

1-1-1995

Emotion in Organizations

Glenn E. Nilson

Eastern Connecticut State University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/csr>

Recommended Citation

Nilson, Glenn E. (1995) "Emotion in Organizations," *Clinical Sociology Review*: Vol. 13: Iss. 1, Article 15.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/csr/vol13/iss1/15>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@WayneState. It has been accepted for inclusion in Clinical Sociology Review by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@WayneState.

more autonomous way enabling them to develop separate self-identities without adult intervention. Goode further notes that access and participation in kid culture is not guaranteed to all children in our society. He argues that because children with severe disabilities have so much of their sense of self-identity given to them by the adults who care for them, they are often denied access to kid culture. Therefore, they never learn to experience and organize their everyday world in the same way normal children do.

In Chapter Seven Goode discusses the conclusions of his research and summarizes what has happened to the deaf/blind mentally retarded children and their families in the twenty year period since his study was completed. Goode argues that research on disability is still in its early stages of development. Researchers need to spend more time directly observing and talking with people with disabilities, in order for them to fully understand the realities of their everyday world. The author concludes that in the last two decades some improvements have been made in the quality of services offered to severely disabled children and their families. However, there is still much that needs to be done to assist individuals with severe disabilities to achieve full integration into the mainstream of society.

In the opinion of this reviewer, Goode's book represents a passionate appeal for human understanding. The author's treatment of a difficult human issue is caring and sensitive. The narrative descriptions in the book are presented to readers in a clear, concise, and informative way. The book would make an excellent text for social scientists developing university level courses on psychosocial aspects of disability. The book would also make an excellent resource for special education and human service professionals working in community-based agencies providing needed educational and social services to children with severe disabilities and their families.

Emotion in Organizations, by Stephen Fineman. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993. 230 pp. \$55.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper. ISBN 0-8039-8734-X.

Glenn E. Nilson

Eastern Connecticut State University

Willimantic, Connecticut

Emotion in Organizations offers an important contribution to the study of emergent changes in the sociology of organizations, especially organizational change. It challenges the reader to reconceptualize certain

fundamental assumptions about organizations and organizational behavior, namely the occurrence and function of emotions in organizations. Although the current work is imbued with a strong focus on gender issues, it also manages to transcend that discussion and points up the important value addition from feminist sociology to the sociology of emotion. While the book does not attempt to set forth a single coherent new theory of emotions, relying instead on “. . . existing social constructionist and psychodynamic thought,” it offers a tantalizing challenge to theoretical formulation nevertheless. In short, this collection of essays leads the reader into an exciting frontier of important sociological challenge and growth.

Bureaucracy, the epitome of rational social behavior, has been assumed to be—and idealized as—a place without emotional interference. The book shows that this idealization is dependent upon a false understanding of emotions. Emotions are not surgically excised from the organizational *corpus*; rather much social and psychological work in organizations is directed toward the management and repression of unaccepted emotions. As the reader begins to glimpse the social nature of emotional behavior, it also becomes apparent that this area of study has been sadly neglected in sociological research, both in and beyond organizations.

The readings point out that it is through successful feminist contributions to sociology that emotions, especially emotions in organizational settings, have begun to lose their pathological stigma. The discussion is no longer limited to arguing the legitimacy of emotions in women in organizations. Instead, the reader is introduced to a different perspective on the emotional emancipation of men as well. Emotions, regardless of gender, are socially derived and managed, and not genetically fixed in gender differentiated chromosome configurations. While the dominance of males over social science, *etc.*, is not a new conflict issue, it is particularly rewarding to begin to see what contributions a shared scientific platform has to offer. Since conflict theory has appeared to provide a major basis for the study and discussion of gender issues, it is also particularly exciting to glimpse the rich potential in the study of emotions from other perspectives, such as micro-theoretical and, hopefully, symbolic interactionist perspectives. Fineman suggests that emotions must be understood from a diversity of such perspectives rather than sociologists and social-psychologists engaging in destructive conflict to determine a single victor.

If there is any weakness in the presentation of the perspectives included in this work, it is in the repeated digression into gender conflict issues and the effects of male organizational dominance. All-in-all, this

book was engrossing, inspiring, and challenging. It stands as a must for anyone interested especially in organizations, and organizational change, but also is important for anyone seeking insights into cutting-edge developments in sociology.

I.A.M. (Integrated Anger Management): A Common Sense Guide to Coping with Anger, by Melvin L. Fein. Westport, CN: Praeger, 1993, 231 pp. \$12.95 paper. ISBN 0-275-94244-9. \$49.95 cloth. ISBN 0-275-94773-4.

L. John Brinkerhoff

*The Center for Individual and Family Services
Mansfield, Ohio*

How might one interpret, in a book written about anger management, the not infrequent application by its author of such terms as “stupid” or “fashionable pap” to that with which he is in disagreement? Initially amusing, eventually annoying, the overall effect was to distract this reader in reviewing an otherwise interesting and welcome contribution to the literature. More about this matter later.

The contents of the book are summarized nicely on its back cover:

Despite our justified fears of its destructiveness, anger is an essential part of our social life. I.A.M. provides a way to take advantage of this by offering a step-by-step guide for 1. keeping the emotion safe, 2. learning to tolerate its sometimes overwhelming intensity, 3. evaluating its often disguised objectives, 4. relinquishing impossible aims, and 5. realistically employing its power to obtain critical goals.

A broad audience would seem intended, including those in search of self-help in managing anger, clinicians, sociologists of emotion, and the general reader.

The book is especially interesting in its treatment of anger from the perspective of the sociology of emotions, in making explicit the social construction, negotiation, and role of anger, and the advantages accruing to those who master the emotion. The chapters “Anger and the Family” and “Anger and Organizational Leadership” are recommended reading in particular.

In many ways, however, the person struggling with anger seems to be to whom the book is primarily addressed. The author, in a rather touching preface, reveals motivations for writing this book that well transcend the merely academic or clinical. Perhaps it is this self-help