

# Theorising the Relationship between Feeling and Doing: The Sociology of Personal life



Styles of theorising emotion &  
the relationship between 'feeling and doing'  
My interest in this through 'intimacy'  
Examples from recent work on personal life

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a 'genus covering enormously diverse and variable species'

Inclining to particular behaviour rather than compelling

“go with your gut feeling”

'a transformation of disposition to act'

'A subjective component of feelings, a physiological component of arousal or bodily sensation, and an impulsive or motor component of expressive gesture'

(Barbalet, 1998, 26–27 & 84)

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The symbolic interactionist and phenomenological traditions



Erving Goffman 1956  
“Embarrassment and social  
organisation” *American  
Journal of Sociology* 62,  
264–74



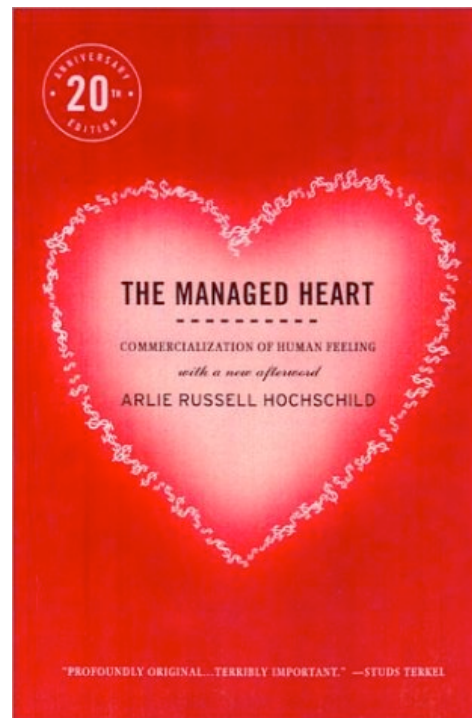
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Feeling rules

Deep acting

Shallow acting



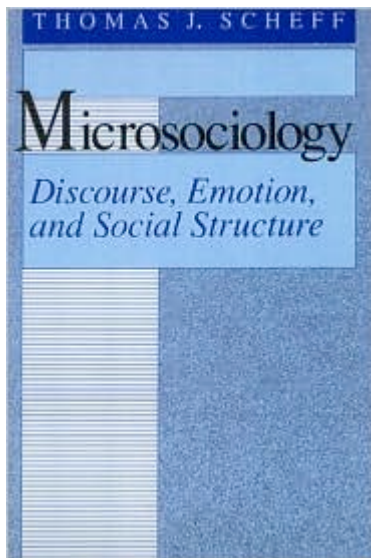
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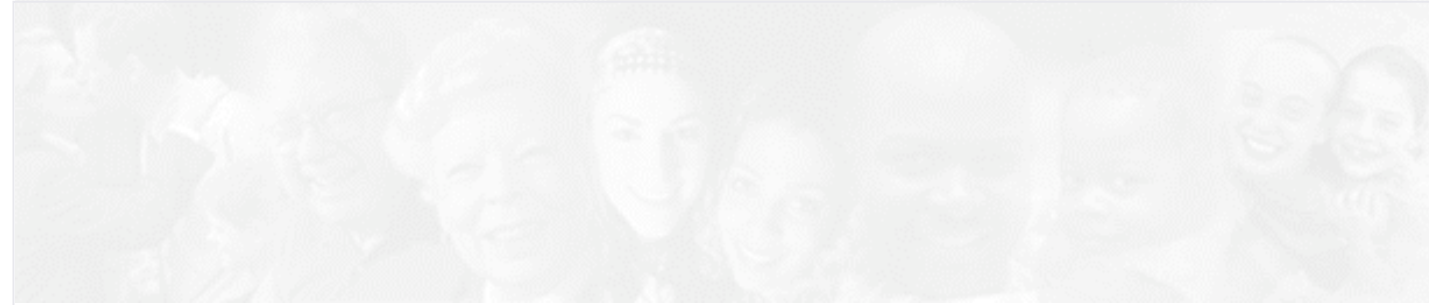
cathexis

the bond



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'Even sociologists fall in love; an exploration in the sociology of emotion',  
*Sociology*, 1993

'Love and intimacy: the gender division of emotion and 'emotion work': a neglected aspect of sociological discussion of

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*Sociology*, 1993

Gender and domestic work and emotional work  
Gender and 'intimacy'



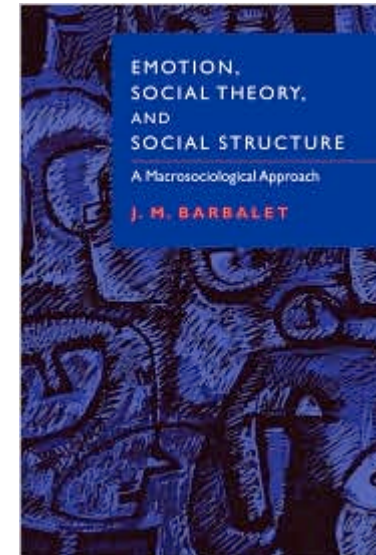
- Different possibilities of doing and the history of material inequalities more cause than consequence of assumptions about individual and gender differences in emotional character suiting people to different sorts of actions and assumptions about different emotional literacy of men and women

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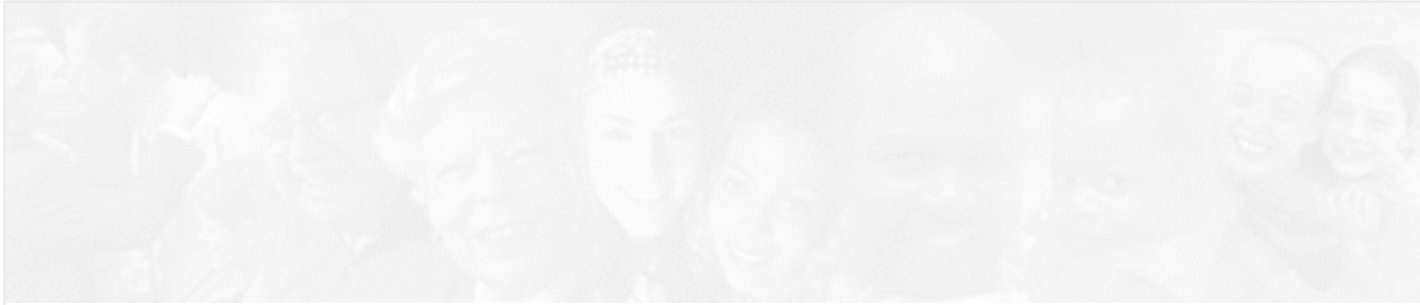
## J. M. Barbalet's critique of 'social constructionist'



- emotions are not simply an aspect of culture
- an approach which assumes emotions are shaped by culture can only acknowledge the emotions the prevailing cultural conventions designate as 'emotions'
- emotions have their own 'structural dynamics' e.g. shame at being angry



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- More recent attempts to map emotions as part of mapping relationships (Jacqui Gabb 2008 *Researching Intimacy in Families* Palgrave)

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Two contrasting examples of recent work on the impact of doing on feeling in personal life



-Wilcox, W.B. and Nock, S.L. 2006. 'What's Love Got To Do With It? Equality, Equity, Commitment and Women's Marital Quality'. *Social Forces* 84: 1321-1345.

-Pugh, Alison 2009 *On Longing and Belonging*

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Are their losses as well as gains in  
attention to emotion



Is it sensible to label complex packages of feeling and  
doing as 'an emotion'?

Well being

Resilience

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