

Sociology of emotions

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Abstract

Emotions are at the center of social dialogue, with the sociology of emotions being a fundamental issue for study. Society is a unity of individuals who are sharing feelings, values, rules and collective consciousness. Emotions are descriptions of a person's inner existence while contributing to the social construction of reality. In this article are described major theoretical perspectives on the meaning of emotion in sociology. Emotions, being mainly social constructs, defined by culture through their learning, regulate both the inner world and the interactions with the outside world, that is, interpersonal relationships and they are studied as social phenomena associated with social and cultural structures. Both contemporary and classical theories of emotion are useful for the progress of the science of sociology and an in-depth study of social phenomena.

Key words: emotions, sentiments, sociology, theories, interaction, interpersonal relationships.

Definitions of Emotions

Scientists from different scientific fields have approached emotions in a different way. In the study of emotions were involved biology, psychology, neuroscience, sociology and many other disciplines. For this reason, they have been formulated different definitions of emotions. Traditionally, emotions have been conceptualized and studied primarily as individual phenomena, with research focusing on cognitive and expressive components and on physiological and neurological processes underlying emotional reactions. According to biologists, emotions are inherent in the evolution of the species and help the person to act quickly or slowly in order to protect him from certain danger. Neurobiologist Damasio argued that emotions, along with the disguised physiological mechanism behind them, help us in the task of predicting an uncertain future and the appropriate planning of our actions as well as a reason our subjects characterize a continuous ability to experience emotions.

In terms of psychology, emotions and sentiments fit into the structure of one's personality. The study of emotion is closely related to the study of social development as many theorists stress the importance of interaction and the first relationships the infant creates with the mother or her substitute [1] as well as vice versa a very important role played by emotion in the shaping of personality and social development. [2]

Thus, according to the *Differential Emotions Theory*, special attention is given to individual emotions to facilitate the development of social abilities and the prevention of psychopathological problems. The connections between emotions, cognition and behavior, but also the importance of individual emotions for the organization and mobilization of the individual can lead the person to good or poor adjustment. So specific emotions and patterns of emotions have different functionality at different periods of a person's development while affecting in a different way the cognition and behavior associated with different forms psychopathology. [3]

An important contribution to the study of emotions is that of Scheff (1990) who studied emotions and introduced for

the first time the term '*Sociology of Emotions*.' Scheff attributed to emotions the importance they deserve, considering them as a guideline that defines an individual's desire and understands his behavior and action, as well as his relationship with others. [4]

Kemper (1990) tried to separate emotions and sentiments and mentioned that sentiment is a relatively short-lived response, primarily positive or even negative by nature, while the emotions manifested as a response and they are formed in a specific situation and condition. [5]

Lawler (1999) defines emotions as relatively brief, positive or negative evaluative states, which have physiological, neurological and cognitive elements. [6] Brody (1999) sees emotions as motivational systems with physiological, behavioral, experiential and cognitive components that have a positive or negative valence (they make one feel good or bad), which vary in intensity and tend to be induced by interpersonal situations or events that merit our attention because they affect our well-being.[7] Primary emotions are considered to be universal, physiological, of evolutionary relevance and biologically and neurologically innate, while secondary emotions, which can be a result of a combination of primary emotions, are socially and culturally conditioned. According to Kemper (1987), the primary emotions are fear, anger, depression and satisfaction, while Turner (1999) identifies them as satisfaction-happiness, aversion- fear, assertion-anger, disappointment-sadness and startlement-surprise. Kemper (1978) also distinguishes between structural, situational and anticipatory emotions. [8] Emotions such as guilt, shame, love, resentment, disappointment and nostalgia are considered as secondary emotions. [9] Gordon (1981) distinguishes between emotions and sentiments, which according to him are 'socially constructed pattern[s] of sensations, expressive gestures, and cultural meanings organized around a relationship to a social object'. [10] Lawler (2001) distinguishes between global emotions, or generic responses to the outcome of an interaction, which are involuntary and not conditioned by interpretation or cognitive attribution, and specific emotions, which actors associate with specific objects and are defined through interpretive effort. [11]

Emotions can be distinguished from feelings, affects, moods, and sentiments. The first two are less specific terms, the latter two, more specific. The general term 'feelings' includes the experience of physical drive states (e.g. hunger, pain, fatigue) as well as emotional states. Affects refer to positive and negative evaluations (liking/disliking) of an object, behavior, or idea; affects also have intensity and activity dimensions. [12] Thus, emotions can be viewed as culturally delineated types of feelings or affects. Compared to emotions, moods are more chronic, usually less intense, and less tightly tied to an eliciting situation. Sentiments are "socially constructed pattern[s] of sensations, expressive gestures, and cultural meanings organized around a relationship to a social object, usually another person or group such as a family"; [13] examples of sentiments include romantic love, parental love, loyalty, friendship, and patriotism, as well as more transient, acute emotional responses to social losses (sorrow, envy) and gains (pride, gratitude). As defined by Gordon, the term "sentiment" emphasizes relatively enduring social relationships as affect elicitors. [14]

Social Approaches to Emotion

The sociological perspective contradicts biology and psychology, as emotions are not merely innate, biophysical phenomena. Basic emotions such as interest, fear, surprise, disgust, sadness, happiness and contempt may have evolved as physiological reactions and expressive signals due to their utility for individual and group survival. Historical and cultural variability shows that to a large extent subjective experiences and emotional beliefs are socially acquired but also socially constructed. The general theoretical approaches to understanding the dynamics of human emotions that emerged from the perspective of sociology are as follows: Theories of Social Construction, Dramaturgical Theories, Symbolic Theories, Symbolic Interactionist theories, Power and Status Theories and Social Exchange Theories.

1. *The Social Construction Theory* approach emotions as socially constructed phenomena, whose character is not physical, but develops through systems of speech and culture.

This was the first sociological theory, which discovered the qualitative elements of emotion, which can vary widely and exhibit quite different development in time. In addition, they argued that a set of emotion elements does not necessarily mean that they characterize emotional episodes in general. For most sociologists, emotions are socially constructed in the sense that human emotion is dependent on socialization through culture and social structures. This emphasis on the concept of emotion building is interpreted in the sense of the influence of emotions and on the interaction of social structures with the individual, which is governed by social norms, values and beliefs. [15]

2. In the *Social Structure Theories of Emotion*, despite the very strong cultural assumptions, emotion ceases to be recognized as irrational by definition and its important moral, epistemological and value dimension is recognized. Social construction theory treats emotions as a dynamic concept, as a process of change, emphasizing that emotion is a social construct, defined by culture through the learning of emotions. [16] In this sense it is a fact that emotions regulate both the inner world and the interactions with other people. [17]

3. According to *Symbolic Interaction Theory*, emotions depend mainly on the situation in which they are presented, on the vocabulary of emotions and on the emotional beliefs, which vary from society to society. The patterns of interaction underpin the emotion in more extensive interactions, which accumulate and gradually create long-term stratification. [18] Successful interactions create excitement, confidence, and a sense of affiliation with the groups in which emotional energy is acquired. Unsuccessful interactions create frustration, embarrassment, and alienation from the team and its interests. Emotions such as anger, fear, and joy are treated as short-term effects that result from frustrating or pleasant interactions that underlie the long-term motive of greater or lesser emotional energy. Another view that associate's emotion with interactions states that emotion is a complex set of interactions between objective and subjective factors mediated through the nervous system, which can awaken cognitive processes that awaken emotions.

they often lead to behavior that is adaptive and purpose driven. [19]

4. According to the *Positivist Theory*, emotions are treated as unchanging, automatic, shaped responses to specific categories of social stimuli. Emotion is examined in physiological and social, cognitive and expressive terms to form an integrated theory of emotions. [20] [21]

5. *Social Exchange Theories* explain how and when the emotions produced by social exchange create stronger or weaker links with relationships, groups, or networks. It is argued that social exchange produces positive or negative emotions that are rewarded or punished internally. Theory shows that social units (relationships, groups, networks) are perceived as the source of these emotions, depending on the degree of community in the exchange task. This function is greater if (1) the actors find it difficult to distinguish their individual results or contributions to the settlement (non-segregation) and (2) the actors perceive a shared responsibility for success or failure in the exchange project. The theory explains the effects of the various exchange structures on these conditions and, in turn, on cohesion and solidarity. The implications are developed for network transformations in a group.

6. *Ritual theories* argue 'that focused interaction, which these theories refer to as ritual, is at the heart of all social dynamics. Rituals generate group emotions that are linked to symbols, forming the basis for beliefs, thinking, morality, and culture'. [22] Taking the sacrificial rituals of aboriginal Australians as a paradigm, Durkheim (1965 [1912]) described the basic mechanisms through which these collective events produced and maintained the social cohesion of the group. Rituals are social gatherings in which individuals maintain the same focus of attention, share the same values and feel the same emotions. [23] [24] These social gatherings provoke a collective effervescence and a high level of group consciousness. Collins (2004) distinguishes between the positive emotions and moral feelings, which, directed toward the group itself, shape social solidarity, and the positive emotions and trust that individual participants feel in the form of emotional energy (EE). According to Collins, in-

dividuals always seek to maximize their emotional energy in every social encounter. Goffman (1959) [25] grounded his social research project in this initial Durkheimian insight, stating that all social encounters constitute an interaction ritual.

7. *Exchange theories*, developed by Homans and Blau, have also been used to explain the complex world of emotions. Social interaction is a process in which actors exchange valuable resources in order to obtain an advantage or benefit. Individuals try to obtain rewards or avoid punishments by maximizing the utility of their behavior and calculating costs and investments. [26] Individuals 'feel good' (positive reinforcement) when rewards exceed costs and investments, and they 'feel bad' (negative reinforcement) when they do not. But the intensity and type of emotions provoked by a social exchange depend on many other factors: the type of exchange (productive, negotiated, reciprocal or generalized); the characteristics of the structure and the nature of social networks; the relative power and dependency of the actors; whether or not expectations are met; the relevant norms of justice (e.g. equity, equality and procedure); and to what individuals attribute the cause of the outcome of exchange.

Alongside the theories about emotions, there were theorists who tried to reconcile the opposing views. One of them was Kemper (1987), who attempted to elaborate and synthesize positive theories and social construction theories, reporting that emotions evolve through attachment to social definitions, with labels and concepts in interaction and in accordance with social organization. He noted that secondary emotions, such as shame, guilt, love, anxiety, resentment, etc., are acquired - in certain circumstances - through primary emotional experiences with the secondary labels attached to the individual through of its socialization.

An important contribution to the study of emotions is that of Scheff (1990), who by studying emotions introduced for the first time the term 'Sociology of Emotions', giving emotions the importance they deserve, viewing them as a guideline, that defines one's desire and his behavior and action, as well as one's relationship with others. Much of

his work focuses on the analysis of individual cases and the emotions that develop in interpersonal relationships and their integration into a broader social and political context, so that the micro-analytic level is combined with the macro-analytic. Therefore, it attaches particular importance to the theory of social bonding. According to Scheff, a person's personality and basic behavior and life attitudes stem from the nature of his relationships and interactions with others, from the perspective of how others perceive us (what we perceive). He tried to approach these social relationships in terms of alienation and solidarity.

In an effort to distinguish between emotions and sentiments, Kemper (1990) referred to this by saying that sentiment is a relatively short-lived response - primarily positive or even negative in nature - while emotions that are expressed in response are shaped by a particular situation and treaty. On this basis it distinguishes emotions in relation to their duration. Thus, long-term emotions are those that help define social relationships (e.g. love, hate, trust, respect), and shorter-term emotions are responses to actions and information about specific objects. On the other hand, compared to moods, it is said that they are peculiar and cannot be compared as they lack a clear and straightforward object, they are individual and can be short or long-lasting. [27]

Turner (2007), in an attempt to approximate the concept of emotions in relation to social organization, incorporated features from multiple categories, proposing a more comprehensive theory of human emotions. He supports the view that culture inherent in a social organization causes the awakening of prudent emotions. According to this view, the four primary emotions are 1. Satisfaction-Happiness; 2. Prevention-Fear; 3. Imposition-Anger; and 4. Frustration-Sadness and in this order of succession emotions influence their dynamics, facing them and the wider social structures in which they occur. [28]

Fisher and Manstead (2008) further went on to a functional approach to emotions by distinguishing two basic social functions: social acceptance and social exclusion. Social acceptance is related to the promotion of social and harmonious relationships between individuals and groups. Social

exclusion promotes, through the experience and expression of feelings, differentiation from others and competition at the level of groups, couples or even individuals, and is related to the functioning of emotions in social relationships where they exist, for example different social status. [29] It is fact that the social nature of emotions can be analyzed at different field of social studies.

Conclusion

This article argues that emotional phenomena occupy an important place in sociology's heritage which has yet to be explicated fully by the sub-discipline. Major traditions of the sociological theory developed orientations towards the social and moral dimensions of emotional phenomena. Social construction theorists and symbolic interactionists view emotions as primarily dependent on definitions of the situation, emotion vocabularies, and emotional beliefs, which vary across time and location. In contrast, "positivists" view emotions as invariant, automatic, patterned responses to different categories of social stimuli. In conclusion the sociology of emotions is studying the social nature of emotions also the emotional nature of society. The integration of emotions and their effects in sociological research, which began several years ago with the recognition of the sociology of emotions, must continue to move and evolve until emotions are fully integrated into the general sociological perspective.

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