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Collective emotions in rituals: Elicitation, Transmission, and a "Matthew-effect"

Sociological theory frequently assumes that rituals exhibit a number of latent social functions, in particular the promotion of social cohesion and the reproduction of social order. A key mechanism in realizing these functions is often seen in processes of "collective effervescence," a concept first introduced in the context of rituals by Emile DURKHEIM (1912) denoting the elicitation of mutually shared emotional arousal. DURKHEIM ascribed crucial social functions to collective effervescence, in particular with respect to the genesis of values and the affective charging of symbols representing the group (cf. JOAS 2001). Moreover, he argued that collective effervescence contributes to the emergence of a "collective conscience" and thus the reinforcement of group ties and social solidarity.

In modern sociological theory, this approach is most elaborately reflected in the works of Randall COLLINS (2004a). Although COLLINS focuses on ritualized interaction in a sense proposed by Erving GOFFMAN (1967), he assigns a key role to his concept of "emotional energy," which is generated when actors mutually engage in various forms of "interaction ritual chains." This "emotional energy," COLLINS holds, can take the form of collective emotions in face-to-face encounters and contribute to the emergence and reproduction of social solidarity, much in the same way as proposed by DURKHEIM.

Although there are marked differences between DURKHEIM'S and COLLINS' accounts of the relationship between ritual and emotion, both uniformly emphasize the importance of collective emotions or "collective effervescence" for the emergence and reproduction of social solidarity, cohesion, and – ultimately – social order well beyond the actual interaction situation. Far from being sociological mainstream, these ideas have spread into social theorizing and inspired the literature on, for instance, collective action and crowd behavior, the formation of social movements, and group processes (COLLINS 2001; JASPER 1998). What remains largely underdeveloped in both theoretical accounts, however, is the conceptualization of collective emotions (and collective effervescence) and a precise definition and empirical substantiation of what collective emotions are. How are collective emotions elicited? How are they "transmitted" between actors, i.e., what makes them "collective" in contrast to "individual" emotions? How do they differ from individual emotions qualitatively and with respect to their social functions? And what are the conditions under which collective emotions exhibit their supposed social functions?

Although the literature on collective emotions is sparse not only in sociology, but throughout the social and behavioral sciences, there is a number of theoretical elaborations and empirical studies that are worth considering in sharpening the picture of the nature and the social functions (and dysfunctions) of collective emotions in rituals. In this contribution, I will develop answers to the above questions, elaborate a number of foundational affective mechanisms of collective emotions in rituals, and give insights into the ways in which

collective emotions impact the reinforcement (or disruption) of group ties. I will proceed in three steps: First, I will discuss existing theories on the relationships between collective emotions, rituals, and certain group parameters, such as cohesion, solidarity, and collective conscience. Second, I will highlight a number of shortcomings and problems that are evident in existing theories with respect to the question of how collective emotions are elicited. In referring to select psychological and philosophical theories of emotion, I will develop an original approach to tackle this *elicitation problem*. Third, I will discuss the assumptions existing theories make about the "transmission" of emotions between actors as a crucial ingredient of collective emotions in rituals. In using evidence from social psychological approaches to emotion, I aim at clarifying this *transmission problem* and at developing original insights into the question of how the transmission problem is related to the (alleged) social functions of collective emotions.

Two accounts of collective emotions in rituals

One of the earliest sociological accounts of the role of collective emotions in rituals is developed by one of the founding figures of sociology, Emile DURKHEIM, in his writings on *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (DURKHEIM 1912). DURKHEIM'S analysis is mainly based on the analysis of religious practices of Australian Aborigines, in which he sought to excavate the basic principles of religion and religious experience (CARITON-FORD 2005; OLAVESON 2004). He was interested in the question of how religious beliefs and belief systems emerge and are reproduced within a community, and how they contribute to everyday systems of classification and categorization, mainly with respect to distinguishing "the profane" from "the sacred." He assumed that religion and religious practices are key in establishing the moral order of a group or community by shaping their core values, bringing about collective identity and collective conscience, and ultimately forming strong group bonds and creating a sense of community.

For DURKHEIM, the mere cognitive acquisition of religious beliefs was not sufficient to generate this sense of community and to foster the emergence of a collective conscience. In his sense, too strong were the distractions of the everyday and profane world and the temptations of the gains of purely individual courses of action, and too ephemeral the world of religious thoughts, beliefs, and ideals. What was missing, in DURKHEIM'S terms, was the "grounding" of religious beliefs (i.e., of the moral and social world) in the world of subjective phenomenal experience (i.e., in the "natural" world) (SHILLING/MELLOR 1998). According to DURKHEIM, precisely this grounding is achieved in rituals, in which the members of a group gather collectively to perform various rites, for example worshipping the gods, forgiving sins, or commemorating certain events. For DURKHEIM, the central feature of these gatherings is that they are "effervescent" assemblies in that they generate heightened and mutual emotional arousal from the collective performance of various ritual practices (PICKERING 1984, p. 385). Crucially, this heightened arousal is directed at symbols (e.g., totems) or individuals representing the group and – through these symbols – at the (religious) beliefs and moral values held by the group. "It is the *collective effervescence* stimulated by assembled social groups that harnesses people's passions to the symbolic order of society" (SHILLING/MELLOR 1998, p.196, italics original). Moreover, DURKHEIM indeed assumed that under conditions of collective effervescence in rituals, individual psyches can be "transformed" and primed towards a decidedly *collective* conscience. Collective effervescence and its key ingredient – collective emotional arousal – is "experienced mentally and physically, and binds people to the ideals valued by their social group" (SCHILLING/MELLOR 1998, p. 196).

Importantly, DURKHEIM also assumed that beliefs and symbols which are affectively imbued during rituals unfold their functions for a group or community in the absence of actual ritual practices, i.e. in everyday life. For example, the presence of affectively "charged"

symbols does not only convey a specific emotionally-laden meaning, but may also activate traces of emotional memory related to the experience of collective emotions in ritual contexts. The same holds for the affective charging of beliefs, in particular normative beliefs and moral convictions, which in part derive their compelling and commitment generating qualities out of their association with affective arousal. Both assumptions are corroborated by modern psychological and neuroscientific research (LaBar /Cabeza 2006; Kensinger/Schacter 2008; Bless 2001; Bower 1991; Forgas 2000; Clore/Schwarz/Conway 1994; cf. also von Scheve 2009 for an overview).

Durkheim's key arguments concerning the social functions of collective effervescence and emotions are paralleled by modern sociological theories of group cohesion and solidarity. One of the most prominent examples is Randall Collins' (2004a) theory of "Interaction Ritual Chains" (IRC). Although Collins' model focuses on ritualized interaction in a sense first proposed by Goffman (1967), he considers Durkheim's perspectives on collective effervescence and emotions as building blocks of his own approach. He emphasizes the compatibility of Durkheim's model with more general sociological theories of stratification and conflict by highlighting its explanatory qualities with respect to the generation of solidarity within different social groups. In Collins' view, Durkheim's analysis of emotions in rituals provides an answer to one of sociology's key questions – "What holds society together?" – in providing insights into processes that generate social solidarity and cohesion on the group level (Collins 2004a, p. 40, Collins 2004b). Collins' theory of IRCs contributes to this understanding by introducing the concept of "emotional energy" as a motivational force that is produced in ritualized social interactions and encourages individuals to repeatedly engage in interactions producing high levels of emotional energy. Conflict and stratification enter this framework by making reference to different techniques and resources that groups have at their disposal to realize and implement rituals that generate the necessary amounts of emotional energy (ibid.).

From this perspective, Collins' theory differs from Durkheim's approach in that it focuses on the repetitiveness of social interactions – of encounters – and the patterns they create. These encounters derive their regularity from the amount of emotional energy they are able to produce. The more emotional energy actors can absorb in an encounter, the more likely they will engage in this kind of encounter again. In this model, the explanatory power of emotions lies in their status as a valued resource and in their potential to generate "interaction orders."

In principle, there is no need for Collins to postulate collective emotional phenomena such as collective effervescence – for emotional energy to emerge, dyadic interactions are sufficient. However, Collins emphasizes that the sociology of ritual is predominantly a "sociology of gatherings – of crowds, assemblies, congregations, audiences" (Collins 2004a, p. 34). He further states that "When human bodies are together in the same place, there is a physical attunement: currents of feeling, a sense of wariness or interest, a palpable change in the atmosphere." For him, this physical attunement seems to be the necessary precondition for collective effervescence and collective emotions to occur. In this sense, it paves the way for the alleged functions of collective emotions, at least at the dyadic level of analysis: "Once the bodies are together, there may take place a process of intensification of shared experience, which Durkheim called collective effervescence, and the formation of collective conscience or collective consciousness. "We might refer to this as a condition of heightened intersubjectivity" (Collins 2004a, p. 35). "The key process is participants' mutual entrainment of emotion and attention, producing a shared emotion / cognitive experience" (Collins 2004a, p. 49).

Both Durkheim and Collins seem to imply in their writings that bodily co-presence together with shared practices and activities – either sacred rituals or profane social exchange – are sufficient conditions for physical and psychological "synchronization" to be established

and for collective effervescence and collective emotions to occur. In doing so, both theorists offer only sparse explanations of how exactly effervescence is established and collective emotions occur. They provide no elaborated theory – in terms of emotion theory – of either individual or collective emotions and their elicitation, but are rather quick in drawing conclusions concerning their specific qualities and socio-cognitive effects.

It is evident that collective emotional phenomena play a crucial role in many societal affairs, which is theoretically well elaborated by DURKHEIM and COLLINS, and thus deserve further investigation. The aim of the following sections is thus to extend DURKHEIM'S and COLLINS' theories where they show obvious deficits: In their assumptions on the elicitation and transmission of collective emotions in rituals, crowds, and gatherings, and the cognitive and social preconditions necessary to establish the social functions of collective emotions. To do so, I will discuss the assumption that the functions ascribed to collective emotions and effervescence require a number of non-trivial preconditions that have to be fulfilled and that some of the *functions* of collective emotions or collective effervescence mentioned by DURKHEIM and COLLINS are in fact *preconditions* for these phenomena to occur.

The elicitation problem

How are collective emotions elicited in the first place? DURKHEIM and COLLINS are relatively silent about the exact mechanisms and process that instigate collective emotions. Here I will provide insights into these mechanisms and processes by referring to current emotion theories from sociology, psychology, and philosophy which almost exclusively deal with the elicitation of individual-level emotions, and adapt these theories towards the level of collective emotions.

One step in this direction can be found in work on collective emotions understood as "group-based" emotions (WILDER/SIMON 2001; SMITH/SEGER/MACKIE 2007; MACKIE/SMITH 2002; MACKIE/SMITH 1998; MACKIE/DEVOS/SMITH 2000; BREWER 2001). In these theories, it is not the face-to-face gathering and the contagious and effervescent processes of social interaction in bodily co-present groups that are at the center of attention, but rather the fact that actors tend to *identify* themselves as members of a group or a social collective (BREWER 2001). By way of identifying with a group or the belief that one is a member of a social group, collective emotions can also be elicited *in solitude*, e.g., when other members of the group perform certain actions or are ascribed certain qualities by third parties. Imagine, for example, cases of nation-based collective guilt, or the cheering when your favorite football team scores (ALLPRESS *et al.* 2010; DOOSJE *et al.* 1998; BRANSCOMBE 2004; KESSLER/HOLLBACH 2004). These group-based emotions are frequently elicited even when people are alone and no processes of collective effervescence or contagion in close face-to-face encounter can occur.

Theories of group-based emotions primarily refer to social identification theory (TAJFEL/TURNER 1986) to explain collective emotions. However, identification with an in-group is only one way by which collective emotions may arise. Think, for example, of a heavy traffic jam in which you are stuck, and of people starting to leave their cars and shouting and complaining in mutual anger about the reason for the road blockage. In this case, we may well speak of collective emotions, but would hardly speak of group-based emotions relying on identification with the group of stuck drivers. To further explore this type of collective emotion – and other kinds of collective emotions as well – it might be helpful to take a look at theories dealing with emotion elicitation primarily at the individual level, which will be done in the following section.

Socially shared appraisal contents in emotion elicitation

Current *appraisal theories* represent one of the most promising and consensual approaches to emotion elicitation (FRIJDA 1993; ROSEMAN/SMITH 2001). They have proven to be both theoretically fruitful and empirically well substantiated (ROSEMAN 2001). Critique directed at earlier models of appraisal addressing the overly cognitivist nature of these theories has mostly ceased by now, given that the more up-to-date approaches explicitly account for an integration of cognitive and physiological processes in the generation of affect (PECCHINENDA 2001; SANDER/GRANDJEAN/SCHERER 2005). Although they are mostly discussed and developed in emotion psychology, appraisal theory has also been adopted in areas such as anthropology or sociology (cf. VON SCHEVE 2009).

The latter link between sociology and appraisal theory is probably the least elaborated and implicit one, but at the same time most promising with regard to further probing alternative routes to the generation of collective emotions. Basically, appraisal theories assume that emotions are elicited by actors' "interpretations" of situations, acts, or events with respect to their relevance. "The primary assumption that unites all appraisal accounts is that a person's interpretation of a stimulus situation evokes an emotion" (BARRETT 2006, p. 31). Plainly speaking, if something is not relevant in any way according to an "interpretation", it will not be capable of eliciting an emotion. Clearly, much of this view depends of the definition of "interpretation," "relevance," and "emotion." However, in what follows I am not concerned with the details of appraisal theory in the first place, which are discussed at length elsewhere (ROSEMAN/SMITH 2001), but I am interested rather in the basic assumptions these theories hold.

If we thus accept – even if only for the sake of the argument – that interpretation and relevance are two core principles in the elicitation of emotion, we can further ask about the details and mechanisms of the interpretative components of appraisal processes. Most of the current appraisal theories assume that actors interpret (or "appraise," for that matter) acts, events, or objects with respect to the goals, beliefs, needs, desires, values, and norms they have. For example, if I believe that the dog in front of me is dangerous and I have the desire for bodily integrity, I will most probably be afraid of the dog. If, however, the dog also blocks my way to an important appointment for which I will surely be late, this goal hindrance might also let me experience anger or even rage. These appraisal "contents" or "structures" thus constitute the background against which occurring events are interpreted and evaluated and can be differentiated into representational (e.g., beliefs, values) and motivational (e.g., desires, needs) components.

Even theories of emotion not committed to the appraisal paradigm widely share the assumption that some kind of relevance detection is crucial for eliciting emotions. Thus the idea of relevance detection is found in almost any of today's major emotion theories, for example belief-desire theories (REISENZEIN 2001; ORTONY/CLORE/COLLINS 1988), core affect theories (RUSSELL/BARRETT 1999), perceptual theories (PRINZ 2004), or affect program and "basic emotion" theories (EKMAN 1999; PANKSEPP 1998).

In this vein, appraisals can be seen as "inherently relational": "Rather than exclusively reflecting either the properties of the stimulus situation or the person's dispositional qualities, appraisal represents an evaluation of the stimulus situation as it relates to the person's individualized needs, goals, beliefs, and values" (SMITH/KIRBY 2001, p. 124). Appraisal theories further assume that acts, events, or objects are appraised along a number of different dimensions, for example novelty, intrinsic pleasantness, goal significance, coping potential, and compatibility standards (SCHERER 1993; ELLSWORTH/SCHERER 2003). Other appraisal theories tend to differentiate these dimensions on similar terms (e.g., FRIJDA 1986; ORTONY/CLORE/COLLINS 1988, SMITH/ELLSWORTH 1985). Most theories lay out more or less detailed conceptual schemes of how appraisals along these dimensions – based on specific motivational and representational structures – elicit discrete emotions (ELLSWORTH/SCHERER 2003).

By and large, appraisal theory has not yet made its way into mainstream social science or sociological reasoning on emotion (cf. VON SCHEVE 2009 for an overview), but many of its key assumptions are shared by sociological approaches. In criticizing overly "constructivist" approaches to emotion, Kemper states that "if emotions depend on the interpretation of the situation, it seems that all who define the situation similarly ought to experience the same emotion. The problem, in part, comes down to whether or not it is possible to have a standard set of categories for defining situations which will link them logically and empirically with emotions" (KEMPER 1981, pp. 352f.).

This view provides a fruitful linkage to connect conceptually necessary assumptions of appraisal theory with social science views on emotion. One of these assumptions is that interpretations ("appraisals") of a situation – if identical – tend to elicit identical discrete emotions. Conceptually, this is supposed to substantiate the view that different events can elicit the same emotion and, on the other hand, identical events can elicit different emotions when appraised differently. In view of groups, communities, societies, or other collectives, this means that events which are witnessed by a larger number of actors at the same time – for example in ritual contexts –, will elicit identical emotions among these actors simultaneously and collectively, if – and only if – they are appraised in an identical fashion. Appraising events identically then presupposes a certain congruence of the representational and motivational contents or structures of appraisal. How is this congruence achieved?

Probably because of their psychological roots and their focus on intra-individual processes, most appraisal models usually conceptualize the motivational and representational components of appraisal as independent, unchanging, and relatively stable inputs to an appraisal process, whereas the eliciting event is assumed to be the more dynamic input to this relation. However true that might be when investigating rather short-term emotion episodes in individuals, a social science perspective cannot be comfortable with the supposition that cognitive structures are stable and unchanging phenomena – in particular from a long-term perspective.

Fortunately, a number of appraisal theorists share this uneasiness and highlight the dynamic nature of cognitions involved in the generation of emotion (ORTONY/CLORE/COLLINS 1988; CLORE/SCHWARZ/CONWAY 1994). SCHERER, for example, states that "[o]ne of the central tenets of appraisal theory holds that the evaluation process is highly subjective, which explains why the very same event can provoke rather different emotions in different persons. This implies the existence of pronounced individual differences in the evaluation process, differences that are due to habitual appraisal tendencies or habits, which could be partly responsible for differences in emotional reactivity" (SCHERER 1997, p. 903).

Sociological research provides elaborate theoretical models on how this congruence in appraisal contents may arise and how habitual appraisal tendencies might come into existence. Theorizing in the sociology of knowledge since Karl Mannheim has convincingly argued that cognitions and the emergence of cognitive structures (or knowledge structures) are strongly and systematically influenced by the social and cultural environment a person is embedded in (MANNHEIM 1929, pp. 227ff.; BERGER/LUCKMANN 1966; ZERUBAVEL 1997). This sociological approach to knowledge and cognition thus assumes that actors are differentially endowed with the beliefs, values, attitudes, and desires that are most salient within a social entity. Consequently, culture and society and several smaller social collectives, e.g., groups and communities, exhibit regularities with respect to the motivational and representational cognitive structures of their constituting individuals. These similarities ultimately form the basis of what Emile DURKHEIM (1912) called the "collective conscience."

This strand of reasoning is also paralleled by research in social psychology which focuses on "social representations" (MOSCOVICI 2001). Social representations are not limited to representations of the social, but also encompass representations of non-social entities. What

makes them "social" is thus the fact that they emerge and are steadily negotiated in social interactions (LAHLOU 2001). This approach is further mirrored by empirical and theoretical studies on social and socially shared cognition (HUTCHINS 1991; MACRAE/BODENHAUSEN 2000; BLESS/FIEDLER/STRACK 2004) and has been investigated with respect to the elicitation of emotion by OATLEY (2000).

When bringing together these sociological and social psychological theories on the social origins and distribution of cognition with current appraisal models of emotion, a picture of the elicitation of collective emotion emerges that is fundamentally based on the *collectively shared* representational and motivational contents of the appraisals that precede emotion. This perspective on collective emotions is markedly different from (a) collective effervescence approaches referred to in ritual studies as well as from (b) theories of group-based emotions. The former one presupposes the bodily co-presence and ritual gathering of actors, and the latter requires a common "collective" identity of those experiencing group-based emotions.

This proposed "representational," appraisal-based model of collective emotions does of course not claim to substitute group-based or effervescent explanations, but rather extends them. It is perfectly conceivable that a number of actors – for reasons elaborated by the sociology of knowledge and social psychology – shares motivational and representational contents of appraisal and is then implicated in or perceives potential emotion eliciting events or situations. Think, for instance, of the traffic jam example again. Here, the criteria for group identification clearly do not apply, and mechanisms of collective effervescence can hardly contribute to evoking emotions. Instead, most of the actors simultaneously stuck in the traffic jam share the motivational goal of reaching their individual destinations in a specific time frame and will form the belief that the traffic jam is an instance of goal hindrance, which will most probably elicit negative emotions such as anger, rage, or frustration.

This does not mean, however, that all the actors implicated in this situation will experience the exact same emotion. For instance, with respect to the appraisal components novelty and coping potential, different facets of emotions will arise. Some of the drivers may be used to traffic jams on the road in question and may even expect problems at a particular time of the day. Others may be ready to cope with the situation easily, because they can without difficulty postpone the meeting they are heading to, or because they have a passenger with whom they can chat and forget about the annoying situation. Obviously, there are a number of reasons why the exact emotions of the drivers may differ, but there is reason to believe that the sharing of situational context and actual goals and beliefs contributes to some kind of "affective alignment."

This affective alignment will no doubt be effective in situations in which collective effervescence may arise due to bodily co-presence (think, for example, of protest marches) or in which a number of actors are implicated in a situation as members of a group. Being members of the same group clearly heightens the chances of group-members not only having a common collective identity, but also of sharing actual goals and beliefs. Theories of group-based emotions, however, mostly emphasize the role of social identity and tend to neglect the alignment of appraisal contents.

With respect to the elicitation of emotions in rituals and in particular the role of collective effervescence, it seems clear that adding the assumption of shared appraisal contents extends the explanatory power of existing models. Although situations are conceivable in which collective effervescence in the Durkheimian sense arises without the alignment of (or even with contrasting) cognitive appraisal components, it seems intuitively clear that a convergence of these factors may promote collective effervescence. To some degree and under specific conditions, a minimal set of converging motivational and representational appraisal components among actors participating in a ritual might even be a necessary precondition for collective effervescence to occur.

Shared intentions in the elicitation of collective emotions

Apart from the shared appraisal contents, there is a second dimension of collective emotions which is largely neglected in existing approaches. This dimension stems from the middle-ground between shared appraisal contents – in particular their motivational aspects – and theories of group-based emotions. More precisely, it can be understood as a specification of the group-based approach to collective emotions which incorporates theoretical assumptions on how shared motivational appraisal contents are effective in generating emotions. Recent work mainly in the philosophy of sociality and social ontology (BRATMAN 1993; TUOMELA 1995; SEARLE 1995; SCHMID 2005) as well as in evolutionary anthropology (TOMASELLO 2008) has repeatedly emphasized the importance of shared/collective intentions in the coordination of human social behavior and the evolution of cooperation. More recently, these accounts of collective intentions have been related to the explanation of collective emotions (GILBERT 2002; SALMELA 2009; SCHMID 2009). Although these approaches differ in some detail, they uniformly suppose that emotions elicited on the basis of collective intentions are qualitatively (or most probably also functionally) different from emotions elicited by individual intentions (SALMELA 2009; SCHMID 2009).

With respect to theorizing on collective intentions and investigating the mechanisms underlying collective emotions, two main positions can be – for the purpose of this article very roughly – distinguished from one another. On the one hand, there are "summative" or aggregate accounts of collective intentions. Broadly speaking, summative accounts assume that a collective intention (or belief) exists if a sufficiently large number of members of a social collective intend or believe that something is or should be the case (cf. TOLLEFSEN 2004). The collective intention in this case can be considered to be the sum of its individual parts.

On the other hand, "non-summative" accounts assume that collective intentions are collective because members of a social group or collective have certain intentions (or beliefs) *as members* of that group. Collective intentions according to this perspective gain their collectivity by referring to mental states of individuals that are directed at the group or exist "on behalf" of the group. For example, a theatre ensemble strives to perform exceptionally *as an ensemble* and not in a way that each constituting member of the ensemble performs exceptionally (although the former often presupposes the latter). Another example would be the performance of the German National Football Team in the World Cup 2010 in South Africa. Many newspapers were in accordance in describing the team's strength as the willingness to perform exceptionally *as a team*, which in this case was markedly different from each of the individual players doing an excellent job.

Collective intentions thus represent the "togetherness" and mutual goal-directedness found in social groups and collectives (SALMELA 2009). Nevertheless, they in some respect also require a form of group identity as proposed by theories of group-based emotions. Accounts of group-based emotions, however, usually focus on aspects of identification rather than on the collectively intentional aspects of emotions. Group-based emotions are felt on the basis of group-membership, and individuals experience these emotions "as a member of a specific group" (IYER/LEACH 2008, p. 91).

In Raimo TUOMELA's work, for example, differentiation of summative forms of collective intentions on the one hand and non-summative on the other hand is achieved by his distinction between "I-mode" and "We-mode" collectivity (TUOMELA 2006). Along these lines, SALMELA (2009) has suggested distinguishing "I-mode" from "We-mode" collective emotions. In his approach, collective emotions can be characterized by their collective *contents*, *concerns*, and *mode*. Collective content in his model is similar to the representational appraisal contents suggested above, that is that they encompass "objects, actions, events, or states of affairs that are relevant to collective concerns or believed by the

group members to be relevant in this way" (SALMELA 2009). Collective concerns, then, represent shared concerns which can be either "I-mode" or "We-mode" concerns, where the former leads to "weak" collectivity and the latter to "strong" collectivity. Finally, the "mode" reflects feeling an emotion either *as a member* of a particular group or as an individual, whereas the former is similar to the assumptions on social identity mentioned by theories of group-based emotions.

Crucially, SALMELA explicitly relates his conceptualization of collective emotions to COLLINS' (2004a) assumptions on the functions of collective emotions, particularly with respect to the solidarity-enhancing effects he proposes. SALMELA convincingly argues that these effects are markedly distinct for "I-mode" and "We-mode" collective emotions, and that existing theories on the functions of collective emotions – mainly in the social sciences – tend to neglect these differences. COLLINS (2004a), for example, assumes that the main solidarity-producing process in ritualized interaction "is participants' mutual entrainment of emotion and attention, producing a shared emotion / cognitive experience" (COLLINS 2004a, p. 49). However, his model lacks a theoretical conceptualization of the kinds of shared emotions that might bring about these effects.

Here, SALMELA's work is instructive in suggesting that in particular "We-mode" collective emotions and "strong collectivity" have a unique impact on the solidarity enhancing effects of rituals proposed by DURKHEIM, COLLINS, and others. This also means that the effects and functions of collective emotions and effervescence, as proposed by DURKHEIM and COLLINS, are markedly different in groups in which they operate in the "We-mode" and are based on strong collectivity. However, this mode requires group-members or participants in ritual practices to *a priori* share common concerns, intentions, and goals. Hence, weak as well as strong forms of collective emotions in the sense proposed by SALMELA and by the affective alignment arguments derived from appraisal theories to some degree seem to be *necessary preconditions* for collective effervescence and – most crucially – for the socio-cognitive effects of rituals to actually occur. This means, as common wisdom holds, that "you can't make something out of nothing", i.e., without a minimal set of collectively shared intentions as well as representational appraisal components, the supposed socio-cognitive effects of rituals (e.g., enhanced solidarity, collective conscience, etc.) are unlikely to occur. Collective emotions and effervescence are not necessarily able to *produce* solidarity and a collective conscience, but rather they *enhance* these phenomena.

A question that remained untouched until now but has profound consequences for the elicitation of collective emotions in ritual practices and face-to-face gatherings is the transmission of affect between actors. Collective intentions and shared appraisal contents can of course be understood as a form of transmission of components necessary for emotion elicitation. However, these "cognitive" parts represent only one side of the medal. The other side reflects the nonverbal expression of emotion in social interaction and will be discussed in the following section.

The transmission problem

In the works of both DURKHEIM and COLLINS, there is the (implicit) assumption that for collective emotions and effervescence to arise in mutual gatherings (i.e., face to face interactions), there must be some form of more or less automatic or involuntary transmission of emotion between actors. This idea is reflected, for instance, in COLLINS' (2004a, p. 49) phrase of "mutual entrainment of emotion and attention" or in DURKHEIM'S idea of "emotional contagion that results from physical co-presence" (COLLINS 1975, p. 58; DURKHEIM 1912; FISH 2005).

Collective emotional phenomena have long fueled the idea that there exist mechanisms allowing for the rapid and automatic transfer of emotions between people without necessarily

relying on verbal communication. The verbal transmission of emotion might, for instance, be achieved by verbally communicating information about the emotion eliciting event, which in turn is connected to individual (or mutual) experiences, feelings, and goals and can thus lead to the elicitation of an emotion.

Collective emotions, by contrast, often arise without any verbal communication about an emotion eliciting event and can "affect" several actors simultaneously, which suggests alternative routes of transfer (RIMÉ *et al.* 1991; SMITH/DAVID/KIRBY 2006). In the nonverbal domain, there are many everyday instances closely related to collective emotions, for example contagious laughter or yawning, or the involuntary wrinkling of one's nose when witnessing others experiencing disgust. Within emotion research, these phenomena are investigated under the conceptual term of "emotional contagion," which demarcates the involuntary and automatic transfer or imitation of expression of emotion and emotional states between subjects. In their classic treatise, HATFIELD and associates define emotional contagion – in contrast to the verbal transfer of emotion – as the "tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person and, consequently, to converge emotionally" (HATFIELD/CACIOPPO/RAPSON 1992, p. 153f.). Hatfield and her colleagues deliberately use a broad definition of emotional contagion to account for a wide range of components of an emotion, for instance facial expression, bodily posture, phenomenal feeling, action tendency, or appraisal pattern (HATFIELD/CACIOPPO/RAPSON 1992). Interestingly, with respect to social science accounts more generally and approaches to emotions in ritual, Hatfield and colleagues also speculate that an "important consequence of emotional contagion is an attentional, emotional, and behavioral synchrony that has the same adaptive utility (and drawbacks) for social entities (dyads, groups) as has emotion for the individual" (HATFIELD/CACIOPPO/RAPSON 1992, p. 153; cf. also VAN BAAREN *et al.* 2004).

Current accounts of emotional contagion mostly assume that contagious processes are largely based on motor mimicry, which is well documented in social psychology. Motor mimicry can be observed when the mere perception of another person's behavior alters behavior of the perceiving person in a way that leads to convergence of both behaviors. Research on motor mimicry is closely linked to findings on direct connections between perception and action (perception-behavior link) (cf. BARGH 1997; CHARTRAND/BARGH 1999). This effect is also known as the "chameleon effect," which describes the non-conscious mimicry of postures, manners, and facial expressions of interaction partners and the unintentional change of behavior to match others' in a current social context (ibid.).

With respect to emotional contagion, the facial expression of emotion is considered a specific kind of motor behavior and may be mimicked in much the same way as other kinds of motor behavior. In view of the mimicking of facial expressions, the "facial feedback hypothesis" states that specific configurations of the facial musculature contribute to the experience of specific affective states (cf. MCINTOSH 1996). The hypothesis thus holds that by (unconsciously) imitating the facial expressions of others, there is a tendency to also converge on the level of phenomenal feeling. Although research has supported this hypothesis, it has also become clear that there is a large number of confounding factors, most importantly the social context in which imitation occurs (HESS/BLAIRY/PHILIPPOT 1999; HESS/PHILIPPOT/BLAIRY 1998; BOURGEOIS/HESS 2008).

The facial feedback hypothesis to a large extent draws on so-called "affect program" and "basic emotion" theories which suppose biologically hardwired connections between the different components of an emotion, for example subjective feeling, motor expression, autonomic nervous system activity, appraisal pattern, or action tendency (EKMAN 1999; PANKSEPP 1998; KREIBIG 2010). Because of this tight coupling, the hypothesis assumes that the subjective feeling component of an emotion is to a large part dependent on afferent feedback from the facial musculature. Specific patterns of facial expression – as part of

hypothesized universal and biologically grounded "affect programs" – are thus responsible for the fact that, for example, sadness feels different from joy (HATFIELD/CACIOPPO/RAPSON 1992, pp. 161f., HESS/PHILIPPOT/BLAIRY 1998, p. 511).

Further empirical support for the existence of emotional contagion comes from animal studies that show that emotional behavior is influenced by facial mimicry, which has profound implications for cooperation among animals (HATFIELD/CACIOPPO/RAPSON 1994, pp. 79f.). Also, studies in developmental psychology show that emotional contagion is closely related to empathy and sympathy and can be considered as an early and basic form of affect transfer between infants (ibid.: 82). Hatfield and colleagues (1994) review a number of studies from clinical psychology, social psychology, and group behavior illustrating that emotional contagion seems to be a widespread and often observed phenomenon in various contexts, although it has not been at the center of attention until recently.

Meanwhile, research has begun to explicitly focus on emotional contagion and produced a number of impressive empirical results. These results can help understand how the transmission of affect through emotional contagion may contribute to the elicitation of collective emotions and effervescence in rituals. Experimental studies show that emotional contagion seems to be most pronounced for the emotions of joy, sadness, anger, and fear. In these cases, it was not only the facial expression that tended to be mimicked, but also the subjective feeling. The studies support the view that perceiving the facial expression of someone else in a social interaction contributes to actually feeling the emotion associated with this expression in the emoting subject. Moreover, it has been shown that it is not diffuse and fuzzy feelings which are elicited by contagion, but rather discrete and discernible emotions. Hatfield and colleagues also emphasize that in addition to facial expressions, verbal, vocal, and haptic information also support emotional contagion (HATFIELD/CACIOPPO/RAPSON 1992, p. 162).

More recent studies have focused on the unconscious initiation and processing of emotional contagion to further investigate its automatic and involuntary functioning. For example, DIMBERG and colleagues have shown that the perception of expressions of anger and joy leads to corresponding configurations of the facial musculature in perceiving individuals only 300 to 400 milliseconds after exposure to the expression (DIMBERG/THUNBERG 1998, LUNDQVIST/DIMBERG 1995). LUNDQVIST (1995) presents similar results for the emotions of sadness, surprise, and anger. This effect also seems to hold when subjects are instructed to actively suppress any facial reactions (DIMBERG/THUNBERG/GRUNEDAL 2002). Most interestingly, this form of emotional contagion even occurs when facial expressions are presented for a very short duration, i.e., when they cannot be consciously perceived (DIMBERG/THUNBERG/GRUNEDAL 2002). Moreover, unconsciously perceived facial expressions seem to be sufficient to trigger (neuro)physiological responses characteristic for these emotions in individuals who are exposed to the expression (DIMBERG/ÖHMAN 1996; ESTEVES/DIMBERG/ÖHMAN 1994).

In view of collective effervescence and emotions in rituals, emotional contagion thus seems to play a fundamental role in transmitting affective states between individuals in close proximity and engaged in face-to-face interaction. Although DURKHEIM (1912) and COLLINS (2004a) present no elaborate concepts of emotional contagion, nor empirical evidence to substantiate their claims, the picture drawn by present research on contagion is much in line with their theorizing. Also, in view of the solidarity-enhancing socio-cognitive effects proposed by DURKHEIM and COLLINS, research on emotional contagion is supportive, although evidence is still sparse (VAN BAAREN et al. 2004).

One issue, however, arises with respect to a fundamental assumption underlying most of the current research on emotional contagion. The much referred to facial feedback hypothesis largely relies on models of affect and emotion characterized by assumptions of the cross-cultural universality of emotion (and facial expression) and a tight coupling of the different

components of emotion, in particular motor expression and subjective feeling. In line with the assumptions of the cultural universality hypothesis, most approaches presume that the mechanisms underlying emotional contagion require that emotion expressions can be recognized or "decoded" by other individuals precisely and effortlessly. This can only be the case when variance in facial expression (i.e., the encoding of emotion expression) is limited. Thus automaticity and recognition accuracy is believed to reside in the biologically hard-wired and universal nature of most facial expressions, which also limits socially or culturally induced variation.

However, this universality assumption has been criticized for several reasons, theoretical as well as empirical, and a number of alternative theories have been suggested (cf. ELFENBEIN/AMBADY (2003a), and RUSSELL (1994, 1995) for a comprehensive overview). One of the most promising alternatives in the context of emotional contagion is the proposed *in-group advantage* in emotion recognition (ELFENBEIN/AMBADY 2002). In a meta-analytic review of 165 cross-cultural studies on emotion recognition, ELFENBEIN and AMBADY (2002) conclude that the social and cultural proximity of individuals manifesting and perceiving an emotion expression influences the accuracy with which the underlying emotion can be recognized. According to their analysis, the higher the proximity between actors, the better the recognition accuracy and the faster emotion expressions can be recognized. This in-group advantage in emotion recognition increases with similarity between cultures, for instance through spatial proximity or high levels of inter-cultural communication (ELFENBEIN/AMBADY 2003b). Moreover, the in-group advantage has also been shown in smaller and less stable social units, e.g., work teams, and can be related to, for instance, national, ethnic, or regional groups (ELFENBEIN/AMBADY 2002, ELFENBEIN/POLZER/AMBADY 2007).

This alternative explanation of emotion recognition – which also seems to underlie emotional contagion – states that emotions can be better recognized when individuals exhibit the same socio-cultural background. The reason behind this thesis is that facial expression varies with cultural background and that different cultures develop different *dialects* of emotion expression (ELFENBEIN *et al.* 2007, MARSH/ELFENBEIN/AMBADY 2003). If this reasoning is correct, then we should also suspect fundamental consequences for emotional contagion in a way that makes contagion dependent on the socio-cultural proximity of individuals engaged in face to face interaction, for example in ritual contexts. This warrants the theoretical conclusion that emotional contagion is more frequent and effective between individuals sharing a common social and cultural background when compared to individuals with heterogeneous backgrounds.

Extending the reasoning behind in-group advantages in emotion recognition, it is thus plausible to also assume in-group advantages in emotional contagion. "Advantages" in this context can be understood with respect to the "adaptive utility" that emotional contagion supposedly has for groups and dyads according to HATFIELD and associates (HATFIELD/CACIOPPO/RAPSON 1992, p. 153). Interestingly, these advantages can possibly be further extended to encompass effects of recognition accuracy not only on the mimicking of facial expression, but also on the rapid and effortless association of facial expressions with conceptual and propositional knowledge of specific emotions, which is highly culture-specific (MARSH/ELFENBEIN/AMBADY 2003).

Taken together, these results draw a more fine-grained picture of emotional contagion in face to face interactions, for example in rituals. Thinking of DURKHEIM'S (1912) and COLLINS' (2004a) views on collective effervescence as a key component of rituals, this research points to the fact that their basic assumptions on the mechanisms and functions of emotional contagion are largely supported. On the other hand, research on the in-group advantage in recognizing emotions – as far as it can be extended to emotional contagion – specifies the conditions under which emotional contagion arises most effectively and has the

most pronounced functions and effects. Here, much the same reasoning can be applied as in the arguments on the elicitation of collective emotions outlined above. The more individuals share representational and motivational contents of appraisal, and the higher the degree of collective intentions, the higher the probability that collective emotions – in particular in the "We-mode" – are elicited. In other words, socio-cultural proximity can be considered a facilitator for the sharing of appraisal contents and the elicitation of collective emotions. Whether or not all individuals in a specific situation share the same emotion either in the "I-" or the "We-mode," the (additional) *transmission* of emotions between these individuals also works more effectively when they share a common socio-cultural background. The efficiency of transmission depends on the social relationship between expresser and observer in a face-to-face interaction.

Conclusion

This contribution has probed a number of almost "common sense" assumptions in theories on the role of collective emotions in rituals. First, it has investigated the key mechanisms underlying the elicitation of emotions in rituals. "Standard" sociological accounts of the elicitation of collective emotions in ritual contexts tend to make no specific assumptions on how exactly collective emotions arise and what the specific conditions for their elicitation are. They are rather quick, however, in alluding to the socio-cognitive effects collective emotions have, mainly with respect to increases in solidarity and social cohesion (DURKHEIM 1912, COLLINS 2004a). I have shown that the elicitation of collective emotions in rituals and similar social situations requires that a number of preconditions have to be fulfilled, and that it is far from being a process that is initiated simply by a number of actors gathering mutually and performing ritual practices.

First, I have shown that – from the perspective of emotion elicitation in individuals – the alignment and congruence of the cognitive underpinnings of emotion elicitation, i.e., the representational and motivational components of appraisals (*shared appraisal contents*), is a key factor in facilitating collective emotions. Given that individuals are part of the same situation and according to modern appraisal theories, only alignment of these appraisal components and converging appraisal results can lead to the elicitation of similar (or even identical) emotions. I have thus argued that congruence of appraisal contents is in some way comparable to the idea of a "collective conscience" mentioned by DURKHEIM (1912), but in this perspective would rather be a *precondition* of collective emotions as opposed to an *effect* of collective emotions, as suggested by DURKHEIM.

Second, I have very briefly illustrated selected philosophical approaches to collective emotions. These approaches suggest differentiating summative and non-summative accounts of collective emotions. It has been argued that summative accounts, in which a collective emotion is seen as the "sum of its parts," capture the reasoning behind collective emotions based on shared appraisal contents and reflect the concept of "I-mode" collective emotions. On the other hand, non-summative accounts propose collective emotions based on "We-mode" intentionality, which are most probably qualitatively and functionally different from "I-mode" collective emotions. We-mode collective emotions are also different from "group-based" emotions in that they do not primarily rely on mechanisms of social identification, but rather on a form of strong collective intentionality. It has been proposed that these "strong" forms of collective emotions do in fact facilitate the socio-cognitive and solidarity-enhancing effects of rituals more effectively than weaker forms of collective emotions.

Third, I have argued that the same reasoning behind the elicitation of emotions can be applied to the transmission of affect in rituals. Here it has been shown that the emergence of collective effervescence and emotional contagion – as proposed by the "standard" accounts – primarily relies on mechanisms of the facial expression of emotion and the ability to rapidly

and effortlessly recognize or "decode" these expressions. It has become clear that the basic arguments marshaled by, for instance, DURKHEIM and COLLINS, are perfectly in line with modern accounts of emotional contagion. In reviewing the extant literature, however, it has also become clear that evidence indicates that the mechanisms of emotional contagion are dependent on the social and cultural proximity of individuals. Hence there is reason to believe that the proposed in-group advantage of emotion recognition also applies to emotional contagion and makes it more effective within pre-existing groups than across the boundaries of, for example, ethnic, national, or regional groups.

In conclusion, the reviewed literature and the arguments presented suggest that a high degree of sharing of representational and motivational contents of appraisal, which is supposed to be a consequence of close social and cultural proximity, facilitates the elicitation of both "I-mode" and "We-mode" collective emotions, and in addition enhances emotional contagion between members of pre-existing close-knit groups as compared to more fragile groups. With respect to collective emotions in rituals and their supposed socio-cognitive effects, in particular their potential to increase solidarity and cohesion, it can be concluded that they are more likely and more effective in groups that exhibit a fair amount of shared appraisal contents and collective intentions. What we thus find here can be termed the "Matthew-effect of collective emotions": Groups that are already close-knit, cohesive, and exhibit a high degree of shared cognitive components of emotion elicitation profit most from collective emotions and their social functions.

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