

Introduction

Two things are attempted in this book. First, key aspects of social structure are examined through the development and application of emotions categories. Thus rationality, class structure, social action, social conformity, basic rights, and social change are considered through discussion of a particular emotion or set of emotions which both characteristically pertains to each of them and elucidates the processes to which each is subject. Second, the development and application of emotions categories to the analysis of social-structural components are used in the refinement and elaboration of sociological theory.

The dual interests of understanding social structure and enriching sociological theory have always been central in sociology. Less frequently have endeavors to achieve these aims been attempted through a focus on emotion. Emotion is not readily thought of as a category which either belongs in or has anything important to offer sociology. Nevertheless, the following chapters will show that emotions terms can be developed in and applied to the analysis of social structure. They will also show that theorizing which offers a central place to emotions categories risks nothing of its sociological character.

But any conclusions which are drawn from these chapters must be made in light of their intentions, and therefore of the limits on what they attempt to achieve. While it is not an author's place to prime the critics, although all authors do that unintentionally and inadvertently, I do want to indicate some of the things not attempted in this book.

One obvious omission, which some readers may regret, is a full statement of a general theory of emotion. This absence is fully intended. There are some robust theories of emotion, and parts of my discussion are obviously informed by certain of them. Of the sociological theories of emotion in general, Kemper's (1978) stands out as the most influential on my own work. In two chapters, chapters 5 and 7, his social interactional theory of emotions is addressed explicitly with a view to extending it. But these extensions are with regard to particular emotions, not the overall

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0521621909 - Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach

J. M. Barbalet

Excerpt

[More information](#)2 *Introduction*

framework of the theory. And this is the point. A theory of emotion in general has not been attempted here because this book is concerned instead with certain particular emotions.

Emotion in general is simply a category, while particular emotions have the reality of actual experience. What is needed in sociology is not another general theory of emotion but a deeper understanding of particular emotions, and especially those central to social processes. The emotions which are treated in the chapters to follow include fear, resentment, vengefulness, shame, and confidence. All of these have previously attracted the attention of researchers; but by considering them in the context of social structure it is possible to discover new things about them. Fear, for example, has always been held to be a paralyzing emotion which holds back change. But a study of elite fear leads to a reconsideration of fear itself, as we shall see in chapter 7.

The particular emotions explored in the following chapters will each be considered in terms of singular aspects of social structure. The coverage cannot be complete, and aspects of social structure not discussed here, and other emotions, deserve to be researched. If this book achieves anything of value it will be to further encourage the building of what used to be called middle-range theories of social-structural components in terms of efficacious emotions.

Some problems require a different approach, however. One such is the problem of rationality, in which no single dominant emotion or emotion type is implicated, but the conventional conceptualization of emotion itself, and also of rationality, must be brought into question. Rationality is not a component of social structure so much as a quality of social agency. It is shown in chapter 2 that the bases or social foundations of rationality include a range of particular emotions. It is also shown that the concepts of rationality and also emotion cannot be taken at face-value.

A method employed here for unraveling the connections of rationality and emotion is a critical analysis of the sociological theory of Max Weber. When emotions are understood to be central in social structure and social processes, the capacity of sociological theory to convey that fact becomes a matter of real concern. Much of the discussion of the chapters that follow will be devoted to the evaluation and construction of sociological theory. But, again, this is not comprehensively executed and much has been left undone.

Weber is given his due in the following discussion, but what of the other classical theorists, especially Durkheim and Marx? The importance of Durkheim to a sociology of emotion has not gone unnoticed (see Barbalet 1994; Collins 1975; Fisher and Chon 1989). Marx has drawn very little attention in this regard, however, although his work does warrant

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0521621909 - Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach

J. M. Barbalet

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

3

consideration (see Barbalet 1996b). But for the purposes of understanding those aspects of social structure and the correlative emotions discussed later, it would be entirely artificial to simply survey classical sociological theory in this book. Nevertheless, theorists who have typically been ignored by sociologists are drawn upon when their contribution is of critical importance to the discussion.

Two theorists in particular, almost never allowed to contribute to sociological theory, prove to be crucial at key points of discussion: Adam Smith and William James. Their work is discussed here as it touches on the themes of the various chapters. During research, it emerged that, once the importance of emotions to social processes becomes clear, the intellectual constitution of sociology, and therefore the history of sociology and those who have contributed to it, have to be rethought. In this process the current standing of both Smith and James will inevitably undergo a transformation, from neglect to a recognition of their considerable importance. But this is work for the future, and, briefly, the Epilogue that follows.

It is necessary to add another caveat regarding what is to follow. The social science discussion of the role of emotion in large social units and processes has typically focussed on pathological manifestations of emotions which have destructive consequences. Perhaps the best known of these is Gustave Le Bon's classic of the late nineteenth century, *The Crowd* (1895). The deleterious consequences for social order and historical change of excessive and pathological emotions is an important topic. Indeed, some of the best recent sociological writing on emotion is in this vein. I am thinking especially of Thomas Scheff and Suzanne Retzinger's *Emotions and Violence: Shame and Rage in Destructive Conflict* (1991), and Thomas Scheff's *Bloody Revenge: Emotions, Nationalism, and War* (1994). The purpose of this book, however, is not to pursue such a line of thought.

Many of the emotions to be discussed in the following, especially resentment, vengefulness, shame, and fear, have typically been treated in terms of their pathological forms. This book, however, is focussed on the explanation of what might be called normal or functioning social processes. The challenge is to demonstrate the centrality of emotion to the routine operations of non-deviant structures of social interaction. In doing so, it is sufficient to stick to normal not extreme expressions of emotion. The discussion here, then, is confined to the emotions necessary for structures of social order and harmonious social change. This is not to deny that conflict or even fundamental challenge are not regular occurrences in social systems. Rather, it is to say that emotion is central to and not deviant in the everyday operations of social processes.

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0521621909 - Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach

J. M. Barbalet

Excerpt

[More information](#)4 *Introduction*

One more thing must be said before the chapters which make up this book are described. A good deal could be made in these brief remarks of the book's macrosociological focus. But much of what is covered here pertains also to the social psychological or micro realm, and it would be disingenuous to not acknowledge the fact. Our concern in discussing microsociological matters, however, is to indicate a clear appreciation of what an emotions perspective can offer an understanding of the linkages between the micro and macro domains. This is an under-explored set of problems to which an emotions approach is well placed to contribute.

The chapters which follow explain particular social processes through the application of conceptualizations of certain emotions. The exception to this are chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 1 situates the discussion of emotion in the recent history of sociology, and explains that emotions categories hold a place in the foundations of sociology. It also explains how emotion came to be displaced from sociology. In considering the new sociological interest in emotion, this chapter discusses the relationship of emotion with culture and with social structure.

In chapter 2 the discussion is directed to the relationship between rationality and emotion in general. This chapter demonstrates the limitations of the taken-for-granted assumptions about the contribution of emotion to irrationality, especially in the work of Max Weber. Against this conventional and still widely accepted partial understanding of emotion, the discussion explores instead the contribution to rationality made by emotion.

Chapter 3 focusses on an emotion which is key to fundamental aspects of social structure, namely class resentment. It is frequently commented that the theory of social class is at an impasse, which some writers believe will be overcome through the application of rational choice theory to the analysis of class situations. This chapter shows that a focus on class resentment encourages the identification of aspects of social structure and culture which are crucial in understanding propensities to class formation and action. This chapter demonstrates how emotion may be conceptualized as inhering simultaneously in individual experience and in the social structures and relationships in which individuals are embedded.

Moving from class structure to social action, chapter 4 is concerned with the emotional basis of action and agency. Confidence, in particular, is shown to be an emotion which, in overcoming the uncertainty of engaging an unknowable future, is a necessary basis for social action. By referring to the future in this way, we therefore introduce temporality into considerations of action when its emotional dimensions are highlighted. The macrosociological significance of the perspective developed in this chapter is demonstrated by a consideration of business confidence.

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0521621909 - Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach

J. M. Barbalet

Excerpt

[More information](#)

The contribution of shame to social conformity is treated in chapter 5. This has recently become well-covered ground through a mushrooming of popular interest in shame (Karen 1992). This chapter examines the argument that shame is central to conforming behavior as it was presented by Adam Smith in the eighteenth century, by Charles Darwin in the nineteenth, and in the various forms of twentieth-century claims for and doubts about the importance of shame as a social emotion. Through a critique of leading sociological accounts of shame, a new typology of shame and the ambiguous relationship of shame with social conformity is presented.

Human or basic rights are increasingly drawing attention from sociological writers. Chapter 6 presents a theory of basic rights in which the emotions of resentment and vengefulness are shown to be principal factors. The chapter argues that claims to rights are directed and energized primarily by resentment and vengefulness. It is also argued that rights are claimed not when physical needs are not met, but when social standing is violated. Resentment and vengefulness are distinguished in terms of the types of social violation each is a reaction against. By approaching basic rights through emotions it is also possible to account for historical variability in the efficacy of the vocabulary of rights in political practices.

The final chapter, chapter 7, is concerned with the problem of social and organizational change, and especially the importance of fear in influencing social processes. The relevance of fear in these matters has been insufficiently explored, and the conceptualization of fear in previous discussions of it has been incomplete and partial. It is shown, for instance, that in addition to the flight–fight or subjugation and rebellion fear behaviors, a third typical fear response is containment. This last response can be described as an attempt to limit or redirect the source of fear. While fear can be characterized as a consequence of insufficient power, it is important to recognize that this may be experienced relatively as well as absolutely. Elites, therefore, may experience a loss of power relative to what they had previously experienced, with resulting fear. Thus fear is not exclusively an emotion of subordinate groups. Elite fear, in particular, leads to attempts to contain what is perceived as a threatening force. In this way elite fear is a significant but neglected source of change.

At the end of the book is an Epilogue, in which some earlier themes are revisited. First, the present vernacular standing of emotions is discussed. The problem of sociological critique through an emotions perspective is next taken up. Internal to this part of the discussion is a critique of the notion of emotional labor in which an alternative presentation of emotional processes is provided. Third, the importance of temporality and its

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0521621909 - Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach

J. M. Barbalet

Excerpt

[More information](#)6 *Introduction*

connection with emotions and action are treated. Finally, the impact on sociological traditions of an emotions approach is outlined. A unifying theme of this epilogic discussion is the concept of “the self.”

Discerning readers will have noted an apparent inconsistency between the theoretical orientation of some of the chapters. It is therefore necessary to qualify the use of terminology more clearly to indicate the focus of the different chapters. In particular, the concept of class is employed in chapter 3, whereas in chapter 7 the term elite is used. These terms are widely understood to belong to antithetical conceptualizations of social organization. The use of these quite different terms in different chapters is intentional. The focus of chapter 7 is broader than that of social class and also includes political strata. The consideration of this chapter is not class structure, as it is in chapter 3, but the structure of power, and the implications of this for the experience of fear.

Additionally, in chapter 3 the discussion of resentment attaches to class differences in social structure, whereas in chapter 6 the account of resentment is developed in terms of the division of labor, without any reference to class. Again, these two terms, class and division of labor, have been associated with alternative characterizations of social structure. The term class is typically situated in arguments concerning conflict, exploitation, and social cleavage, whereas the term division of labor finds its place in discussions of reciprocity, social exchange and order, and stratification. But as Bertell Ollman, for instance, has recently shown (1993, pp. 53–67), these distinct terms can be understood as referring to different levels of generality and not necessarily to opposed theoretical formations.

The discussion of basic rights and the attendant emotions of resentment and vengefulness is certainly applicable to class societies. But it is also relevant to analyses of those societies in which class is underdeveloped or complicated by overriding social forces, but in which the division of labor underpins social organization. This is a more general account than that which functions in terms of class relations: and this is precisely the character of the account in chapter 6.

In each of the chapters to follow emotions categories are developed through sociological, and frequently macrosociological, analysis. Also, social processes are explained and theoretical accounts of these developed through an application of emotions terms. The idea that emotions can only be dealt with psychologically, for instance, is therefore demonstrated to be simply untrue. Indeed, the following chapters indicate the significance of emotions to social processes and the ways in which emotions concepts can be applied to the development of sociological explanation and theory building.

In summary, then, this book explores particular emotions in order to

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0521621909 - Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach

J. M. Barbalet

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Introduction

7

extend our understanding of social structure, and to enhance the competence of our social theory. Its real purpose is not to settle matters and answer questions definitively. Rather, it is a book whose success will be realized if it serves to prepare and not conclude investigation.

1 Emotion in social life and social theory

This chapter addresses the question of the place of emotion in sociology, and therefore in social processes. The matter is dealt with in this manner, rather than beginning with emotion in society, because while the role of emotion in social life can be taken to be more or less constant, the category of emotion has had a varied career in social analysis. This anomaly requires explanation.

The chapter begins with a discussion of sociology in general, and where emotion might fit into it. It is shown that in its historical origins, in the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment, and in later European and American sociological writing, there was ample space for emotion. But through a number of changes in social organization and intellectual trends, the category of emotion lost its footing in social explanation. And yet, even during the period of overarching cognitivism in social thought, certain sociologists continued to draw upon emotions categories in their accounts of social processes.

Within a more recent generation, some sociologists have returned to a more explicit exploration of emotion in their research. How this redirection arose is also discussed in the chapter, along with a number of the questions it raises. These include the constructionist approach to emotion, the relationship between emotion and culture, and emotion and social structure. Finally, the chapter emphasizes that, while emotion in general is an abstract category, experience is always of particular emotions. More important still: while emotional feelings tend to merge into each other, the particularity of an emotion is to be located in its social sources and consequences.

Emotion and sociology: the odd couple

What is sociology's business with emotion? One answer is that sociology attempts to explain social phenomena; and emotion is a social phenomenon. That emotion has a social nature is not immediately obvious, however. An individual's experience of emotion more readily reveals the

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0521621909 - Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach

J. M. Barbalet

Excerpt

[More information](#)

personal and intimate side of emotion than its collective or social dimension. Nevertheless, it has been shown by anthropologists, historians, and sociologists, that the patterns of emotional experiences are different in different societies. In this sense emotion can be regarded as an outcome or effect of social processes. As a social product, emotion is in principle amenable to sociological examination and explanation. There is in fact a large and growing literature which shows, from a number of different perspectives, that emotion is a social thing (Kemper 1991; McCarthy 1989).

There is another answer to the question, "What is sociology's business with emotion?" Sociology might be concerned with emotion because emotion is somehow necessary to explain the very fundamentals of social behavior. This idea, that emotion is a social cause, is more likely to be resisted by sociologists than the idea that it is a social effect. As this is the more difficult to accept of the two answers concerning sociology's business with emotion, it is the one that we shall focus on here. The only good reason to offer a sociological explanation of emotion is if emotion is itself significant in the constitution of social relationships, institutions, and processes.

Resistance to the idea of a causal capacity of emotion in social life and social processes follows fairly directly from the present state of sociology itself. This claim is by no means exaggerated, as a brief summary of the structure of sociology will demonstrate. It is necessary, therefore, to diverge into a discussion of sociology and its variant forms, which exclude consideration of emotion. In examining the quality of their deficit we will better appreciate the important role emotion might play in reconstituted sociological explanations.

Sociology, unlike academic history, for instance, is committed to the possibility of general explanation. But, unlike academic economics, say, sociology does not operate within a single unifying paradigm. While agreeing on the necessity to go beyond description, sociologists are likely to disagree about the particular form of explanation which can take them there. There is not one sociology; rather, there are many sociologies. Drawing upon conceptualizations of varying breadth, we may count the number of general types of sociological theory as five (Martindale 1961), say, or four (Collins 1994), or three (Giddens 1971), or two (Dawe 1970). For our present purposes, the simplest approach is the best. Dawe (1970) distinguishes between a sociology of social system and a sociology of social action.

Accounts of social behavior which operate in terms of a sociology of social system assume that factors which are external to social actors determine what they do. Such accounts do not propose that external forces simply compel actors to act. Rather, they offer two possibilities.

Cambridge University Press

0521621909 - Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach

J. M. Barbalet

Excerpt

[More information](#)10 *Emotion, social theory, and social structure*

Social-system accounts hold that structural factors create particular and limited ranges of opportunities, so that possibilities for action are materially constrained. Or, relatedly, social-system accounts hold that structural factors imbue agents with particular interests, so that there are objective imperatives of action. Both of these types of account refer to conditions important for social analysis, but neither of them can be construed as offering complete statements concerning the source of social action, as we shall see. For these reasons, such approaches offer little encouragement to an emotions perspective, although we shall have more to say about that also, shortly.

The social-system approach regards social actors as necessarily constrained. In the face of limited options, actors must choose from among them. Even in the absence of a choice of options the actor can choose not to act. The choices referred to here are matters of sociological concern. How the choices, and indeed the interests, of actors are translated into actions, also requires sociological explanation. These considerations take us to the realm of the sociology of social action. Accounts of social action typically assume that actors are self-conscious or reflective decision-makers. But such a perspective seems to be more optimistic than realistic.

The actions of most people most of the time do not arise from self-conscious decisions. The assumption that social actors know the relevant facts of their situation, or even their own preferences within it, and also how to best match the opportunities they face and the preferences they have, is overstretched. Indeed, to the extent that social action involves cooperation with others, actors can never know, at the time they take it, whether their decision to cooperate is correct. The success or otherwise of any cooperative act, which would indicate whether the decision to cooperate was correct, is necessarily posterior to the decision itself.

In addition to the cognitive basis of action, sociology has frequently taken habit, or what is usually called custom or tradition, to be an adequate source of a significant proportion of social behavior. Habit as such is not much discussed in sociology today, but Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Thorstein Veblen, George Herbert Mead, and others treated it explicitly as a basis of action. Its importance is still implicitly acknowledged in role theory and other accounts which emphasize routinizing aspects of social learning. The importance of habit cannot be denied. But habits change, and the differential inclination to habituation of distinct types of social action has itself to be explained.

Those accounts of social processes which operate in terms of either reflective decision-making or habit tend to exclude emotion from consideration as a basis of social action. It should be noted, however, that there are theories of emotion which function through strongly cognitive categories, involving interpretive processes, which facilitate emotional