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Micro Social Orders*

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There is no greater honor for me than receiving the Cooley-Mead Award, in part because it comes from my core reference group, people who know my work well, and in part because it is named for two scholars—George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley—whose work heavily influenced my early interest in sociology when I was an undergraduate. Receiving an award in their name is an indescribable experience. There also is an interesting coincidence in the location for this award, here in Anaheim: 40 years ago this past June, I graduated from Huntington Beach High School.

I did not reach this point alone. I have had the benefit of excellent colleagues and coauthors: Andy Michener, who taught me how to conduct theory-driven experimental research; Sam Bacharach, with whom I developed the nonzero-sum concept of power that is still central to the work; George Youngs, with whom I did some of my early coalition work; Rebecca Ford, with whom I theorized and tested deterrence and conflict spiral theories; Jeongkoo Yoon, with whom I developed and tested the theory of relational cohesion; and Shane Thye, with whom we have broadened the theorizing and extended it to the network level. Several students over the years also have made important contributions to my work, too many to thank properly. I was very fortunate to have a supportive environment and excellent colleagues at the University of Iowa for my 23 years on the faculty there. I would like to acknowledge in particular the group of social psychologists

who gathered at Iowa in the late 1980s: Willie Jasso, Michael Lovaglia, Barry Markovsky, Cecilia Ridgeway, and Henry Walker. I don't believe it is an accident that this is the period when I first began thinking about "micro social orders," the topic of my Cooley-Mead presentation. I also have been very fortunate that Cornell University and its School of Industrial and Labor Relations have provided an intellectually rich and equally supportive context for me to continue to develop these ideas over the last eight years.

Below is a paper that I presented in synopsis at the Cooley-Mead ceremony, held in Anaheim on August 19, 2001. It extrapolates and generalizes from our work on emotion and exchange, and sets the stage for further theoretical work now under way with my colleagues Shane Thye and Jeongkoo Yoon.

A final note. I was in New York City on the morning of September 11, 2001, working on the final version of this paper, when sirens drew me to the roof of a building in Manhattan to see what was wrong. In the days that followed, I finished the last version of this paper, but not with my usual concentration and focus. Hopefully, it doesn't show.

MICRO SOCIAL ORDERS

In this paper I theorize how normal, everyday emotions strengthen or weaken "micro social orders." I draw on the "theory of relational cohesion" (see Lawler and Yoon 1996, 1998), general analyses of emotion and exchange (Lawler and Thye 1999), and a forthcoming "affect theory of social exchange" (Lawler 2001a). These theoretical efforts contain the seeds of a more general analysis of micro social orders that highlights the role of emotions and feelings. My aim here is to develop these implications.

A micro social order is defined as a recurrent pattern of interaction among a set of actors, from which they come to perceive themselves as a unit (i.e., a group) and to

*The author expresses appreciation to Jeongkoo Yoon and Shane Thye for their comments and suggestions on this paper, and also to the provost of Cornell University for facilitating this work in a variety of ways. The research underlying this program of research has been supported by three grants from the National Science Foundation over the last 10 years. Direct correspondence to Edward J. Lawler, School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850; e-mail ejl3@cornell.edu.

develop feelings about that unit. A micro social order, in Berger and Luckmann's (1966) terms, is a "third force," something perceived as outside the individual actors and to which they orient their behaviors. Such orders could be relations, groups, networks, organizations, ethnic communities, and the like. Micro social orders have behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions. They entail recurrent exchange, shared perceptions of an affiliation with others, and positive or negative affect about that affiliation. We interrelate these features of a micro social order in an effort to understand the social exchange bases for cohesion and solidarity (see Lawler and Yoon 1996).

With such a conception of micro social orders, it seems clear that many extant sociological approaches to social psychology incorporate a micro-social-orders theme. The rubric of "micro social orders," in fact, may be more descriptive of sociological social psychology than are many prevailing characterizations. For example, expectation states theory shows how stable, recurrent patterns of influence occur and are sustained (Berger, Conner, and Fisek 1974); status construction theory suggests how and when cultural beliefs about worth are imported to social encounters and shape power and prestige orders (Ridgeway 2000). Identity theories explain how stable self-other definitions develop and are sustained (Burke 1991; Heise 1979; Stryker 1980); social identity research demonstrates when group categories or memberships foster cooperative relationships within groups and hostile relations to outsiders (Brewer 1993; Tajfel and Turner 1986). Conversational analyses reveal subtle taken-for-granted realities that underlie micro social orders (Maynard and Clayman 1991). A variety of structure and personality research suggests how structures shape patterns of behavior in social units—for example, how the organization of work influences behavior and interaction in and outside the workplace (Kohn and Slomczynski 1990). Finally, exchange network research reveals the effects of network structure on the accumulation of benefits or resources across positions and occupants (Willer 1999). My argument about micro social orders suggests that fundamental prop-

erties of social interaction engender emotional effects on actors, and that these effects may be an integral but unrecognized component of the phenomena studied by several traditions of social psychology.

My argument interweaves three basic ideas. First, social interaction is joint activity—that is, action that is undertaken with one or more others. The form, degree, and content of the joint activity may vary, but jointness is essential to social interaction. Second, joint activities have emotional effects on individuals engaged in them. This was a key point of Durkheim's analysis of religion in preliterate societies and is amplified by Collin's (1981, 1989) theory of interaction ritual chains. Third, in the context of joint activities, individual emotions are attributed in part to social units (see Lawler 2001a; Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2000; Lawler and Yoon 1996). Micro social orders ostensibly have an emotional foundation insofar as social interaction entails jointness and produces emotional effects, and insofar as the emotions are attributed to the relevant social unit (e.g., a relation, group, network, organization, or society).

The paper is organized into three sections: an overview of our theory and research on relational cohesion (Lawler and Thye 1999; Lawler and Yoon 1996), a summary of core ideas from the forthcoming "affect theory of social exchange" (Lawler 2001a); and implications for micro social orders.

THE THEORY OF RELATIONAL COHESION

Relational cohesion theory links individual emotions arising from exchange to relational or group commitments. It assumes that emotions produced by exchange have a source ambiguous to actors; and because actors want to reproduce positive feelings and avoid negative feelings, they engage in cognitive work to understand the source of their emotions. The link to the relation or group is based on the argument that actors, under certain conditions, interpret their individual feelings with reference to their relational or group affiliations. As a result, they develop stronger affective attachments to relationships or groups that they perceive as

a context for or cause of positive feelings, and they form weaker affective attachments to those which they perceive as a context for or cause of negative feelings.¹

Relational cohesion theory emphasizes *commitment to exchange relations*. Emerson (1981) defined an exchange relation as a series of repetitive transactions between the same two actors over time. Some degree of repetition or recurrence is built into this definition. We argue that the *degree* of repetition (exchange frequency) affects the perceived cohesion of and commitment to the exchange relation, through the emotions generated by successful or unsuccessful exchange. Commitment is defined as an attachment to a social unit: relation, group, organization, community, or society (Kanter 1968). Three forms of commitment behavior have been studied in our research: *stay behavior* (continuing to exchange in the current relationship despite equal or better alternatives), *unilateral gifts* (token, symbolic expressions of friendship), and *cooperation under risk* (i.e., in a social dilemma). These correspond to Rosabeth Kanter's distinctions between continuance, affective, and normative commitment.

Figure 1 presents the theory in the form of a path model. The theory specifies a series of indirect steps, through which the structure of power dependence (Emerson 1972) generates commitment. Power dependencies determine frequencies of exchange across a set of prospective relations. The theory contends that these will be greatest in structural

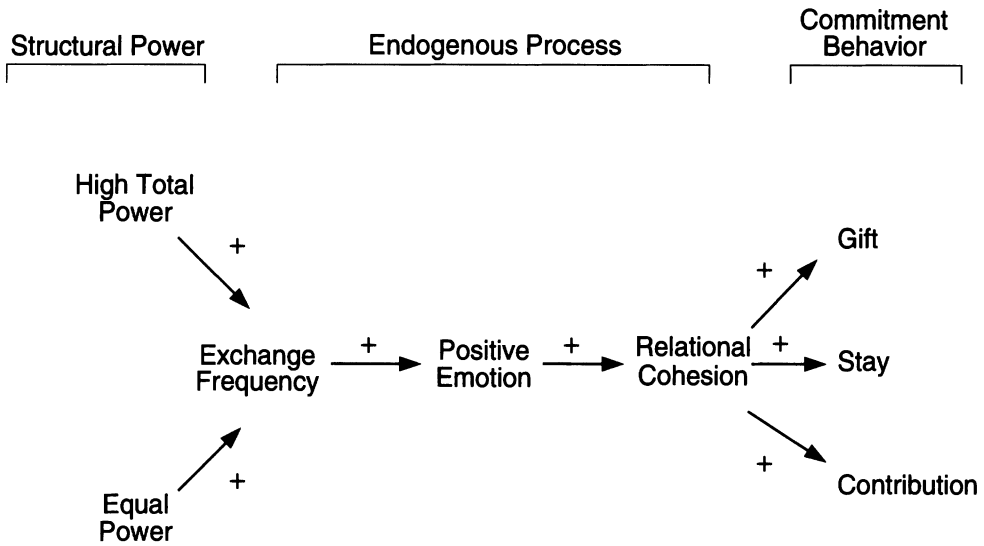
relationships entailing greater mutual dependence or interdependence because the incentives to exchange are stronger in such relations; moreover, exchange frequencies will be greater under equal than of unequal power, primarily because equity or justice issues tend not to complicate the exchange agenda in such cases. Exchange frequencies are important to this process because of the emotions and feelings produced by repeated exchange. If the emotions are positive, they generate perceptions of a salient, unifying relation, which then produces various forms of commitment behavior. If the emotions are negative, they generate less perceived cohesion and more fragmented relations. A noteworthy implication is that pockets of cohesion should develop in structural relations where exchange occurs more frequently. Moreover, these relations tend to be perceived as possessing more value than relations with alternative partners (see Lawler and Thye 1999; Lawler and Yoon 1993, 1996, 1998).

The central and unique feature of relational cohesion theory is the endogenous process—*exchange to emotion to cohesion*—that links social structure to commitment behavior. The theory specifies a process or sequence of steps through which structural conditions generate commitment behavior involving both emotional and cognitive elements. This endogenous process distinguishes relational cohesion theory from other theoretical analyses of commitment in exchange relations (Cook and Emerson 1984; Kollock 1994; Tallman, Gray, and Leik 1991).

Empirical Tests

To test the theory, we constructed an experimental setting in which two actors had the opportunity to exchange repeatedly across time. The actors represented different organizations, one a seller and one a buyer. In each episode of negotiated exchange, actors could exchange up to five offers and counteroffers to reach an agreement. If an agreement was not reached, their payoffs for that episode were determined by hypothetical negotiations with an alternative actor. The power conditions were manipulated (high versus low mutual dependence and equal

¹ Two emotions are analyzed by relational cohesion theory: pleasure/satisfaction and interest/excitement. The difference is between feeling satisfied and contented and feeling energized and uplifted. These reflect the two dimensions associated with the circumplex model of emotion (Larsen and Diener 1992; Watson and Tellegen 1985), namely pleasure and arousal. In the case of social exchange, when such exchange is successful, actors ostensibly feel pleasure/satisfaction about the results achieved and interest/excitement about the implications for future exchanges with the same partner. When it is not successful, they feel displeasure and lack of motivation. In our research, pleasure/satisfaction consistently has mediated the effects of repetitive exchange on cohesion and commitment, whereas interest/excitement has exerted its effects primarily with more challenging or difficult exchange tasks (Lawler et al. 2000; Lawler and Yoon 1993).



Note: Reprinted from Lawler and Yoon (1996).

Figure 1. Relational Cohesion Theory

versus unequal dependence) by varying the quality of the alternative available. The primary variables measured were the rate or frequency of exchange, self-reports of feelings about the negotiations, and perceptions of their relationship with the other. Also, in the last phase (about the last one-quarter of the experiment), a new option or choice was introduced to measure commitment: either stay behavior (the alternative was made equal to the focal relation, or a little better), token unilateral gifts, or participation in a new joint venture with the payoff structure of a prisoner's dilemma.

In this context, several experiments have tested part or all aspects of the theoretical model displayed in Figure 1 (Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2000, 2001; Lawler and Yoon 1993, 1996, 1998; Lawler et. al 1995). The results support the basic sequence of steps specified in the theoretical model. Equal or high total power generates more frequent exchange, and the predicted endogenous process—exchange frequency to emotion to relational cohesion—is affirmed consistently. The research has revealed four conditions under which the endogenous emotional/affective process is likely to be strongest:

(1) *If total (average) power in the relationship is high.* Higher total power implies greater interdependence and stronger incen-

tives to exchange for each actor. Under these conditions, successful exchange generates stronger positive feelings and greater cohesion and commitment behavior (Lawler and Yoon 1996). Moreover, the evidence shows effects for total power even when actors lack knowledge of each other's alternatives. The effects of total power are not contingent on awareness of the power conditions (Lawler et al. 1995).

(2) *If actors' relative power is equal.* Equal power promotes a stronger initial sense of common interest and avoids the problems of negotiating the relevance or impact of power differences on relative outcomes. For relative power, awareness of each other's alternative enhances the power effects.

(3) *If exchange produces positive emotions.* An application of relational cohesion theory to a four-actor network (i.e., a stem), in which both equal and unequal power relations form, indicated that unequal power did not produce positive emotions; because of this, the endogenous process did not operate (Lawler and Yoon 1998). This affirms the critical role of mediating emotions to the commitment process.

(4) *If exchanges are voluntaristic.* Repetitive exchange among actors who choose one another freely as exchange part-

ners produces a stronger endogenous process than if the exchange partnerships are involuntary (Lawler et al. 2001). This was shown in an experiment with a four-actor box network, in which two actors (A and B) preferred to exchange with each other, while the other two (C and D) preferred to exchange with A or B rather than with each other. The structural conditions made it likely that A and B would attain their most strongly preferred partner, thereby forming a “voluntaristic” exchange relation, whereas C and D would form an exchange relation with each other that was “structurally induced.” The empirical results indicated that the emotional/affective process was stronger in the voluntaristic (A-B) relationship than in the structurally induced (C-D) relationship (Lawler et al. 2001).

A recent study examined the group formation effects of multi-actor “productive exchange,” and tested for both mediating uncertainty reduction and emotion effects (Lawler et al. 2000). The endogenous process of relational cohesion theory operated for stay behavior and for gift-giving forms of commitment behavior, but not for investment in a new joint venture, which took the form of a Nperson prisoner’s dilemma. In addition, the emotional-affective process was the exclusive intervening pathway to stay behavior and to gift giving, whereas uncertainty reduction was the exclusive intervening pathway to cooperation in the Nperson social dilemma. The latter can be construed as a trust process, grounded in the partner’s perceived predictability. The implication is that, under some conditions (e.g., multi-actor exchange), “dual processes” of commitment may operate in parallel: emotion-based and trust-based. Given that the emotional-affective process operates independently of uncertainty reduction, an important question arises: When are emotion-based effects on social order likely to occur? We return to this question shortly.

Overall, theory and research on relational cohesion affirm the role of emotions and feelings in commitment processes without excluding or diminishing the role of uncertainty reduction (Kollock 1994). The message of our work on relational cohesion is threefold. First, repetition or frequency is a behav-

ioral foundation for cohesive exchange relations because of the emotional effects of repeated success or failure at exchange. When emotions are positive, cohesion is strengthened; when emotions are negative, cohesion is weakened. Second, emotions arising from exchange generate efforts by individual actors to understand the source of such emotions. Third, whereas structural conditions (power dependence) unleash these processes, structures exert indirect rather than direct effects on commitment behavior. We now examine the “affect theory of social exchange” (Lawler 2001a) which specifies conditions under which social exchange promotes order and solidarity at the micro level.

AN AFFECT THEORY OF SOCIAL EXCHANGE

The affect theory of social exchange is designed to complement relational cohesion theory rather than displace or supercede it. This new theory takes up several theoretical tasks: (1) It analyzes the effects of different forms of exchange—negotiated, reciprocal, productive, and generalized—on the micro solidarity. (2) It specifies the mechanism through which exchange makes individual actors “feel good” or “feel bad.” (3) It distinguishes several social objects—self, other, and social unit—that could be targets for the emotion. (4) It explains the conditions under which emotions are directed at social units rather than at self or other, and analyzes the interrelationships of self-other and social-unit attributions of emotion. In this paper I emphasize the last three points. (For analysis of structure effects, see Lawler 2001a.)

In the affect theory, the emotions from exchange are construed explicitly as immediate, involuntary, internal reinforcements that occur when an exchange is consummated. They shape behavior like any other reinforcements, except that these stimuli are internal to the actor and constitute what Bandura (1997) and others call “self reinforcements.” The reinforcing or punishing nature of the emotions accounts for their motivational properties: specifically, why actors tend to act in ways that reproduce positive and avoid negative feelings. In the theo-

Table 1. Emotions Directed at Each Object

Social Object	Valence of Emotion	
	Positive	Negative
Task	Pleasantness	Unpleasantness
Self	Pride	Shame
Other	Gratitude	Anger
Social Unit	Affective Attachment	Affective Detachment

Note: Reprinted from Lawler (2001a).

ry, this operant notion is joined with a decidedly non-operant notion: that actors strive to interpret the source of their emotions, and respond emotionally to their interpretations.

The theory distinguishes global, relatively diffuse emotions from specific emotions that develop when actors interpret these global feelings. This comparison is adapted from Weiner's (1986) attribution theory of emotion. He argues that "primitive" or global emotions result from interaction outcomes rather than from actors' interpretations or attributions, whereas specific emotions are a result of interpretation (attribution) rather than interaction outcomes *per se*. In the affect theory of social exchange, "feeling good" (pleasantness) and "feeling bad" (unpleasantness) are the global emotions; the specific emotions of particular relevance are pride/shame in self, gratitude/anger toward the other, and affective attachment/detachment from one or more social units. Table 1 presents the emotion framework used by the affect theory of exchange (Lawler 2001a).²

The central problem is to explain when each of the three social objects assumed for social exchange situations—self, other, social unit—is perceived as a prime source of glob-

al emotions. The answer of the affect theory is concise and straightforward: *It depends on the degree to which the exchange entails a joint task*. The greater the jointness of the exchange task, the greater the likelihood that actors will attribute their individual emotions to the social unit—a relation, group, or network. My theory identifies both a structural and a perceptual property of joint tasks, which account for this.

The structural property is the degree to which individual contributions to task success or failure are separable or distinguishable. This idea is taken from Oliver Williamson's (1985:245–47) analysis of governance structures, which he uses to account for "relational teams" or collaborative work arrangements. Williamson argues that if contributions are not distinguishable, workers have no way of ascribing credit or blame for individual accomplishments, nor for responding to each other's contributions. Under these conditions, collective responsibility and joint credit are more salient to actors than individual responsibility, credit, or blame. According to the affect theory of social exchange (Lawler 2001a), this property (non-separability) varies across the different forms of exchange and accounts for differential propensities toward solidarity.³

The perceptual property is the degree to which a joint task generates a sense of shared responsibility for the results and for the emotions produced by these results. The argument is that if repetitive exchange generates

² The conceptual scheme linking particular emotions to particular objects incorporates a standard set of emotions: pride, shame, anger, and gratitude. I make no claim for comprehensiveness, but rather choose emotions that seem to be associated clearly with only one of the three social objects. Other emotions also could be relevant, such as guilt, envy, and resentment. The particular emotions of relevance are probably context-specific. Thus, in generalizing my theory, the object to which an emotion is directed is more important than the particular emotion of relevance. Predictions of the theory should apply, for example, where envy rather than anger is the most important other-directed emotion, or where guilt rather than shame is the relevant self-directed emotion.

³ Social exchange theorists identify four forms of exchange: negotiated, reciprocal, productive, and generalized (Emerson 1981, Molm 1994; Molm and Cook 1995). The theory predicts the strongest emotion-based solidarity in productive exchange and the weakest in generalized exchange; negotiated and reciprocal exchanges fall between. (For comparisons of negotiated with reciprocal exchange, see Lawler 2001a; Molm, Peterson, and Takahashi 1999.)

a sense of shared responsibility among the actors, they perceive their individual feelings as also jointly produced. If global emotions of pleasure or displeasure are jointly produced, it is a fairly small theoretical step to presume that actors also are prone to attribute these feelings to the larger relation or group affiliation that frames and organizes their interaction. In sum, the theory connects joint tasks, common emotional experiences, perceptions of shared responsibility, and social-unit attributions for emotions felt.⁴

A key threat to the theorized process, however, is self-serving attributions: that is, people's well-known tendency to take credit for good results or events and to blame bad results on the situation or on other people (e.g., Weiner 1986). A perception of shared responsibility should mitigate this tendency because, under nonseparability, actor's find it harder to associate the collective results with particular individuals (self or other) and because jointly produced emotions suggest a common, collective cause. Self-serving attributions should dominate if the joint tasks involve low nonseparability and, correspondingly, a low sense of shared responsibility. Social-unit attributions should dominate if joint tasks entail high nonseparability and perceptions of shared responsibility. In this manner, the affect theory of exchange explains how and when global emotions arising from exchange promote or undermine person-to-group attachments.

To this point, I have focused on person-to-group attachments. Yet it also is important to ask "What role do person-to-person attachments play?" The affect theory of social exchange can form the basis for an

answer. Specifically, global emotions are a linchpin of person-to-group ties; specific emotions, directed at self and other, are a linchpin of person-to-person (interpersonal) ties. Recall that Parsons (1951) considered person-to-group and person-to-person ties as fundamental dimensions for analyzing social order; this point was made more recently in social identity theory and research (Tajfel and Turner 1986). The affect theory of exchange interconnects and interweaves these two dimensions, an indication that emotional/affective processes are a bonding agent creating or breaking person-to-group and person-to-person ties.

Success at exchange should produce pride in self and/or gratitude toward the other; failure to exchange should produce shame in self and/or anger toward the other. The theory predicts that under conditions of nonseparability and shared responsibility, pride in self and gratitude toward the other are related positively; in other words, actors can feel gratitude toward the other without diminishing their own pride or taking credit from themselves and vice versa. Joint tasks and shared responsibility generate joint credit and collective responsibility. The implication is that repeated success at an exchange task may strengthen an exchange relation, not only because global feelings are attributed to the relation, but also because actors feel *both* pride in self and gratitude toward the other. Nonseparability, in the context of repeated failure, weakens relations because of the combination of "shame in self" and "anger toward the other," although not necessarily to the same degree as high separability would weaken the social unit. Regardless of the valence of emotions, person-to-person and person-to-group dimensions are mutually reinforcing and are conjoined under conditions of nonseparability.

The link between person-to-person and person-to-group ties can be explained in part by the fact that joint tasks connect experiences of collective and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy exerts important psychological and social psychological effects on actors (Deci 1975; Gecas 1989; Izard 1991). The affect theory implies that tasks which combine structural nonseparability with perceptions of shared responsibility also promote a sense

⁴ My theory applies both to joint tasks that have their source in crisis and to those with a source in positive events. Broadly, the backdrop for the task or activity may range from strong constraints to unusual opportunities (Giddens 1984), from negative to positive exogenous events. My theory does not address the type or source of the problem per se; I focus on the social structure in which a "problem" is addressed and on the jointness of the activities undertaken to deal with it. Crisis and associated negative emotions may bring people together around common tasks; so might opportunities for joint benefit. The theory posits that a common process occurs in response to success or failure at dealing with the tasks, whether the source is positive or negative.

that self-efficacy is “socially mediated”—that is, contingent on collective efficacy. Global emotions reflect an experience of collective efficacy: for example, the ability to work successfully with one or more others on a joint task and make something happen. Specific emotions reflect actors’ interpretation of their own role in producing these results. If they take full credit for themselves, they feel pride in self but no gratitude toward the other—that is, they make a self-serving attribution. A sense of shared responsibility allows pride in self and gratitude toward the other to occur in tandem.

My overall conclusion is this: insofar as collective and self-efficacy are intertwined in exchange tasks, so are global and specific emotional experiences of actors, and so are person-to-group and person-to-person attachments. The affect theory of exchange suggests the conditions under which collective and self-efficacy are intertwined, and indicates the consequences for micro order and solidarity.

The interconnections of person-to-group and person-to-person ties in the theory are elaborated in a recent paper in which I apply the affect theory of social exchange to the question of how and when “collective identities” become salient and intertwined with “role-based identities” (Lawler 2001b). Collective identities are shared beliefs about person-to-group affiliations that emerge from interaction concerning joint tasks or activities. Role identities are organized around structural positions or locations with associated cultural definitions (Stryker 1980). Role identities entail definitions of “me” for each actor, whereas collective identities entail definitions of the “we” for actors (Thoits and Virshup 1995). My theory predicts that the most salient identities (i.e., identities likely to be enacted in a given social situation) are those which actors perceive as the strongest and most reliable sources of positive emotional experiences. These can be collective identities (if perceptions of shared responsibility are strongest), role-based structural identities (if perceptions of individual responsibility are strongest), or interrelated role and collective identities (if actors perceive both shared and individual responsibility). In the latter case,

global feelings would generate group attachments, and individuals would feel both pride in self and gratitude toward the other (see Lawler 2001b). Collective and role identities are thereby conjoined.

In sum, the broad implication of the affect theory is that exchange structures produce joint activities—that is, repetitive exchanges among the same actors. These joint activities exert positive or negative emotional effects on individuals; they generate global emotions or feelings. The actors attribute these emotions to relations, groups, networks, or other social units that bring them together; this occurs to the degree to which the task entails nonseparability of individual contributions and thereby enhances actors’ sense of shared responsibility. Under such conditions, positive feelings about self (pride) and other (gratitude) also occur and are interconnected with person-to-group attachments. The effects of social structure on micro solidarity are indirect and are mediated by these emotional consequences of exchange.⁵

MICRO SOCIAL ORDERS

Broad implications for micro social order are developed in two ways: first, by abstracting the core ideas above in order to show how they can be extended beyond the focus on social exchange; second, by placing relational cohesion theory in the context of other approaches that emphasize the role of repetitive or recurrent interaction in micro social orders. Below I suggest that the emotional-affective processes of our theorizing can integrate different explanations for micro social order.

Abstracting the Theory

The theory can be abstracted by recasting key terms more broadly. *Social interaction*

⁵ On the basis of these propositions about joint tasks, the affect theory of exchange offers several hypotheses about structural effects on micro social orders. Aside from analyzing the different forms of exchange (negotiated, etc.), the theory can predict when networks are likely to evolve into groups and when attachments to relations are stronger than to larger social units—that is, networks or groups. (For details, see Lawler 2001a).

can be substituted for *social exchange*; *joint activities* can be substituted for *joint tasks*; and the activities or tasks involved in an episode of social interaction can vary along the same structural and perceptual dimensions as do exchange tasks—that is, in non-separability and shared responsibility. The results (benefits) of social interaction produce global emotional responses: successful interaction makes them feel good and unsuccessful interaction makes them feel bad (also see Collins 1981). Under the conditions specified by the affect theory, social-unit attributions for these emotions occur. On the broadest level, the fundamental proposition about micro solidarity is captured by a simple causal chain, portrayed in Figure 2.

The upshot is that social interaction involves implicit or explicit joint activities based in a social structure, and these generate benefits for actors. These activities may involve spending a pleasant evening with friends, deciding what cultural event to attend, dividing child care responsibilities in a household, and so forth. Emotional experiences—feeling good or feeling bad—follow from these activities. Although these are not under the actors' direct control, the actors can control them to some extent by understanding the situational conditions under which they occur and by influencing those conditions, or engaging in appropriate approach/avoidance behaviors. These everyday emotions and feelings in social interaction are not only internal reinforcements but also internal signals about the course of social interaction, akin to those analyzed in affect control theory (Heise 1979). According to my theory, they are interpreted in collective terms under specified conditions. Moreover, through the theorized process, successful interaction strengthens the emotional basis of both interpersonal and person-to-group ties.

Integrating Ideas on Micro Solidarity

The idea that repetitive or recurrent interaction is a basis for order, cohesion, or solidarity at the micro level is an underlying theme across a wide variety of theoretical traditions and perspectives. Homans (1961), Berger and Luckmann (1966), Randall Collins (1981), Cook and Emerson (1984), Molm (1994), and Dennis Wrong (1995), for example, incorporate this theme. The relevant literature contains four variations on the theme; these, in turn, represent complementary explanations for the social-order effects of recurrent interaction.

One class of explanations is *social constructionism*. Berger and Luckmann (1966) theorize that “all actions repeated once or more tend to be habitualized to some degree” (p. 57). Actors interpret and ascribe larger meaning to the fact that they interact with the same actors repeatedly; interpretations of habitualization generate “reciprocal typifications”—that is, consensual definitions of the overarching relationship. In this process, the relation or group becomes an object for actors—a “third force” beyond self and other in the social context—and actors orient themselves to this object.

Cognitively based expectations of the other are a second type of explanation—that is, the ability to anticipate and predict the other's preferences, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies. Repetitive interaction creates mutual knowledge that enables each actor to form reliable expectations of how the other will behave and respond, and to adjust their behavior in advance. Examples of this approach include the uncertainty-reduction explanation for commitment (Kollock 1994) as well as trust explanations, where trust is defined as an expectation of cooperation (Pruitt and Kimmel 1977; Yamagishi 1995). The overall point is that actors choose to continue interaction with partners with whom they expect mutual cooperation.

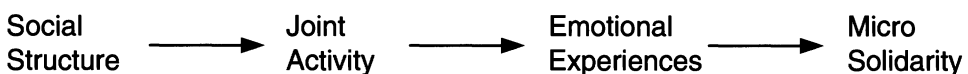


Figure 2. Basic Causal Sequence, Micro Solidarity

Normative-based expectations are a third class of explanations for micro social orders. Normative expectations can be imposed exogenously or generated endogenously; in either case, they accord relationships a moral/ethical legitimation. Role theory (Turner 1978) and structural identity theory (Stryker 1980) exemplify this type of explanation. In Stryker's theory, self-other definitions are tied to roles embedded in a social structure, and commitment to those roles depends on the salience of the associated identities. Roles invoke culturally meaningful "names" for actors, and normative expectations are associated with those names. Actors call upon these to guide their own behavior and to anticipate others' behavior, but in the course of social interaction, they also refine or reshape their identities and related expectations. Normative expectations are partly negotiated; thus they are both exogenous and endogenous (see Stryker 1980; Turner 1978).

A fourth class of explanations is the *emotional/affective*. Following Durkheim (1915), Collins's (1981) theory of interaction ritual chains posits explicitly that recurrent social interaction is the most fundamental basis for social order at both macro and micro levels. He ties this idea to the emotional aspects of interaction (i.e., feelings of confidence and uplift). Collins theorizes that social interaction strengthens group solidarity particularly

when actors have a common focus of which they are aware and when they experience common emotions or feelings that grow stronger over time (Collins 1981, 1989). Emotional experiences in interaction make group memberships more salient and more real to actors; as a result, actors begin to perceive a moral obligation to one another. The theory of relational cohesion builds on several elements in Collins's theory of interaction ritual chains.

These four explanations for the impact of repetitive or recurrent interaction on relations and groups can be construed as analytically distinct and complementary pathways to micro social order. Figure 3 portrays these paths. One implication of this model is that micro order or solidarity will be strongest if (1) the relation or group is salient as a third force (reciprocal typification); (2) actors' cognitive expectations for each other foster interpersonal trust (i.e., expectations of cooperation); (3) normative expectations are associated with structural positions or roles; and (4) actors are attached affectively to the social unit.

The affect theory of social exchange goes further and suggests a fairly simple revision of this model. Specifically, global emotions are introduced as an intervening link between recurrent interaction and the other solidarity-producing phenomena (see Figure

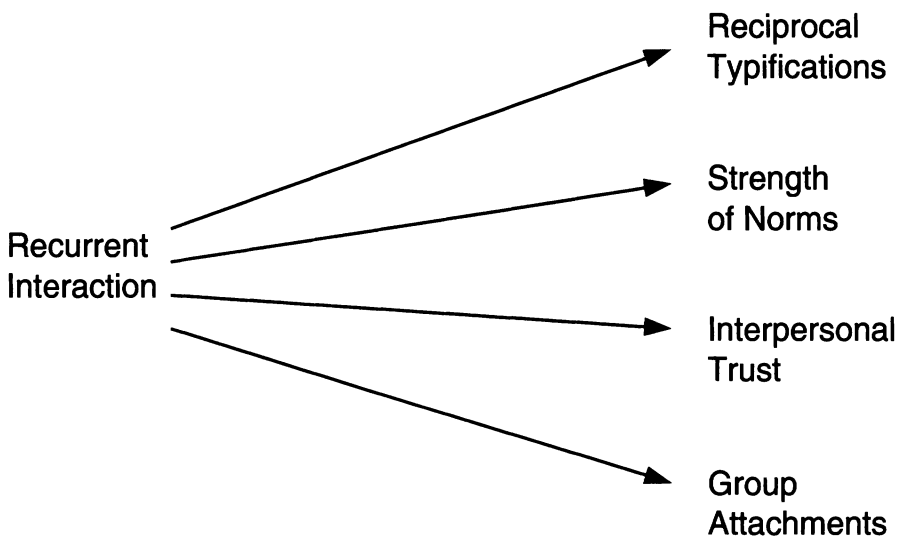


Figure 3. Bases of Micro Social Order

4). The reason for this temporal placement is that the global emotions are immediate, internal responses (Lawler 2001a). Social interaction does not necessarily produce these emotional consequences. Micro social orders can be generated and maintained on purely structural, normative, and cognitive bases, as portrayed in Figure 3, or they can be emotionally grounded, as portrayed by Figure 4.

My intent is to suggest an alternative theoretical view that treats the interaction-to-emotion link as a contingency. *If* interaction generates the emotional effects predicted by the affect theory of exchange, the result is an increase in the strength of the other pathways to micro solidarity. Nonseparability and shared responsibility are the underlying contingencies that determine whether the model displayed in Figure 3 or in Figure 4 captures the basis of micro social order in a particular situation. This reasoning leads to the following overarching proposition:

Micro social orders are emotion-based when social structures produce common activities and tasks that give prominence to shared responsibilities for collective results; micro social orders have other, nonemotional bases when the common activities and tasks give prominence to individual responsibilities for collective results.

A particularly important outcome or result is whether the social unit assumes

intrinsic value for individual actors. I argue that the predicted emotional effects are necessary if this is to happen; therefore such effects can distinguish expressive from instrumental group attachments. Micro social orders may be created and sustained through a variety of processes (see Figure 3), but whether these attachments are instrumental or expressive depends on the positive emotional consequences of the joint tasks. When the emotional process operates (Figure 4), micro social orders are expressive and are valued in themselves; when the emotional process does not operate (Figure 3), micro social orders are instrumental and are valued for the benefits they provide to individuals.

CONCLUSION

The theory of relational cohesion (Lawler et al. 2000; Lawler and Yoon 1996) and the affect theory of social exchange (Lawler 2001a) place an “emoting actor” at the center of exchange theorizing about order-related phenomena. Moreover, they identify an emotional dimension of social exchange that could be fundamental in micro social orders. By connecting the jointness of social activity with person-to-group attachments through emotional/affective processes, principles of these theories may apply to many social interactions in a wide variety of social contexts. Actors must be interdepen-

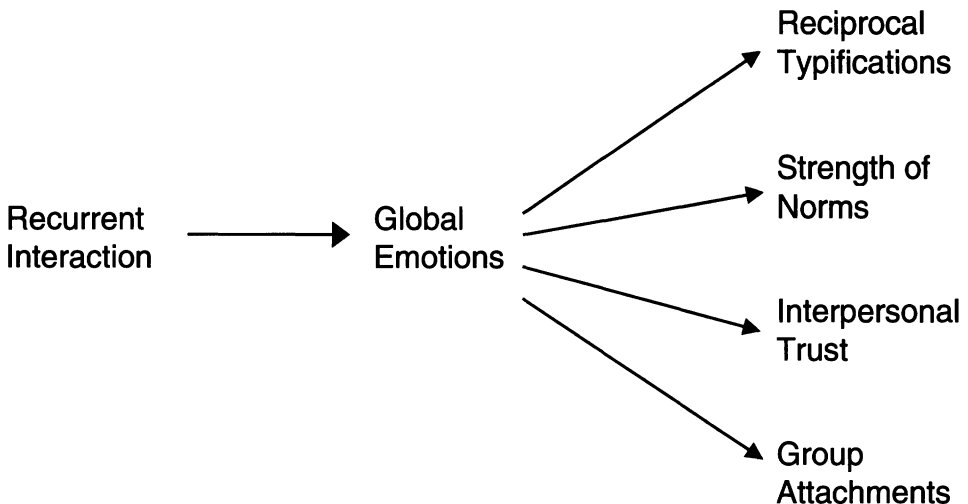


Figure 4. Emotions and Micro Social Order

dent, the interaction must generate benefits to actors, and emotions felt (as a result) must constitute internal reinforcements. Under such conditions, if the activities or tasks are high in "jointness" and if actors perceive a strong sense of shared responsibility, emotions felt individually are likely to be interpreted in collective terms. This lays the foundation for expressive ties to relations and groups.

The theoretical argument developed here could have implications for other research programs in social psychology and for the design of work groups, teams, committees, and task forces. I have shown how the argument might pull together extant ideas on interaction-to-order processes, and I have suggested how it can specify when role-based identities enhance collective identities, and vice versa (Stryker 2000).

To extend and apply these ideas to other areas of research or to practical issues of group design, we must answer certain questions. How are individuals' behaviors connected in the task? For example, how joint is their task? What inferences will actors make about the manner in which their behaviors are connected? For example, will they perceive shared or individual responsibility for collective results? Will they feel good when they achieve the task and bad when they don't? Will they make individual attributions or social-unit attributions for these emotions?

The answers to these questions will determine whether the principles outlined here are operative in particular social contexts. The main point is that joint activities, common emotions, shared responsibilities, and social-unit attributions together form the basis for micro social orders that take on expressive value.

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