group processes work on emotional production during exchange and group discussion. Kemper's reliance on two fundamental dimensions of sociological study has made it easy to translate his insights into research problems within other traditions.

Randall Collins (1981, 2004) joined Kemper in advocating status and power as the two fundamental dimensions of social interaction. Collins's goal was to account for macrolevel structure through aggregating interactions among individuals. Following Durkheim's classic work, he developed the concept of *emotional energy*, which he argued is released by standardized sequences of interaction called *interaction rituals*. Copresence and mutual focus create a ritual character to interaction. Such occasions create a shared mood, which often feeds back into further interaction through a process that Collins called rhythmic entrainment; basically, interactions tend to be repeated when they produce a shared, positive emotional production and that repetition makes the mood self-perpetuating.

This process has a number of outcomes that are socially important. It creates emotional energy, building group solidarity and creating social boundaries for those who are not involved in the interaction ritual chain. It transforms mundane objects and actions into sacred symbols that have the ability to generate emotional energy on other occasions. Finally, the moral status of the interaction ritual—the objects and actions that it contains—create normative pressures; anger is generated when the moral order created by the group is violated.

Actors who acquire large amounts of emotional energy from ritual encounters are able to claim property and authority. Therefore, individual-level interactions are cumulated to create societal forms. The outcome of the interaction ritual chain is a stratification system, where emotional energy is a resource, capable of being transformed into other, more tangible resources.

Summers-Effler (2002) developed an extension of Collins's theory addressing negative emotional energy such as fear, anxiety, and shame that stems from the inability of individuals to escape interaction rituals in which they have very little power. Often these conditions result in the

adoption of strategies that attempt to minimize the loss of emotional energy rather than maximizing positive emotional energy. Summers-Effler (2004a, 2004b) further extended the theory through the introduction of symbolic interactionist elements in which the self is positioned as a critical element in rituals. The experience of positive emotional energy enhances the sense of self and makes people more likely to commit to group symbols. Conversely, the experience of negative emotional energy decreases self-esteem and consequently reduces the likelihood of committing to group symbols and diminished levels of group solidarity.

Thomas Scheff (1979; Scheff and Retzinger 1992) developed another view of ritual that was rooted in the psychoanalytic tradition. Scheff thought that distressing emotions (such as grief, fear, and anger) are universal because the social situations that produce them are universal. For example, attachment losses (e.g., from parental closeness) produce grief and fear. Scheff assumed that emotional discharge was necessary. Ritual, drama, contests, and other collective emotion-management techniques allowed for the safe discharge of accumulated emotion. While Collins saw interaction ritual chains as generating solidarity and structure at the macrolevel, Scheff saw the rituals as providing a safe outlet for the emotion built up from the common experience of distress. For Scheff, rituals are functional solutions to the problem of repressed emotions, a necessary element of human experience.

The above theories of emotion generally address macro- or group-level phenomena that serve to bind or bond a collectivity in some fashion. The aggregate level of analysis and measurement used in these theoretical traditions tells us little about the individual experience of emotion. Without bridging levels of analyses, neither these more macro theories nor the symbolic interactionist theories can offer a complete understanding of emotion. However, the structure of interaction theories provide us with some understanding of the role that emotion plays at the group level and extends our understanding of emotion as something more than an individual phenomenon.

### Survey Research about the Distribution of Emotions

All sociological theories, with the possible exception of Thomas Scheff's psychoanalytic approach, make the prediction that people occupying different social positions will experience different emotional climates. Survey research on self-reports of social distress show clear patterns that support these predictions (see Mirowsky and Ross 1989). Women report more distress than men, unmarried people report more distress than married people, and the uneducated poor report more distress than people who have more income and education. African Americans and other minorities show somewhat higher levels of distress, although the pattern gets more complicated if we control for their generally lower socioeconomic status. It appears

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that some socialization techniques in the minority community are geared to providing protection against some of the negative emotional consequences of minorities' subordinate position. Having children leads to distress in parents; levels of marital satisfaction and well-being drop after a birth and do not return to their prechild levels until after all the children leave home. People who experience undesirable life events (such as loss of a job, death of a spouse, sickness, and accidents) report more distress than those who do not. Those who have little religious faith are more distressed than those who have strong religious beliefs. The young are more depressed and anxious than the middle-aged. Anxiety declines steadily with age, while depression declines from youth to age 55 and then increases again in old age. In general, those who have few network contacts and few social roles are more distressed than those who are better integrated into society (Thoits 1983, 1986).

Clearly, disadvantaged persons have fewer resources to avoid negative events and to respond to misfortunes that do occur. This powerlessness puts them at greater risk of stressful circumstances. Such victimization also leads to depression because of an implied lack of control: While some people may choose to be exploiters, few choose to be victims. In general, the social structural position strongly shapes one's emotional life.

Early survey research by Thoits (1983, 1986) made clear the importance of social networks and social integration for mental health. Peggy Thoits indicates that individuals with fewer network contacts were at greater risk for distress than the well-integrated. However, identity loss and accumulation were shown not to operate in an additive manner but were conditional based on the degree of overlap or segregation in the identity structures of individuals. These results indicate that identity loss is more psychologically distressing when the identities that constitute the identity or self-structure of an individual are less segregated and the individual is more socially integrated. Later work by Thoits (1992) indicated that psychological distress may be less a function of the number of identities held by an individual; rather, psychological distress may be a function of the characteristics of identities. Thoits (1992, 2003) found a significant difference between what she termed *voluntary* and *obligatory* identities. Voluntary identities differ from obligatory identities in that they may be abandoned more readily because other identities are not necessarily dependent on them. As such, a constellation of voluntary role identities may provide protection from general psychological distress as individuals may shed these identities when domain-specific threats present themselves. Moreover, Thoits (1992, 2003) determined that the psychological distress burden was shouldered unevenly by women, due in great part to the obligatory nature of many of their role identities.

A small qualitative study of husbands and wives conducted by Simon (1995) produced findings that paralleled those of Thoits (1992). Simon determined that men and women generally exhibited significant differences in their

feelings about combining work and family roles. While women tended to feel that the combination of role identities from the two structurally separate domains was more psychologically disruptive, men had little cognitive or psychological difficulty merging similar role identities. According to Simon, women felt that committing themselves to work role identities precluded their adequate fulfillment of family role identities. For women, the combination of work and family role identities resulted in negative self-evaluations and feelings of inadequacy, while the same combination produced positive self-evaluations and feelings of self-worth for men. Many of these results were reinforced by a later analysis of national level data (Simon 2002).

While Thoits and Simon are generally measuring levels of distress, stress, or psychological well-being rather than emotion per se, the findings of their research have important implications for emotion research. Stress and distress are constructed as negative occurrences or affective states in survey and medical sociology literatures. As such, generalized negative affective states correspond to frequent experience of more negative emotions. Taken together, the findings of Thoits and Simon bring into sharp relief the potential pitfalls of isolating one or two identities for analysis—a strategy employed in most symbolic interactionist theories of emotion. Moreover, Thoits's research shows the importance of qualitative differences between the general characteristics or time commitments of identities for emotion outcomes, reinforcing the Stryker insight that position within the self-structure is important for the identity-emotion relationship.

### An Assessment of Current Theory and Research

The modern sociological theories of emotion offer comprehensive views of the place that emotions hold in social life. In particular, they articulate a model of the self who feels, the ways in which the social world impacts him or her, how emotions motivate social action, and, cumulatively, how emotional production supports or changes social structures. Experimental, ethnographic, and survey evidence supports the view of emotion as a social as well as an individual phenomenon. We offer four suggestions for the advancement of the sociology of emotions: (1) a repositioning of the importance that biological and/or physiological factors contribute to the production of emotion; (2) a return to central importance of class and gender variations in emotional experience and management; (3) examination of key differences among theories of identity, action, and emotion; and (4) a call for greater interpenetration between the various subfields of the sociology of emotion and sociology as a larger field.

### Biology and Physiology

As sociologists attempted to carve a uniquely sociological niche for the study of emotions in the second half of

the twentieth century, most adopted a theoretical stance that viewed emotions as socially derived and defined. This theoretical position stood in direct opposition to existing psychological and biological theories investigating a complex biological processing of emotion. Because of the early efforts of sociologists to legitimize the sociological investigation of emotion, we believe that the social basis for emotions has gained legitimacy in and outside the discipline. With legitimacy issues resolved and the impressive accumulation of decades of social research, we believe that it is time to engage in a more meaningful discussion of the role of physiology in the production of emotions and the implications of physiological bases of emotions for future social research.

Turner (2000) and Robinson, Rogalin, and Smith-Lovin (2004) represent examples of recent sociologically based attempts to incorporate evolutionary biology or physiology into current accounts of emotion. Turner (2000), taking an evolutionary stance, argues that natural selection processes favored the reproduction of those individuals who were able to appropriately communicate basic emotions through body language. Selection processes “hard-wired” individuals with basic socially useful emotions such as pride, shame, and guilt. Turner draws several important conclusions regarding emotions, evolutionary biology, and physiology. Paramount is his conclusion that emotion researchers must reconsider their theoretical accounts of emotion to include the importance of nonverbal emotion communication, which often occurs outside the conscious realm of social actors. These subliminal emotional gestures, Turner argues, result from rapid chemical reactions that are beyond the control of the individual and are perceived by observers at an unconscious level. The cues resulting from chemical neurological processes occur so rapidly that the notion of internal gestures proposed by Mead (1934) may have lost its fecundity. Ultimately, Turner concludes that the study of interaction and emotion has been truncated by sociologists’ failure to include biological and neurological processes.

Robinson et al. (2004), like Turner, argue that the time is ripe for probing physiological analogs to emotion. In their review of the psychological and physiological literatures, Robinson et al. conclude that there are a variety of measures that could be used to develop sociological theories of emotion. They concentrate on physiological features that have workable measurements in laboratory research and are potentially useful in social psychological experiments. Robinson et al. note that existing sociological theories of emotion, especially affect control theory and identity control theory, use theoretical mechanisms similar to those employed in psychological self-regulation (Carver and Scheier 2000) and self-discrepancy (Higgins 1987, 1989). All of these theories invoke the control system imagery developed by Powers (1973), using theoretical constructs of deflection, discrepancy, or disequilibrium to represent the comparison of system expectations (a reference level) and perceptual reality. The theoretical similarities between the

deflection processes in sociological theories of emotion and psychological theories of self-regulation and discrepancy led Robinson et al. (2004) to argue that there may be physiological analogs to the deflection processes outlined in symbolic interactionist theories of emotion.

To test existing sociological theories of identity and emotion, Robinson et al. argue that sociologists would need to borrow physiological measures that correspond to (1) deflection, disequilibrium, or generalized stress; (2) positively evaluated emotion; (3) negatively evaluated emotion; and (4) potency and activity dimensions of emotional response. These measures, the authors argue, would permit a more stringent test of sociological theories of emotion as well as providing physiological support for existing psychophysiological theories of emotion. Not only would the use of such measures provide important tests for sociological theories of emotion, but their use would further legitimize several decades’ worth of research and theorizing by sociologists of emotion.

In an impressive review of the potential physiological analogs to the experience of emotion, Robinson et al. (2004) offer “evidence that appears to link behavioral, autonomic, and endocrinological responses to deflection, positive affect, negative affect, potency, and activity” (p. 90). Table 1 from Robinson et al. (2004) suggests that cortisol levels, heart rate, blood pressure, and vagal tone should indicate the stress that comes from deflection of identity meanings. Positively and negatively evaluated emotions, as well as the potency and activity of emotional states, may be indicated by the activation of different facial muscles (which can be measured through thermal imaging), as well as more specific elements of blood pressure and heart rate. These potential physiological measures are hypothesized to correspond to the theoretical constructs in control theories of emotion. Current experiments to validate them are promising. We believe that sociologists of emotion will find the theoretical use of physiological ideas key to disentangling some of their *sociological* debates about the relationship between identity confirmation and emotion. These measures, if validated, would subject such theories to more rigorous empirical tests and would permit more precise prediction of emotion production resulting from interaction.

### **Emotion Work: The Intersection of Class and Gender**

Arlie Hochschild’s (1983) *The Managed Heart* was one of the founding achievements of the sociology of emotion. It inspired two decades of creative, fruitful research projects about feeling rules, their historical evolution, and their effects on social actors’ lives. Despite the fecundity of Hochschild’s original work, we believe that sociologists have largely failed to develop much of the promise of *The Managed Heart* and its implications for class and gender variation in emotion work. Hochschild based her early work on Marx as well as Goffman. We have largely

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ignored the tension that she suggested between capitalist and the workers who do emotional labor in the context of their work. We have not pursued the mental health implications that Hochschild argued would come from the alienated labor of emotion workers within such an occupational structure.

To move beyond documentation of the existence of emotional labor in different occupations, we need to study social structural sources of their variation (see Propositions 3, 5, and 6 above) and to study the psychological effects of this labor (Proposition 4). This expansion of our research agenda would require a very different type of research than that which has currently documented emotion work in a large variety of occupations. Hochschild (1983) hints at this in her third and fourth appendices. In the third, she suggests a list of occupations that she thinks will be high on emotional labor and analyzes their sex composition. In the fourth, she lists the socialization practices in the middle or working class that she thinks would lead to different emotion-management styles in those two populations. To generate more evidence about Propositions 3, 5, and 6, we need comparative studies that cover larger parts of the occupational and class structure.

Proposition 4 may prove the most difficult about which to generate evidence. To study whether or not emotional labor had serious psychological effects would demand not only variation in the independent variable (the amount of emotion labor required in one's job) but also careful measurement of the dependent variable. It would be a daunting task to assess this type of emotional distress in a wider population, although specialists in mental health might show us the way.

As a result of our concentration on feeling rules, we have realized only half of the promise that *The Managed Heart* offered. Scholars have learned a great deal about emotion culture, how people learn it, and how they operate to conform to feeling rules and interpret their failures, but we haven't advanced beyond her initial Marxist-inspired insight—that emotion labor exists—to find out more about how it is related to social structure. These questions were the sociological core of her book, what made it a classic in the *sociology* of emotion. Given how much influence the book has had with us using just half of its intellectual contribution, we may get another good 20–30 years out of this influential text by further exploring the largely ignored propositions of *The Managed Heart*.

### Critical Tests of Symbolic Interactionist Theories of Emotion

Due in large part to shared symbolic interactionist roots, affect control theory (Heise 1979; MacKinnon 1994; Smith-Lovin and Robinson forthcoming) and identity control theory (Burke 1991; Stets 2006) share many common assumptions, principles, and propositions. Theories sharing a common set of assumptions are likely to generate competing hypotheses, as is the case with affect control

theory and identity control theory. The differential predictions and competing hypotheses represent opportunities for crucial tests between the theories.

Both theories predict that emotion results from both confirming and disconfirming situations. Affect control theory and identity control theory agree that negative emotions result when individuals in normal, positive identities do bad things or have bad things done to them. Finally, the theories argue that individuals will act to maintain identities or restore meanings in interaction.

However, their specific predictions regarding the valence of the emotions from some identity-disconfirming events differ. For instance, affect control theory would predict negative emotion resulting from the confirmation of a negative identity, while identity control theory argues that the confirmation of all identities results in positive emotion (even if the identity is negative). Similarly, identity control theory postulates that the disconfirmation of identities, even if reflected appraisals are more positive than expected (e.g., from overreward), is always stressful and produces negative emotions. Conversely, affect control theory emphasizes the valence of meanings in the context of the situation produced by the deflection. For instance, a mother who is evaluated by her friends more positively than she expected would be predicted, by identity control theory, to experience negative emotions, while affect control theory would predict more positive emotions than those associated with the usual, confirming sentiments for that mother identity.

Points of divergence between the two theories represent opportunities for critical tests. However, very few tests of this sort have been undertaken. Stets (2005), Burke and Harrod (2005), and Carter, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin (2006) are exceptions. Two factors have made tests more difficult (Robinson, Smith-Lovin, and Wisecup forthcoming). The majority of identities are positively evaluated; in confirming situations, both theories make identical predictions regarding emotion with positive identities. The disconfirmation of these positive identities will almost always result in negative emotions under both theories, since deflections from the reference standard are likely to be in the negative direction. However, researchers do not currently have measures that are capable of distinguishing between the stress caused by deflection and the actual negative emotion.

While both theories have enjoy considerable empirical support, much more work needs to be done to investigate the competing hypotheses generated by both theories as well as the interaction between the general valence of the identity and confirming and disconfirming interactions. Furthermore, a majority of the research in both traditions focuses on the evaluation dimension of meanings almost exclusively. Both identity control theory and affect control theory posit that identity meanings are multidimensional. Affect control theory specifically organizes its mathematical models around three dimensions—evaluation, potency, and activity. Burke (1991) and Stets (2006) explicitly

argue that meanings must be measured in institutional context, with multiple dimensions of relevant distinction developing from that contextual environment. But researchers in both theoretical research programs have conducted virtually all of their studies using the easy-to-measure evaluative responses and ignoring other dimensions of meaning. Clearly, a full development of our understanding of the interrelationship among identity, action, and emotion will require probing beyond the limits of good-bad responses.

### **Interpenetration Within and Diffusion from the Sociology of Emotions**

As is clear from this chapter, there are several different approaches to the study of emotion. We believe that there should be more collective effort from researchers using each of these perspectives toward interpenetration and collaboration in an effort to increase the empirical knowledge base about emotions. As we have already mentioned, the use of biological measures may prove useful for measuring deflection processes and affective reactions resulting from interaction. Moreover, the use of biological measures may help to delineate clearly the scope conditions for various theories of emotion (i.e., the range of emotional responses and situations to which the theories apply).

There are also strong links between the cultural treatments of emotion (e.g., Hochschild and Thoits), the social interactional theory of Kemper, and the control theories of identity and emotion (Heise, Burke) that have not been exploited. Clearly, the cultural norms that develop in a cultural system mirror the standard role relationships within that social group. If students are supposed to display deference (or even anxiety) in interacting with teachers in one culture, while showing lively, even combative, engagement in another, these patterns say volumes about the relative status and power of the two roles in those cultures. It is the normative interactions that support the meanings of identities in the symbolic interactionist control theories. Identity control theory would predict that we are motivated to conform to normative patterns because of the positive feelings that they produce. Affect control theory would say that it could generate the feeling rules by showing what emotions were predicted in what interaction settings. In any case, the interrelationships of these theoretical frames have been underexploited. The cultural, the interactional, and the symbolic are all intimately intertwined. The sociologies of emotion could be more explicitly connected to one another.

In fact, the sociological study of emotion is one area where the micro-macro linkage should come easily. Collins's (2004) recent elaboration of his interaction ritual chain theory has revived interest in the Durkheimian and Goffmanian observations about the patterned, institutionalized, sacred character of many everyday activities. Collins argues that copresence, mutual focus, and shared mood lead to emotional energy and group cohesion. The symbolic interactionist theories can help us understand

how the meanings that sacred objects and people obtain through these rituals sustain themselves within a culture. They may also help to explain how the shared mood develops in the first place.

There is also room for more integration between the theoretical treatments of emotion and the researchers who use surveys to measure emotional experience in a way that is generalizable to a larger population. Peggy Thoits (1983, 1986, 2005), with her emphasis linking emotion and mental health, has long looked at the social structural antecedents of negative emotion. She has written consistently about the need to integrate emotions theory and work on mental health (Thoits 1991). More recently, both Simon (2002) and Lively and Heise (2004) have used a module of questions about emotional experience from the 1996 General Social Survey to explore theoretical ideas.

While the various traditions within the sociology of emotions remain somewhat atomized and in need of synthesis, the field has done a better job of diffusing its ideas across sociology. The research and insights of sociologists of emotion contribute in significant ways to new work in exchange theory (Lawler 2001; Lawler and Thye 1999; Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2000) and status characteristics theory (Lovaglia and Houser 1996). Culture scholars Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003) make fruitful use of the emotion work concept in their ethnographic study of how small groups (in their case, suburban activists and bar patrons) reflect and reproduce larger cultural patterns of inequality in their face-to-face interactions. Wilcox (1998) makes use of the same ideas for different purposes in his examination of the relationship between religious ideology and parenting style. These are only a few recent examples of a large and growing pool of sociological research that has taken note of the knowledge produced by sociologists of emotion.

### **CONCLUSION**

The field has done an excellent job of getting passed initial disputes about the role of biology in emotion and the use of positivist versus social constructionist methods to study emotions. During the second half of the twentieth century, there has been a remarkable accumulation of theoretical and empirical work both in the sociology of emotions and in subfields such as mental health, social psychology, group processes, culture, and medical sociology. The next challenge will be to foster more interpenetration of these ideas. In most cases, there is no "critical test" because the theoretical approaches are talking about different phenomena. We wish not to dilute the identity of separate perspectives or to necessarily create some grand theory but to ensure that we are maximizing the strides each brings for the overall understanding of the emotions and their place in social life. The key is to recognize what theoretical perspectives have to offer one another and to move on that advantage.

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