CHAPTER 7

Symbolic Interactionism, Inequality, and Emotions

JESSICA FIELDS
MARTHA COPP
SHERRYL KLEINMAN

Emotions are central to everyday interactions. They motivate behavior, shape agency, contribute to self-control and social control, and bear the traces of systemic disadvantage. Our chapter explores the contributions of symbolic interactionism as a theoretical perspective in sociological studies of emotions. We focus on how an interactionist analysis of emotions has added immeasurably to our understanding of social interaction and, in particular, of social inequality. Not all interactionist research, including interactionist studies of emotion, focuses on inequality. However, in tracking the patterns of social interaction to their troubling consequences, we heed the advice of an early interactionist, Blumer (1969), who urged symbolic interactionist researchers to pay attention to the obdurate reality—the empirical patterns—going on around us. The obdurate reality that we observe is replete with examples of inequality and resistance in people's ongoing social interactions. Thus, our goal is to present an overview of the territory that symbolic interaction and sociological studies of emotions share and then analyze the most challenging direction for interactionist research: understanding the reproduction of inequality.

In the following pages, we locate symbolic interactionism in the field of sociology of emotions and explain the theoretical foundations and basic premises of symbolic interactionism. Using

JESSICA FIELDS • Department of Sociology, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA 94132
MARTHA COPP • Department of Sociology and Anthropology, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN 37614
SHERRYL KLEINMAN • Department of Sociology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599

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examples from interactionist studies of emotion, we discuss what is unique about symbolic interactionism as a sociological perspective. We then show readers how the study of emotions is indispensable to symbolic interactionist work. We examine the key questions that symbolic interactionist researchers ask: Who are we? What do we believe? How do we act on our beliefs? What conditions shape our interactions with others? What are the consequences of our interaction for reproducing or challenging inequality in everyday life? We argue that to answer those questions, researchers must take emotions into account. Finally, we offer a pragmatic discussion of how one can profitably study emotions from a symbolic interactionist perspective in order to gain greater insight into the everyday experience and reproduction of inequality.

THEORETICAL FRAMINGS AND FOUNDATIONS

Symbolic interactionists' understandings of social inequality and emotions are grounded in the sociological challenge to conventional ideas about emotions as innate or universal responses to external stimuli. Most interactionists acknowledge the physiological aspects of emotion and feeling, but, as Franks (1987:231) has noted, they spend little time on their "bodily, social expressions." As McCarthy (1989:57) asserted, "My feelings are social, that is, they are constituted and sustained by group processes. They are irreducible to the bodily organism and to the particular individual who feels them." Thus, interactionists fix their analytical attention on social conventions and norms that shape the feelings that people typically experience and define as "natural" (see, e.g., Cahill 1995; Denzin 1984; Franks 2003; Hochschild 1990; Scheff 1988).

From this analytical stance, self and society are two sides of the same coin. Interactionists study the constraints of culture as well as how people use their agency to navigate those constraints. In studies of emotions, interactionists explore how individuals use their capacity for agency to bring their feelings in line with what is expected of them. As Hochschild (1979) put it, people can *work on* their feelings, trying to create within themselves the proper response to a situation. Our sense of proper responses reflects socially determined "feeling rules"—cultural norms for how we are supposed to feel in a situation. For example, we are expected to feel sad at a funeral and happy at the birth of a child. If we do not have the appropriate feelings, we will likely feel uncomfortable and try to change how we feel. We can also practice emotion work on others, trying to induce in them particular feeling states: for example, encouraging students to feel proud of their accomplishments or suggesting that a student who cheated should feel remorseful. That people can work on their own and others' feelings and *change* them indicates that emotions are not merely natural impulses. Rather, they are shaped by both culture (e.g., feeling rules) and our human capacity to react to and make sense of our feelings.

This "emotion work" is a central concern for interactionists whose work fits the tradition of the Second Chicago School of sociology (Fine 1995), our focus in this chapter. Such "realist tales" (Van Maanen 1988) about emotions attend to the names, histories, meanings, and consequences of emotion (Hochschild 1990:120). Work in this tradition addresses many aspects of Thoits's (1989:318) classic definition of emotion: "(a) appraisals of a situational stimulus or context, (b) changes in physiological or bodily sensations, (c) the free or inhibited display of expressive gestures, and (d) a cultural label applied to specific constellations of one or more of the first three components." Researchers illuminate, for example, the rubrics through which people claim and allot sympathy (Clark 1987), the ways people make sense of their bodily experiences of embarrassment (Cahill 1995), people's feelings of frustration and resentment when others ask them to relinquish racial and other social privileges (Frankenberg 1993), and the relationship

between changing gender norms and shifting assessments of which behaviors in ourselves and others warrant gratitude (Hochschild 1989a, 1989b).

Regardless of their focus, symbolic interactionist studies of emotions are based in large part on the theories of Mead (1934), Blumer (1969), and Goffman (1959, 1963, 1967). In his posthumously published *Mind, Self, and Society*, Mead (1934) outlined how people learn to anticipate others' reactions to their behavior and take on these reactions as their own. A sense of self develops as people recognize that others in their society, culture, and subculture have particular expectations for and values attached to their actions, desires, and identities. Identification with the perspective of the community—what Mead called the "generalized other"—informs the development, institutionalization, and maintenance of social ties and groups. These ties and groups constitute society and its inequities; this is the context in which people develop and maintain their sense of self.

As self emerges in the context of social interaction, so society emerges through what Blumer (1969) called "joint action." Society refers to patterns of interaction made up of individuals signaling and interpreting each other's—and their own—actions. These interactions contribute to the simultaneous development of selves and society. Attention to joint action allows the symbolic interactionist to avoid reifying social structure and, instead, to examine the interactions that comprise and maintain social arrangements. Blumer (1969) offered three premises for the study of social reality: People act toward objects based on the meaning those objects hold for the actor; the meaning of objects is negotiated through social interaction; and, because the meaning of objects is subject to people's interpretive processes, meaning is mutable. Symbolic interactionism thus highlights individual accountability and agency and addresses structural, cultural, and material conditions as people experience and reproduce them in their day-to-day lives. Snow (2001:368) recently offered a broadened definition of symbolic interactionism, a definition with four "organizing principles" that Snow claimed Blumer implied but did not fully develop: "the principle of interactive determination, the principle of symbolization, the principle of emergence, and the principle of human agency." This articulation of symbolic interactionism's tenets highlights interactional (structural, cultural, and material) conditions, meaning-making processes, the dynamism of social life, and individual accountability and agency as people experience and reproduce social contexts and processes in their day-to-day lives.

Dramaturgical theory provides a third foundation for symbolic interactionist studies of emotion (Goffman 1959, 1967). Goffman's work explored people's active, consistent negotiation of meaning, social convention, and impression. People engage in "impression management," working to make positive impressions on others and to help others and ourselves save face when interaction goes awry. Loss of face is an emotional experience—we feel embarrassed, guilty, or ashamed when we make a bad impression on others or fail to uphold our end of the social pact. Working together to save face keeps social life moving and maintains social institutions and patterns of interaction. Inequities in social institutions and interactions often make it difficult for members of disenfranchised groups—for example, sexual nonconformists, women, people of color, poor people, people with disabilities—to avoid making a bad impression or to recover from the embarrassment or shame that the bad impression brings. Emotions thus guide our encounters with others and help to establish and maintain social arrangements, whether just or unjust.

The study of emotions entered sociology largely through these theoretical foundations and the perspective of symbolic interactionism. Emotions are central to symbolic interactionist understandings of social life: No treatment of either the sociology of emotion or symbolic interactionism is complete without the other (Franks 2003; Sandstrom and Kleinman 2005; Sandstrom et al. 2001). Also, as we discuss below, symbolic interactionism is increasingly fundamental to sociological understandings of social inequality (Schwalbe 2005a), helping us understand how

emotion contributes to social hierarchies and plays a part in hampering efforts to effect social change.

LINKING THE EMOTIONAL AND THE SOCIAL

Symbolic interactionists insist that emotion is never separable from the social; indeed, it signals our engagement with others and our cultural and subcultural memberships (Clark 1997; Franks 2003). Emotions make our engagement with and accountability to others visceral, and they remind us through bodily sensation when we have transgressed the bounds of social expectations (Franks 2003:788–789) or when those expectations are oppressive and unjust (Lorde 1984). Claiming membership in a group signals that we are willing to adhere to that group's expectations, and emotions help us to measure the extent to which we embrace and meet those expectations. Do we resent the expectations of the group? Do we suffer embarrassment when we violate them? Do we take pleasure in satisfying them? How easily do we meet these expectations, and what effort does meeting them require of us?

Our emotions also help us locate our selves in the often stratified worlds in which we live: we assess who we are in relation to others, and, if we are unsatisfied with that assessment, we struggle, in part through our emotion work, to reposition ourselves. We rely on emotion cues and we exercise interactional strategies in the "emotional micropolitics" of day-to-day interactions to determine and claim our own and others' "place," or social status (Clark 1990). For example, we express contempt for those who we consider our inferiors or admiration for those with whom we hope to affiliate ourselves in efforts to recognize, assert, defend, and alter our status in the world.

Symbolic interactionists' concern with the processes of social organization, meaning-making, and social control has fostered a particular interest in what Shott (1979) has called "role-taking emotions," such as guilt, embarrassment, shame, and empathy. Role-taking emotions require a social self: we cannot feel shame without having developed a generalized other; guilt can wrack us even when no one is around because we feel accountable to societal prescriptions (Scheff 1988, 2000; Shott 1979). Role-taking emotions thus foster both self-control and social control. People feel or anticipate shame; usually, they then work to rid themselves of the emotion or avert it.

Role-taking emotions are not only coercive and controlling. For example, Cahill (1995) argued that shame and embarrassment have the positive consequence of promoting *self*-control (not only *social* control). This self-control encourages people to respect the bounds of propriety and, in doing so, helps to sustain the integrity of the social fabric:

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of embarrassment in only negative terms: it destroys; it disrupts; it damages. In fact, embarrassment produces; it generates self-regulation; it creates trust; it sustains public civility. (Cahill 1995:254)

The threat of embarrassment promotes social responsibility and enlists us in enforcing social order; experiences of embarrassment signal not only that one has violated social norms but also, and perhaps more important, that one recognizes the legitimacy of those norms. Contemporary symbolic interactionists interested in role-taking emotions explore the part feelings play in promoting and maintaining social organization. If that organization is unjust, so too will be the emotion work required to maintain it. Members of some groups may exert themselves to avoid the shame that others attribute to them: For example, low-income university students feeling the stigma of not having had the appropriate cultural experiences, or pregnant girls resisting shaming messages

from both peers and adults. Social actors' role-taking and their efforts to avoid emotions like shame, guilt, and embarrassment reflect, create, and maintain social groups and hierarchies.

Indeed, emotions are central to social order and group membership. In her discussion of sympathy margins, Clark (1987) theorized a sort of bookkeeping through which social actors organize their offering and receiving of sympathy. Social actors keep mental "ledgers" in which they record withdrawals from and deposits to their store of sympathy. The goal is an account neither too large nor too small, but an account that is active. The collective keeping of sympathy margins allows the offering and gathering of sympathy to become a criterion of group membership. Sympathizing occurs within a social framework—sustained by social actors—that helps to define the proper amount to give and receive. Thus, a person can sympathize too much or too little, demand too much sympathy, or seem to be too little in need of it. Failure to keep an appropriately balanced and active account can result in expulsion from the group. Like other symbolic interactionists, Clark asserted a reciprocal and constitutive relationship between self and society in which social actors recognize and monitor their selves in light of a social framework that they have helped to create and sustain. This monitoring of oneself and others always contributes to the maintenance of social order, as Cahill and Clark argued. When that order is an unjust or oppressive one, that monitoring also helps to maintain social inequalities.

EVERYDAY EMOTIONAL PRACTICES AND CONTEXTS

A common criticism of symbolic interactionism and the sociology of emotions is that they are exceedingly "micro" in their focus. However, symbolic interactionist and emotions scholars analyze social institutions and trends that determine the material conditions of people's lives. Interactionist understandings of emotion build on Blumer's resistance to the reification of social institutions. Blumer argued that instead of using institutions (education, government, the family) as the units of analysis, sociologists should instead explore the joint actions of people who reproduce those institutions. In doing so, symbolic interactionists would better understand the conditions supporting the continuation of institutions and the day-to-day lives of those whom the institutions touch (Blumer 1969).

Other interactionists have embraced Blumer's model and analyzed emotions in institutional contexts. Barbalet (1992:152) asserted in his macrosociological analysis of class resentment that "emotion exists not simply as internal states of the individual but in the relationships between individuals and in the interaction between individuals and their social situations." In an early article, Maines (1977) argued that understanding the relationship between individual action and social institutions equips symbolic interactionists to explore "meso"-level analyses that bridge the macro and micro. Franks (2003:794) claimed that symbolic interactionist analyses have the potential to explore, on the one hand, how "micro level feelings of individuals radiate 'upward' to confirm, support, and continually recreate present social structures" and, on the other hand, "the 'downward' shaping of the individual's emotions by culture, structure and social institutions."

Emotional Experiences in Historical Context

Institutions are only one emotional context. Sympathy expectations, experiences of shame, and standards for public behavior also vary across historical and social contexts. As Hochschild (1998:7) explained, our understandings about what we should and should not feel reflect the prescriptions of an emotional "bible, a set of prescriptions embedded in the received wisdom of

[our] culture." These teachings from our emotional bible define how we should feel in response to situations and other people. We should be happy to see our families at holiday gatherings (but we are allowed to feel relief when they return home); we should mourn a lover's departure (but not for "too long"); we have the right to be angry when another driver cuts us off (but others will frown if we express that anger aggressively).

A number of interactionists have examined emotions in their historical context. For example, Lofland (1985:178) argued that experiences of and responses to death shift "across time and space." Similarly, in her analysis of 200 years of U.S. autobiographies, Bjorklund (1998) discussed how, over time, autobiographers honored different conventions in describing their feelings, expressions, and spontaneous actions; these changes signal shifts in "emotional culture" (widely held views about how people in a society should express and interpret situated emotions). Hochschild's (1989b; see also 1989a) study of the division of household labor among heterosexual couples actively explored changes brought on by the second wave of the U.S. women's movement. Hochschild found that as the "gender culture" shifts in the United States, so too does the marital baseline against which women and men measure, receive, and appreciate gifts.

According to Hochschild, a rich "economy of gratitude" depends on the existence of a shared marital baseline: Both partners need to recognize a dozen red roses, dropping the children off at day care, a note tucked into a lunch bag, or entertaining in-laws as "gifts." As more wives work outside the home and ask their husbands to assume housekeeping responsibilities, economies of gratitude are increasingly impoverished. Wives bring home paychecks and second incomes as, among other things, gifts to their husbands; their husbands find the need for a second check, let alone one that exceeds their own, an insult. Husbands wash dishes as a gift to their wives, and wives note simply that their husbands are doing their fair share of the housework. Thus, the power women may have gained in the economic sphere is often a liability in the familial settings that they share with men. Men may find their wives' financial success and power shaming and refuse to accept their paychecks as gifts (Hochschild 1989a, 1989b). Ironically, the gifts that generate the greatest gratitude in these unequal relationships may be (1) men's "tolerance" of their wives' earnings and (2) their willingness to let their wives be both income earner *and* housekeeper.

Hochschild (1989a:97) explained that power in heterosexual marriages reflects a "gender lag" at the turn of the twenty-first century. As gender roles strain and shift, so, too, does power and, with it, feelings. A woman's economic power might *dis*empower her in the home; yet, a husband's lack of economic power does not abolish his gendered power in a world still largely characterized by sexism. Hochschild's analysis of renegotiated and perhaps unfamiliar forms of power rests on classic symbolic interactionist principles. She explored how couples act toward women's power based on the meaning it held for them; she examined how the meaning of economic power changed as couples reacted to it as a liability; and, finally, she presented how culture- and marriage-level negotiations produce new and unstable conceptions of gender and power and, in turn, shift emotional experiences. Emotions provide people with a sense of who and where they are in the world. As feminists challenge sexist understandings of family, work, and home, understandings of gendered and economic power change. With these changes will also come changes in people's sense of themselves and of their emotional possibilities.

Hochschild's analysis of economies of gratitude focuses on historical change as women gain in earning power and expectations for intimate partners shift. However, even within a single historical moment, emotion cultures likely vary according to social status and location:

> Are the sensibilities of white, suburban teen-age girls like those of middle-aged, male salesmen or engineers who may be their fathers? What about middle-class black men compared to middle-class black women or [to low-income Blacks]? How does social place affect the emotions and strategies of, say, female clerical workers or elderly, working-class, Jewish men or [Latina] housewives? (Clark 1990:328)

Beliefs about gender, race, class, sexuality, age, occupation, and physical and mental ability shape our sense of place, agency, and self and thus may also inform our emotional experiences. Attention to these subcultures and social inequalities is crucial to symbolic interactionists' understanding of the relationship among emotions, identities, socially recognized differences, and often oppressive social conditions.

Emotions and Organizational Contexts

As people construct new meanings for themselves and others, their identities are anchored to belief systems. Often, these beliefs are tied to our membership in organizations or occupational groups. Shared emotion norms and emotion management techniques further organizations' goals and elevate members' social position in relation to others. In the world of medicine and related disciplines, for example, practitioners invoke the rhetoric of science to justify managing emotions through displays of rationality (Emerson 1970; Leif and Fox 1963; Smith and Kleinman 1989). Medical practitioners suppress most forms of emotional expression and exhibit "affective neutrality" (Parsons 1951). As students, they learn to focus on technical details, use scientific jargon rather than intimate or personalized language, and avoid unpleasant or disturbing contact. These techniques allow practitioners to manage their own emotions, assume a more powerful position vis-à-vis their emotionally expressive patients, and buttress their identities and authority as physicians (Smith and Kleinman 1989).

The appearance of rationality as a technique for impression management and emotion management has also proved useful to social movement activists in their efforts to legitimate their beliefs and challenge critics. Groves (1995, 1997) observed animal rights activists deploying an unemotional and rational front when dealing with audiences who sought to discredit them as "too emotional." In their public-speaking engagements, activists built the case for animal rights and justice by graphically describing inhumane animal treatment and invoking statistics on the frequency of animal abuse. Graphic imagery and quantitative rhetoric allowed them to turn science into a "cloak of competence" (Haas and Shaffir 1977) and to present themselves as legitimate, objective, factual, and unemotional while inducing strong emotional responses in listeners, an interpersonal emotion management technique (Francis 1994). Appearing ultrarational as they described people's disturbing treatment of animals, activists were able to strategically avoid the charge that they were overly emotional about this issue. Gender inequities informed these efforts, as women activists felt compelled to employ this technique more than did men: "Men's willingness to express their feelings was considered a sign of fearlessness, but in women it was a sign of weakness.... Men were praised for being both emotional and rational. But women were criticized if they were not rational all of the time" (Groves 1997:147–148).

Often, members of social movements, civic organizations, workplaces, and occupations contend with organizational cultures that promote competing sets of beliefs. Such conflicts are not unusual in a historical and cultural context with contradictory and often discriminatory belief systems, and many interactionist researchers focus on them, exploring the problems and consequences that they generate for participants. Participants frequently experience conflicting beliefs as emotional struggles—responding with anger, frustration, shame, or anguish—because in upholding one deep-seated belief, they fear they will be judged as failing to honor another belief and lose face. The drama of dealing with contradictory beliefs thus plays out emotionally, and participants typically employ emotion management strategies to handle the conflicts and inequities they impose.

For example, in Arluke's (1994) study of emotion management at an animal shelter, workers came to the shelter expecting to love and care for lost or unwanted animals, but once on

the job, they learned to euthanize animals when they were not adopted, when cage space ran out, or when animals were ill or diseased. Animal shelter workers developed emotion management techniques to handle the contradictions in their organizational beliefs, frequently by selectively applying one set of beliefs to comply with another. For example, they took pains to minimize animals' distress (and to see themselves as showing care) while administering lethal injections. Their empathy distracted them from thinking about their actions as killing. Conversely, they compensated for their potentially inhumane belief in animal population control by repeatedly forming special attachments to animals, feeling persistently uneasy about the animals' chances for survival and railing against people in the community whose irresponsibility and cruelty set the whole animal shelter process in motion and left workers feeling powerless.

In settings in which participants organize to fight some form of inequality, emotions are one of the resources that group members and leaders mobilize to uphold organizational goals and principles. In their study of an established social movement organization, Smith and Erickson (1997) analyzed how leaders encouraged worker-activists to mobilize their emotions in pursuit of social and environmental justice. Senior management in the organization harnessed worker-activists' passion for environmental justice in order to feed the organization's continuous demand for fund-raising. Workers hired to canvass donors by telephone and to raise funds for the organization were trained to play up their enthusiasm for fighting environmental problems as a strategy to help them meet nightly telemarketing quotas. The workers sold to prospective donors "the potential ability of their organization to reverse and prevent environmental degradation" (Smith and Erickson 1997:325). Their emotion management enabled them to believe that they were following a higher calling than *selling* an environmental cause. Moreover, the environmental organization depended on and reaped the benefits of their emotional labor by encouraging them to feel strongly about environmental injustice—hoping that their urgency and conviction would come through on every phone call. Ironically, cracks in the organizational culture appeared when managers exhorted workers to "voluntarily" assist additional activist causes in their free time, without pay, which underscored "the reality that canvassing was a form of paid labor" (Smith and Erickson 1997:337).

Mobilizing emotions successfully—whether for individual or organizational gain—requires some social support. Institutional cultures may focus on challenging inequalities, but organizational conditions can make or break participants' efforts to mobilize and manage their emotions in a fight for equality. In Copp's (1998) study of a sheltered workshop for adults with developmental disabilities, nondisabled workers, called "floor instructors," were trained to believe that improvement was always possible—that developmentally disabled adults could gain the skills to succeed in competitive employment outside the workshop. The floor instructors were also expected to honor a hard-nosed factory culture, which demanded speed and accuracy from workers and led management to treat workers' boredom, frustration, and physical discomfort as signs of a poorly developed work ethic. The sheltered workshop's organizational conditions of chronically unskilled and developmentally disabled workers, repetitive work, low pay, and frequent downtime produced a situation in which the floor instructors could live out neither their belief in improvement nor their ideal of a fast-moving, profit-oriented factory. The floor instructors' emotion management strategies for handling these organizational problems pushed them toward more adversarial and infantilizing forms of control and weakened their ability to emotionally relate to trainee-clients either as respectful, positive disability advocates or as business-oriented supervisors. Yet both of these sets of beliefs (advocacy versus business) held sway over the floor instructors, and they continually tried to serve their institutional purpose: to encourage "defective" workers to transform themselves into effective and motivated employees. In the absence of favorable organizational conditions, the floor instructors became "burned out,"

experiencing "emotional deviance" (Thoits 1985)—the awareness of being unable to uphold emotion norms.

Even ostensibly supportive emotional norms can foster oppressive organizational conditions. At Renewal, the holistic health center that Kleinman (1996) studied, participants of unequal status engaged in an emotional subculture that reinforced their feelings of solidarity. Doing so masked inequalities between the mostly male practitioners (dominants) and the all-female staff (subordinates). Gathering in "circles" at the start of board meetings and at retreats generated a feeling of collective closeness and fostered members' belief that everyone held equal status *outside* the circle. When Renewal members "processed" tensions and conflicts, they could have exposed gender and occupational inequalities, but their folk theories about emotions—what causes conflicts and how to resolve them—made it difficult for the staff women to challenge the dominance of the mostly male practitioners. At Renewal, participants focused on personality characteristics, not structural arrangements. Members considered titles, money, and prestige as superficial matters that hid the "true self" and "real feelings." If, for example, a staff member were to say "I, as a staff member, resent you, as a practitioner," others would accuse them of hiding behind the mask of an organizational role. The norm of language-use about emotions—using "I" rather than "we"—also made it difficult for staff to organize resistance or to have practitioners take their concerns seriously. Without a "we," it became difficult, almost impossible, to recognize social divisions at Renewal and, thus, to analyze systematic inequality (Kleinman 1996:80).

Finally, organizational cultures can promote inequality by encouraging emotional detachment and obscuring the connections between groups of people. Cohn's (1987) research on defense intellectuals, for example, analyzed why and how members of this elite community failed to be troubled by the prospect of nuclear annihilation of human life. In listening "to men engage in dispassionate discussion of nuclear war," Cohn writes,

> I found myself aghast, but morbidly fascinated—not by nuclear weaponry, or by images of nuclear destruction, but by the extraordinary abstraction and removal from what I knew as reality that characterized the[ir] professional discourse. (Cohn 1987:688)

Her analysis of the language of defense intellectuals and the flawed abstractions on which it is based provides an example of emotional scripting (Zurcher 1985) as an organizational emotion management strategy. The defense intellectuals perfected the emotion management technique of performing rationality. Their "technostrategic" language (Cohn 1987:690) impeded the expression of particular emotions (fear, anxiety, vulnerability, compassion, or empathy) and promoted feelings of distance, power, and control in speakers. By focusing on weapons instead of victims, they denied the possibility that some emotions could be considered, let alone felt. Sympathy for human beings and any obligation to protect them were written out of the script.

However, not all emotions were banned from verbal expression. Cohn pointed out that defense intellectuals' discourse included

> currents of homoerotic excitement, heterosexual domination, the drive toward competency and mastery, the pleasures of membership in an elite and privileged group, the... meaning of membership in the priesthood, and the thrilling power of becoming Death, shatterer of worlds. How is it possible to hold this up as a paragon of cool-headed objectivity? (Cohn 1987:717)

By analyzing how the technical language of defense intellectuals reflects and guides their occupational assumptions, Cohn also showed how their beliefs could be used to regulate participants' emotions—both by expressing emotions that made them feel dominant and powerful and by effacing emotions and meanings that would open their worldview to fundamental challenges. Thus, the symbolic interactionist understanding that language shapes thought can be extended: Language

can also shape speakers' feelings. The consequences for others are anything but benign. Indeed, organizations' calls for emotional desensitizing can contribute to a broad social desensitizing to violence, power, and domination. As we discuss below, organizations may inadvertently reproduce inequality yet another way—when members operate under the influence of widely held emotion norms at the cultural level that support gender, race, or class hierarchies.

WHO WE ARE, HOW WE FEEL: EMOTIONS, IDENTITY, AND BELIEFS

Symbolic interactionism can be distinguished from other sociological perspectives by the attention that scholars give to the construction of meaning and self. Meaning does not inhere in the individual or in objects, but is, instead, social; knowing what objects (self, others, relationships, and communities) mean to people illuminates how social actors live out the often unequal patterns and arrangements that we call "society." Emotions are integrally connected to and inform our actions; we feel and express emotions that comply with, resist, or transform emotion norms (Hochschild 1979; Thoits 1985) that, in everyday life, are just as consequential to the maintenance of social inequality as other normative patterns of interaction. As Hochschild (1990:117) wrote, "what we feel is fully as important to the outcome of social affairs as what we think or do." Our feelings about ourselves, others, relationships, and communities are central to the meanings we construct and to the consequences of our interactions over time. Thus, the construction and maintenance of meaning, and ultimately of social inequality, can be understood as an emotional, not just a cognitive, process.

Identity Work as an Emotional Process

Interactionists understand the self as the product of an ongoing social process (Mead 1934); social actors continually participate in a process of "becoming" that incorporates their interpretations of past social experiences into their sense of who they are. People attach multiple meanings to themselves and to others, using identity labels that signify "the powers, status, inclinations, and feelings—in short, the self—of the persons to whom they attach" (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock 1996:115). Identities are not static, nor are they solely the product of individual agency; instead, people engage in a social process of "identity work" (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock 1996; Snow and Anderson 1987) to give meaning to themselves and others.

The concept of "identity work" captures the work that people do individually and collectively to signify who they are, who they want to be, and how they expect others to treat them. This signaling allows people to engage in coordinated social interaction. Identity work is also an emotional process (Francis 1997; Wolkomir 2001a), as emotions provide a means to communicate our identity claims, our imputations of other people's identities, and our responses when our identity expectations are met, breached, or challenged under adverse conditions.

Identity work as an emotional process frequently occurs when people possess an identity that attracts either strong moral opposition or ardent public support. For example, in Wolkomir's (2001a, 2001b) study of the identity work of participants in gay and "ex-gay" Christian support groups, members struggled with the assumption that one could not be gay *and* Christian. To them, "being a 'good Christian' meant being heterosexual, getting married, and having children" (Wolkomir 2001a:311), and, based on their upbringing in conservative Christian churches, being gay meant evil, sinful, and unworthy of the heteronormative privileges of marriage and children.

Rather than reject their belief in Christianity, support group members redefined "what it meant to be a good Christian" and how to feel authentic doing so (p. 311).

Members of Accept, the gay Christian support group, sought to reject opponents' imputation of their identities as amoral or evil and, instead, to redefine gay as a "moral identity" (Katz 1975; Kleinman 1996) that is equal to others (heterosexuals) and, therefore, equally worthy of God's unconditional love. Members of Expell, a support group for ex-gay Christians, sought to equate the "sin" of homosexuality with other kinds of sin and to recast their effort to suppress homosexual desires (framed as resisting the temptation to sin) as a morally superior sacrifice. Wolkomir (2001a) analyzed the emotional process that newcomers to both groups experienced: After first attracting newcomers with the "emotional promise" that they would feel good about themselves and gain acceptance from others, seasoned group members monitored new members' emotional expressions, encouraged them to practice their new identity in group discussions, and rewarded them emotionally (with solidarity, fellowship, and warmth) when they modeled the emotion norms that each support group valued. Wolkomir argued that without such emotional mobilization, participants would be unable to renegotiate the meaning that they attached to themselves and their gay identities and desires. Her study demonstrated that emotions play a vital role in transforming the meaning of a stigmatized and marginalized identity; they are not merely a by-product of that transformation.

Members of Metro PAGE, a support group for parents of adult lesbian women and gay men, experienced a similar conflict between a morally valued identity and a stigmatized identity (Fields 2001). The parents engaged in both normalization (of their children's deviant sexual identities) and normification (of their own "courtesy stigma") (Goffman 1963) as they struggled with a status inconsistency: "they were simultaneously normal—straight, married, middle-class, and middle-aged women and men—and deviant—the mothers and fathers of lesbian and gay adults" (Fields 2001:166). Parents in the study, especially mothers (who contended with our culture's gendered convention of holding mothers responsible for children's sexuality), initially struggled with feelings of shame, disappointment, and grief because they failed to "successfully" produce heterosexual offspring. The parents who joined Metro PAGE wanted to feel good about themselves and their children, but more than that, they wanted to convince outsiders of this transformation and change their feelings about gay and lesbian sexuality, too. For their identity work to succeed, they needed others to acknowledge and support their identity cues and signs. To cultivate that support, the parents differentiated themselves from other parents who rejected their lesbian and gay children and they "established themselves as generous in their love for those whom others found unlovable" (Fields 2001:179). They adopted "women and men who identified as lesbian or gay [and] engaged in an ennobling of their parental identities" (p. 180). The parents' exemplary, yet heteronormative, expression of parental love through their actions and talk allowed them to reclaim parenthood as a moral identity and transform their shame into pride in themselves and in their children. This emotional reworking indicates that pride is a role-taking emotion (Shott 1979) that even members of stigmatized groups can use to announce that they have worthy identities.

These previous examples illustrate social actors' emotional efforts to resolve fundamental conflicts between valued and stigmatized identities—what Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock (1996:141) call "oppositional identity work." Acquiring valorized or culturally celebrated identities also involves an emotional process, as Adler and Adler's (1989) study of the "gloried self" indicated. Adler and Adler observed players on a top college basketball team take on self-aggrandizing identities in response to intoxicating public adulation and media capitalization of their athletic feats. Adler and Adler's work documented that an identity can prove so seductive and overwhelming that, in the end, it can "engulf" other identities that social actors previously maintained or hoped to hold in the future and constrict their sense of self. Increasingly

seduced by the lure of professional stardom, the young male athletes (mostly African American and lower middle class) abandoned their pragmatic goals of getting college degrees and steady jobs. Their response shows how pursuing a seemingly positive and pleasurable identity—to the exclusion of other identities—can magnify existing social inequality in unforeseen, oppressive ways.

Managing either stigmatized or glorified identities entails emotion work, but a key problem is that people who occupy unequal positions in race, class, gender, and sexual hierarchies lack equal resources to manage them. As Snow and Anderson (1987) noted among homeless men and women, sometimes the only resource available for identity work is talk, and talk cannot overcome severe social and economic deprivation or minimize profound emotional pain. For example, even when homeless people embraced their role and occasionally extolled the virtues of homelessness, they grew even more isolated and displayed signs of social and psychological deterioration. Rather than find that substance abuse and mental illness "caused" homelessness, as the general public maintains, Snow and Anderson observed chronically homeless women and men increasingly turn to chemical or cognitive forms of escape to cope with their unforgiving situations. Thus, without resources to manage stigmatized identities, people some time engage in an emotional coping process that causes them further damage.

People try to fashion and then maintain identities that make them feel good, or at least better, about themselves, individually and collectively, even if they do not succeed in the end. These interactionist studies reveal the emotional underside of cognitive redefinitions of the self in the context of social inequalities.

Inequalities and Self in the Culture of Emotions

The culture of emotions refers to feeling and display rules (how people are expected to feel and show their emotions in particular situations) and shared ideas about how to interpret emotions. This culture reflects a broader gendered culture in which women are expected to take care of others' emotions at work and at home (Hochschild 1983). Women and men are also expected to do different kinds of emotional labor and emotion work: Women are supposed to display sympathy and nurturance and to elevate the mood, feelings, and status of others, whereas men are supposed to act in ways that suppress sympathy, harbor criticism, and deflate the feelings and status of others. Men and women can violate the display rules, but usually not without consequence.

Pierce's (1995) study of feeling rules and emotional displays among trial lawyers and paralegals illustrated that emotional labor, especially in its gendered forms, reproduces hierarchy. Lawyering is a cognitive game involves "highly emotional, dramatic, flamboyant, shocking presentations" designed to "evoke sympathy, distrust, or outrage" (Pierce 1995:53). Trial lawyers, most of whom are men, are expected to display aggression in most aspects of their work. They also learn to practice what Pierce called "strategic friendliness" (1995:71–82). Paralegals, most of whom are women, have the job of reassuring witnesses, a type of emotional labor that helps the attorneys with their cases. Paralegals' deferential and caretaking emotional labor and attorneys' adversarial emotional labor, then, "reproduce gender relations in the law-firm hierarchy" (Lively 2000; Pierce 1995:86).

As Pierce points out, female lawyers, whether or not they go along with the aggressive requirement of the role, are in a double bind (see Frye 1983). If they act aggressively, they can be accused of being too aggressive (for a woman); if they do not act like sharks, male attorneys can accuse them of being lousy lawyers. The women's performances of strategic friendliness are deprecated and trivialized at times by male attorneys as "feminine wiles," even as the males

applaud their own strategic friendliness as clever accomplishments. In addition, female attorneys face sexism from clients and are left to deal with that on their own.

The culture of romance fosters other double standards that can prove dangerous for women. In her study of women who had been stalked by men, Dunn (2002) found that romantic feelings initially made women feel special, agentic, and empowered, but eventually led to disastrous results. The women in her sample had been stalked by former male intimates. When the man pursued his former partner, he instilled fear—threatening that he would hurt her if she did not return to him—as well as guilt and romantic feelings. As Dunn (2002:38) put it, "even unwanted attention, when it fits within cultural constructions of love, can be interpreted as flattering or romantic. This can occur even when avowals of love are intermingled with surveillance, threats, and violence." Some women were forgiving of their ex-husbands because they thought the man's love for her controlled him.

Once the women decided to leave and began seeking help from others in finding protection, they encountered enormous difficulties presenting themselves as victims to lawyers in the district attorney's office of domestic violence units. In their attempts to get the stalkers to leave them alone, the women often agreed to talk to them. The women hoped to calm the man down (a kind of emotion work) and to convince him, nicely, to move on with his life. However, lawyers interpreted the women's behaviors as *complicity*. Lawyers know that cases will not be convincing to juries if the woman has had contact with the stalker. The rules for emotional display in a stalking or rape case require a presentation of the woman as a convincing victim. At the same time, women receive so little help from lawyers or the police that their feminine emotion-work skills become their main resource. Some women end up returning to the relationship, an act that appears irrational, but makes sense from the point of view of people in a desperate situation who are not finding help. One woman explained:

> I was scared if I didn't [resume the relationship] that something would happen to me. I felt like he won't—he won't let me go. He's proven that... He won't get the message. I don't want him. He will not get on with his life. It was—it was hard to explain. It's hard to explain.... But the only reason I was with him was because I feared if I didn't then he would hurt me. The police were not protecting me, they didn't get there on time. I felt like that was the only thing I could do to protect myself and my son. (Dunn 2002:94)

Women's difficulty in dealing with both their stalker and the recalcitrant criminal justice system reveals how they struggle with an emotional double bind: The emotional culture of romance (that privileges their stalker) clashes with institutionalized emotion norms in the court system that constrain how victims should present themselves in the "game" of winning a case against stalkers. Women walk a fine line between proving to legal authorities that they are victims who should be protected from the stalker while also showing that they are not *too helpless* and thus incapable of helping win the case. However, if they aggressively pursue their case, legal authorities might perceive them as too much of a survivor and cut back their assistance. As Konradi (1999) also found in studying rape survivors' courtroom emotion management strategies, any aggression or explosive anger violates the gendered display rule for victims: If she's a real victim, how can she be so strong?

Rothenberg (2003) and Loseke (1992) likewise found that women whose male partners had beaten them but did not fit the "battered woman syndrome" had difficulty obtaining official help. Women who got angry with their partners did not fit the picture of "innocent" and were seen, instead, as provoking the man (and thus could not be a real victim). The gendered display rules of the culture of romance (a woman loving and having contact with the male ex-partner) contradicted the gendered display rules of victims in the legal system (shunning contact, showing fear and pain while suppressing anger). Mills and Kleinman (1988) examined the consequences of this kind of

double bind in their study of emotions and reflexivity among battered women. They found that women might initially perform emotion work on their partners to contain abusive interactions, but, in repeatedly failing to end the abuse, they could lose their ability to manage their emotions. Most of the time, this meant becoming numb and zombielike; occasionally, it meant striking back spontaneously and violently, without self-control or awareness.

EMOTION, IDEOLOGY, AND SUSTAINED SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

As our previous discussion suggests, symbolic interactionist research offers the opportunity to move beyond the study of social patterns and what they mean to participants and toward a critical appreciation of their consequences for reproducing inequality. Social arrangements both reflect and reproduce inequalities; people tie meanings to an ideology that justifies the advantages of the most powerful and the disadvantages of the least powerful. Emotions play a pivotal role in sustaining these meanings, ideologies, and disadvantages. An ideology is not "effective" unless people have strong feelings about the ideas embedded in it. For example, in the United States, many schools and families teach children to feel proud of living in a society presumably organized around meritocratic and do-gooder principles. These lessons persist in the face of pervasive inequalities in gender, race, class, and sexuality (among others).

Understandably, many privileged people do not want to believe that they gain at the expense of others or that their privileges came unearned. They can fail to acknowledge their privileged status because privileges remain largely invisible to those who have them (McIntosh 1997). The meritocratic ideal allows people to assume that they earned their comforts and advantages. If they came to believe otherwise, they might feel guilty about the benefits they receive. In addition, if privileged people were to recognize their unearned advantages and become allies of subordinates, then they would have to confront their fear about fighting the very system that benefits them.

Those with fewer privileges and less power also want to feel good about themselves, although the ideology of "you can make it if you try hard" can bring shame and frustration if their struggles continue. In the case of some inequalities, particularly sexism, it is even possible for individuals in an oppressed category to accept or enjoy the very practices that maintain the disadvantages of the group. From home to work to leisure, meanings and emotions are crucial for understanding how inequality works in our day-to-day interactions.

Dominants and Emotions

When members of privileged groups interact with one another, they find ways to reinforce differences between themselves and the subordinate group that preserve their superiority. Their efforts produce powerful feelings of solidarity. Because members of the dominant group in an unequal society use difference to justify their dominance (Lorber 1995; Reskin 1988), the cultural content on which dominants base their solidarity often devalues and "others" the oppressed group (Schwalbe et al. 2000). Thus, solidarity-building is both part of the process and a product of reinforcing privilege and dominance over subordinates.

For example, in his study of locker room behavior among male college athletes, Curry (1991) found that players constantly competed with each other to obtain coveted positions on the team, undermining the feeling of team unity deemed necessary to win games. Rather than reject competition as harmful, the players crafted solidarity with each other as men (i.e., as members of the dominant group) by bragging about women as sexual conquests, policing one another's

sexuality through homophobic remarks, and practicing their "game face" by maintaining a pose of invulnerability. To signify their identities as men, the players learned to suppress empathy for women and queer people and to conceal sadness or anxieties about themselves inside and outside the game. These emotional practices helped to produce feelings of solidarity and to reinforce hegemonic masculinity.

As Sattel (1976) has argued, men (especially white, middle-class men) learn as boys to stifle feelings of sadness and empathy. This translates into a kind of "emotional capital" (Cahill 1999) that men accumulate and use to justify their authority. Presumably, men can be trusted in high-level positions because they appear to be rational when making important decisions and conceal that their feelings might get in the way. This does not mean that men will display an unemotional front across all situations. Men, for example, might claim "rational" authority at work by suppressing role-taking emotions but practice seductive vulnerability or "sensitivity" with women in the private sphere, which continues to empower them as men (Sattel 1976).

Members of dominant groups often feel hostile—and inflict harm—when they perceive that they cannot control subordinates. Dominants may then use culturally available rhetorics to assert that members of the subordinate group have wronged them and thus justify their hostile feelings and actions. Arendell (1992, 1997), for example, found that 66 of the 75 divorced fathers she interviewed spoke against their ex-wives. These men held traditional views of gender, believing that inherent differences between men and women justify men controlling their families. Even in cases in which the men won custody of the children, having their relationship result in divorce represented both a loss of control (over their ex-wives and children) and an affront to their masculinity. The divorced fathers used these ideas to justify their angry feelings and aggressive behavior toward their ex-wives and children. In turn, this legitimating rhetoric functioned as a cover for restoring male privilege. The men's feelings of anger—a conventionally acceptable masculine emotion, unlike loss or grief—became legitimate, even heroic, as they fought against the perceived injustice of having their domination challenged.

In Dunn's (2002) study of stalkers, men used love and jealousy to justify the violent acts that they committed against their female ex-partners. As one defendant said about the woman he stabbed repeatedly:

> She was my girlfriend and I still love her. I was mad and jealous.... And I gave her some candies, and a rose.... I always gave her presents.... What she did to me felt bad and that's why, when I saw the hickies, I got mad, 'cause I love her a lot, well, I loved her, I still love her. (Dunn 2002:42)

This stalker's father echoed that sentiment: "He is just very intense and very serious, and he loved this girl too much" (Dunn 2002:42). A rhetoric of romance and intense feelings for the woman can serve to legitimize the harm the man inflicts on her. This framing of the problem also positions women as the *cause* of the man's emotional response and, in turn, his harmful behavior, an idea that permeates the rape culture (Scully and Marolla 1984).

What happens in arenas in which men are expected, even encouraged, to express sadness and hurt and to engage in expressive behavior thought of as "unmanly"? Do these expectations curtail the reproduction of gender inequality? Schwalbe (1996) found in his study of the mythopoetic men's movement that participants engaged in rituals that had them hugging, crying in front of other men, and revealing fears through talk (especially about their fathers). Although these kinds of talk, emotion work, and rituals are culturally associated with women and femininity in U.S. society, the men dissociated their practices from women and habitually emphasized that they were doing *men's work* and "getting in touch with one's deep masculinity." The mythopoetic men might have characterized their therapeutic identity work as "human work," thus putting gender itself into question. However, they did not. Rather, they reinstated their identity as men, an identity they did not want to relinquish because of its cultural value. Thus, even in a setting in which men tried

to challenge the usual norms of masculinity and engage in emotional displays that are culturally associated with women, they framed and spoke about their emotion work in ways that maintained the higher status of men and masculinity. Without recognizing it, they reinforced the gender hierarchy.

The men who participated in the mythopoetic movement did not think of themselves as sexist, and their privileges as straight men made it possible for others to buttress their good feelings about themselves as fair people. Similarly, whites who consider themselves nonracist often find ways to keep themselves from making any changes in society that might challenge their race privilege while still feeling good about themselves. Wellman (1993), Bonilla-Silva (2003), and Frankenberg (1993) interviewed white people and discovered how whites find ways to defend their racial privilege and justify inequality but still believe they are not "explicitly contradict[ing] egalitarian ideals" (Wellman 1993:53). The white people used what Frankenberg (1993:142) called a color- and power-evasive strategy: They claimed not to see color. Yet, as the three authors argued, such rhetorics ignore not only a history of the oppression of people of color but also *continuing* inequalities in, for example, education, employment, and housing.

Bonilla-Silva (2003:28) discussed the strategies that white people use to feel good about themselves while arguing against institutional changes that would help people of color. The main strategy he discovered is "abstract liberalism":

> using ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g., "equal opportunity," the idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g., choice, individualism) in an abstract manner to explain racial matters. By framing race-related issues in the language of liberalism, whites can appear "reasonable" and even "moral," while opposing almost all practical approaches to deal with de facto racial inequality.

Abstract liberalism permits white people to feel sadness and sympathy toward people of color and to express generic disapproval of racism. They think of themselves as nonracist because "racist" brings to mind images of white people spewing hateful white supremacist beliefs or carrying out hate crimes. By rejecting racist violence, white liberals can view themselves as good people. These feelings also allow whites to believe that they understand the experiences of people of color. Yet, as Schwalbe (2005b) argued, dominants often know little about subordinates because they do not have to. Nor do dominants need to pay attention to the feelings of subordinates (Hochschild 1983). Subordinates, on the other hand, must attend to the feelings, moods, and behaviors of dominants; their livelihoods and lives depend on it (hooks 1992).

Bonilla-Silva, Frankenberg, and Wellman discovered that many whites are against affirmative action and use the language of abstract liberalism in their arguments against it. One of Frankenberg's (1993:149) interviewees put it this way, a typical response of white people in all three studies: "I resent it particularly because I feel that people should be considered for who they are as a human being and not as this, that, or the other—who you are, regardless of outside trappings—[there's an] inner person, shouting to get out." Appealing to humanism made it difficult for whites to recognize that affirmative action programs are meant to make up for years of structural inequality (Fish 1994). When there is a chance that (race) privilege is threatened, whites' feelings of sadness and sympathy turn quickly into resentment. They can still feel good about themselves as nonracists, even as they resent (some) people of color for getting what they see as special consideration. Thus, we see how ideology (in this case, abstract liberalism) legitimized dominants' negative feelings against the subordinate group while making it possible for dominants to believe and feel that they are fair and just.

Dominants also reinforce differences between themselves and subordinates in service work settings in which subordinates perform emotional labor for the benefit of dominants. In a study

of Korean immigrant-owned nail salons, Kang (2003) found that "body labor"—a form of service work requiring both physical contact and emotional labor performed for a client—was most exploitive in a setting in which Korean immigrant women physically and emotionally pampered white, upper-class professional women who expected "caring and attentive service" and who held "high expectations regarding [hand and foot] massages, cleanliness, sensitive touch, and friendly conversation" (Kang 2003:835). When female Korean immigrant workers at a different salon served a predominately working-class and lower-middle-class African American and Caribbean clientele, they honored different expectations: communicating respectfulness, fairness, and efficiency in their transactions with customers and exercising creativity for customers who sought to distinguish themselves through unique nail designs. Kang's work demonstrated that performing emotional labor does not automatically magnify inequalities. Rather, we must ask who performs what for whom, under what conditions, and with what consequences?

Subordinates and Emotion

As Kleinman (2006) pointed out, researchers might find it difficult to recognize the harmful consequences of rituals and practices when members of the disadvantaged group say that they *enjoy* them. Fieldworkers probably have a healthy skepticism about the rationales and desires of the powerful while overempathizing with subordinates (Kleinman and Copp 1993). However, desires are a product of socialization and social control as much as they are of thoughts, behaviors, and ideologies and, thus, require interrogation. As we discuss below, researchers need to assume that members of subordinate groups are not always aware of, for example, how their individual desires affect their group as a whole.

Hooks (1989:130) has observed that patriarchy is the only system of oppression in which members of the disadvantaged group are meant to *love* their oppressors. As a result, women sometimes engage in practices that win men's approval but reinforce inequality for women as a *group*. Building on Hochschild's (1983) studies of emotion work in relationships, Bartky (1990) conceived of the emotion work enjoyed by many women in intimate relationships with men as false power. She argued that when emotion work is performed only or mostly by the woman (Hochschild 1983; Rubin 1983; Sattel 1976), she might feel good about her skilled work, but she is, in effect, making his feelings more important than her own. Bartky (1990:116) commented on the work of "feeding egos and tending wounds":

> [T]he *feeling* of out-flowing personal power so characteristic of the caregiving woman is quite different from the *having* of any actual power in the world. There is no doubt that this sense of personal efficacy provides some compensation for the extra-domestic power women are typically denied: if one cannot be king oneself, being a confidante of kings may be the next best thing. But just as we make a bad bargain in accepting an occasional Valentine in lieu of the sustained attention we deserve, we are ill advised to settle for a mere feeling of power, however heady and intoxicating it may be, in place of the effective power we have every right to exercise in the world.

Does examining the oppressive consequences of desire for the disadvantaged group ignore human agency? From the symbolic interactionist viewpoint, agency is a given and can range from resignation to rebellion. Once a child can see herself as an object, she can react to her own thoughts and respond to others (Blumer 1969; Mead 1934). However, what kind of object does she see herself as being? And how do others perceive her?

Interactionists studying emotions and inequality ask similar questions about subordinate groups' desires and analyze their consequences for reinforcing or challenging inequalities. Giuffre and Williams (1994) studied how female and male servers came to label, or failed to label,

particular acts as sexual harassment. White female servers in the restaurants that Giuffre and Williams studied accepted touching, pinching, and sexually explicit talk from white male middle-class servers, but they considered the same behavior as sexual harassment when initiated by male Hispanic cooks. Similarly, straight male servers felt disturbed by gay men's sexual joking, but they relished their own "raunchy" sexual jokes. Giuffre and Williams (1994:399) concluded that current cultural ideas about feelings of pleasure "protect the most privileged groups in society from charges of sexual harassment and may be used to oppress and exclude the least powerful groups."

The emotional experiences of pleasure and romance can have adverse material consequences for women. At Renewal (Kleinman 1996), the women on staff enjoyed flirting with the higher-status male practitioners and had sexual-romantic relationships with them. This helped make it possible for the women to become the "housewives" of the organization, working for little or no pay and doing emotional labor for the men. Nanny-domestic workers, too, are expected by their employers to work more for love than money (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Parrenas 2001).

This exploitation is possible, in part, because subordinates often find their experiences with dominants emotionally satisfying. In her study of strippers, Barton (2002) found that the women initially felt good about having men react to them as sexually attractive and paying for the show. As one stripper said: "Sometimes you feel like a goddess with all the men looking at you. It makes you feel good. I like being spoiled with attention. Attention you wouldn't get anywhere else. Any woman would" (Barton 2002:591). Sociologists of emotion ask: What cultural ideas underlie group members' feelings? Strippers could have internalized the idea that women fitting conventional standards of beauty is what turns them into "goddesses," or, as another woman put it, "takes the [men's] breath away, whether they're drunk or not" (Barton 2002:590). Yet, as the strippers Barton studied soon discovered, their male customers did not think of them only as beautiful objects, akin to appreciating a painting in a museum. Rather, "on the flip side of male worship lies contempt for women who have stepped outside the bounds of respectable femininity" (Barton 2002:591). As one stripper noted:

> The job is bad because you have to deal with customers who can be problematic and rude . . . they feel like the normal laws of etiquette that govern any other social or business interaction are suspended there. . . . They'll say, "Turn around bitch, I want to see your ass. I'm paying." . . . That's not something you have to contend with systematically in other jobs. (Barton 2002:592)

Even in those subcultures in which groups have fashioned new standards of attractiveness and new norms for sexual activity, practices that anchor a group's new identity in unconventional norms of sexual desire can ultimately sustain gender inequality. In a local Goth scene (Wilkins 2004), women considered themselves independent, sexually assertive, and in charge of their lives and the spaces in which they hung out. However, as Wilkins pointed out, women in this subsociety cannot choose to present themselves as anything *but* sexy. Similarly, Kleinman (1996) found that participants' belief that they were "doing something different" at the holistic health center made it harder for them to see their own sexist practices. To participants, working at an "alternative organization" meant that they were progressive. To acknowledge that they did anything that failed to live up to their ideals would have challenged their identity as good people, a central identity for participants and their work. This realization was too threatening to their self-image and their good feelings about themselves to acknowledge.

The works of Giuffre and Williams, Barton, Wilkins, and Kleinman suggest that the pleasure subordinates feel about themselves and dominants can obstacle to social change. If members of the subordinate group are emotionally attached to receiving the approval of dominants and if that

approval is tied to practices that ultimately benefit dominants, then subordinates will lack the emotional mobilization to make change.

These studies highlight the emotion work of dealing with inequality (DeVault 1999) and show us how emotions are central to understanding inequality. For the status quo to be sustained, dominants must feel comfortable about their entitlement and not have too much sympathy for subordinates. Similarly, subordinates learn to blame themselves for their low position in a hierarchical system. In the case of some forms of inequality, particularly sexism, many subordinates have intimate relationships with dominants and thus become invested in seeing them as mere "individuals," not as members of a dominant *group*. Alternatively, subordinates might agree that the dominant group exists, but argue that the individual member is an exception. The beliefs of dominants and subordinates are tied to strong feelings about the self that make dominants unlikely to see their privileges and subordinates unlikely to see dominants as a part of their own problems.

METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR INTERACTIONIST STUDIES OF EMOTION

How do interactionists go about studying emotions and their consequences? Symbolic interactionists' research agenda requires a range of methodologies. Affect control theorists (e.g., Heise and Weir 1999; Lively and Heise 2004) and identity theorists (e.g., Stets 2005; Stets and Tsushima 2001) rely on quantitative models and both experimental and survey designs to explore models of emotion. Smith-Lovin, for example, has explored extensively how emotional responses signal continuity or discontinuity between social identities and events and thus motivate social action (Dawn Robinson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and Allison Wisecup in this volume; Smith-Lovin 1990). Other symbolic interactionists have used "autoethnography" to explore their own lives and emotions. Through "systematic sociological introspection," these interactionists examine, for example, their own and their partners' experiences of illness (Ellis 1991, 1995; Frank 1997) and their lives as writers and scholars (Richardson 1997). They seek to analyze intense feelings and deeper understandings of emotion that would be difficult to access via other research methods.

Most realist interactionist studies of emotion rely on the qualitative methods of ethnography, participant observation, open-ended interviewing, and content analysis. As Blumer (1969:1–60) established in his chapter on "The Methodological Position of Symbolic Interactionism," theory and methodology are intertwined. Because meaning emerges in social settings through interaction, researchers must enter those settings and observe interactions in order to understand the meanings people negotiate, experience, and attach to social life (see also Goffman 1989). This type of empirical observation has been at the foundation of some of the most influential studies of emotion. For example, Hochschild (1983, 1989b) conducted interviews and participant observation in her studies of flight attendants, bill collectors, and heterosexual married couples; these empirical works led to fundamental insights into the more general topics of emotion work, feeling rules, and emotional labor. Thoits (1996) explored the emotion work of managing others' emotions in her analysis of fieldnotes she took during a year with Sisyphus, an encounter group, in the mid-1970s.

At times, Blumer's (1969) call for interactionists to explore everyday life has presented sociologists of emotion with a particular challenge: Public accounts of people's emotional lives are often difficult to come by, particularly among disadvantaged or disenfranchised communities (Lofland 1985). Interactionists thus often rely in their studies on multiple and unconventional data sources. Lofland (1985) used historical accounts of mourners and mourning rituals in her study of grief. Clark's (1987) analysis of the feeling rules governing sympathy drew on textual

sources ranging from greeting cards to song lyrics, fieldnotes from observations of sympathy interactions, interviews with adult respondents, survey responses, and ethnographic data reported by other sociologists.

Emotion is not only a substantive focus of symbolic interactionist research; it is also a methodological tool. As Kleinman and Copp (1993) noted, researchers who study others' emotions also have their own emotional reactions to the people they study and the setting in which they have immersed themselves. Kleinman and Copp urged fieldworkers not to stifle, silence, or ignore these reactions but, instead, to locate them in the social settings they are studying. Emotions become tools of symbolic interactionist analysis as researchers explore the insights implicit in their situated feelings. Those adopting this methodological stance ask, for example, what their experiences suggest about the setting's emotional culture and what cultural expectations their "outlaw emotions" (Jaggar 1989) violate. For example, Thoits (1996) found that her feelings of vulnerability in a psychodrama-based encounter group helped her appreciate how other members might have felt after group meetings. Her anger helped her recognize gender inequities in the encounter group.

Other interactionists have looked to respondents' emotional experiences of the research process as a source of further insight. In Arendell's (1997) interviews with recently divorced fathers, respondents' expressions of anger, concern, suspicion, frustration, and desire—and, at times Arendell's reactions to these emotions—helped to reassert the gender hierarchy at the center of the research question (see also Arendell 1992). Fields (2005) found in her study of a community engaged in debates about school-based sexuality education that respondents' apparent caution and suspicion when answering interview questions about race and sexuality pointed to emotion rules governing talk about race—again, the subject of the researcher's inquiry. As these studies suggest and as Scheff (2000) has noted, researchers who explore emotions—particularly emotions that people experience as painful—will need to study not only respondents' testimonies about their emotional experiences but also their emotional behavior and discourse. Even as symbolic interactionists continue to emphasize the social nature of emotions, they also attend to how people experience the social without awareness, through their bodies—"preobjective in expression and yet very social" (Franks 2003:803). Methodological innovations will help interactionists explore not only what people can articulate about their feelings but also what they cannot articulate and cannot feel.

CONCLUSION

Interactionists study and theorize about the core concerns of sociology, including social order and inequality (Horowitz 1997; Schwalbe et al. 2000). Symbolic interactionism, as we have argued, challenges micro/macro distinctions, positing the individual as neither an entity who stands apart from society nor a passive repository of culture. Social life—its organization, inequities, and history—cannot be understood without paying attention to group process and interaction, meaning, and feelings. In U.S. society, these terms bring to mind the individual; however, as Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969) wrote long ago, one cannot understand individual actions without also understanding shared meanings, social constraints, and context.

We would go further: The interactionists' goal is not to understand the individual. Rather, interactionists seek to understand processes within groups, organizations, cultures, and networks. Particulars matter to interactionists because they further efforts "to generalize about process, not populations" (Kleinman et al. 1997; Schwalbe et al. 2000:421; see Becker, 1990, for a discussion of analytic generalizability). In their efforts to understand social arrangements and inequities—what

sociologists usually call "stratification"—symbolic interactionists argue that we cannot understand systems of inequality—or any other social system—without understanding what people think, feel, and do (see Anderson and Snow 2001). Schwalbe et al. (2000:420) put it well: "The idea that inequality cannot be understood apart from the processes that produce it is... deeply rooted in the interactionist tradition, as is the idea that these processes must be examined directly."

What does this mean for the sociology of emotions? The methodological imperative that Blumer (1969) set forth directs fieldworkers to study participants' shared understandings and misunderstandings, social divisions and social cohesion, what members produce or fail to produce despite their best intentions, and the creation and consequences of their joint action. Thus, for interactionists, emotions, like everything else, are data that help them understand social reality. However, if we fail to study the inequality in our midst and ignore the emotions of dominants and subordinates, then we fail to analyze the obdurate reality that Blumer identified as fundamental to the symbolic interactionist perspective. We call on interactionists not only to bring emotions into their analyses, but also to examine how people produce selves and social arrangements in a society still characterized by inequity, injustice, and resistance.

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