Sociology of Emotions

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Culture and everyday experience

✓ Nonmaterial culture: knowledge, beliefs, customs, values, morals, and symbols that are shaped by members of a society and that distinguish the society from others (p. 80)

✓ Nonmaterial culture shapes how we experience everyday life including:
  • What diseases we experience (p. 111)
  • The sick role (p. 111-112)
  • How many sexes are there (p. 112)
  • What emotions we experience (p. 105-107)

The sociology of emotion

- Common-sense belief: Our emotions represent our “true” self, not social rules
- Sociology of emotions studies how culture shapes the way we feel
- Arlie Hochschild: pioneered sociology of emotions
- People do “emotion work”: attempting to make feelings correspond to feeling rules
  - Emotion evocation: bringing about desired feeling
  - Emotion suppression: stifling undesired feeling
- Organizations may demand emotion work from workers
Managing emotions in an animal shelter

Arnold Arluke (1994): participant observation in animal shelter

How can society both treat animals with affection and kill them?

Institution of animal shelter deals with this contradiction

Employees must accept premise that sometimes it is necessary to kill animals

Employees must be socialized to manage uncomfortable feelings about killing

Strategies of emotion management

1. Transforming shelter animals into virtual pets
   • Workers learned not to treat animals as pets
   • “Shelter mascots” served as surrogate pets

2. Focusing on the animal
   • Workers frame killing as eliminating suffering

3. Resisting and avoiding euthanasia
   • Workers may avoid killing animals they become attached to

4. Focusing on the owner
   • Workers feel angry at bad owners who are responsible for killing

5. Dealing with others
   • Workers avoid discussing job with outsiders
   • Workers neutralize criticism by defining as ill-informed