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## Losing our cool? Following Williams and Grossberg on emotions

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## **Abstract**

Despite constituting a significant area of everyday experience, emotions have rarely been the focus of detailed investigation within cultural studies. This paper makes a case for viewing emotions as social/cultural/political, as well as individual, phenomena and reviews the contributions of cultural theorists to analyses of emotions. To this end, it critically examines Raymond Williams' concept 'structure of feeling', which reintroduces the subjective into the social, and Larry Grossberg's concept 'economy of affect', which seeks to explain how, through affective investments, ideologies are internalized and naturalized. Whilst both theorists provide important conceptual tools, each conceptualization has specific limitations and neither theorist offers detailed analyses of the interrelations, in practice, between individual and social aspects of emotion. The authors seek to build on and extend the insights of Williams and Grossberg and locate emotions in and across specific historical, cultural and political contexts within relations of hegemony and resistance. The authors begin to theorize how emotions are constituted and operate interactively at the level of both individual personal experience and wider social formations/power relations. This paper establishes the groundwork for working towards a genealogy of specific structures of feeling and specific emotional subjects. It is argued that theorizing relations between emotion and power is crucial to this project. The paper discusses ways of theorizing 'emotion and power', and outlines the authors' approach, which, it is suggested, could be further explored in relation to concrete examples.

## **Introduction**

Emotions have tended to be ignored or denigrated within Western philosophical and scientific traditions. This academic stance has been matched by a frequent, widespread cultural contempt for emotions in which they have been viewed as infantile and uncivilized things that must be controlled in order for society to operate smoothly and rationally (Planalp 1999). Academic investigation of the emotions has taken place principally within a biomedical framework and the 'psy disciplines', psychology, psychiatry and psychoanalysis (Lupton 1998), in which they have been seen as individual, internal, inherent and private states. These disciplines have also provided a framework through which emotional responses have been surveyed, assessed and subjected to a range of practices directed at management and control.

More recently, however, there has been a growth of interest in the emotions from within the humanities and social sciences and a focus on emotions as sociocultural products. An example is Peter Stearns' (1994) history of the term cool, which tracks the emergence of an increasingly cooler approach to emotional expression over the course of the twentieth century. His study includes an analysis

of the 1960s 'culture of cool', as well as a look at the 1990s use of the term to indicate emotional disengagement, almost always with approval and accompanying positive connotations. Contemporary approbation for emotional disengagement is apparent in the use of the term cool to describe lack of emotional response. For example, when parents, teachers, lovers and friends do not express disappointment or anger or frustration at challenging or provocative things we do, or fail to do, they are thought to be 'cool'.

A focus on emotions as sociocultural phenomena seems to have developed in parallel with a growing twentieth century fascination with, and discovery of, 'the emotional self'\*/involving an intensification of discourses and expert knowledges centred around emotional expression and intimacy (Lupton 1998, p. 6). Yet, within cultural studies, there has been little detailed investigation of emotions as part of everyday personal, cultural and political life. Nor has there been serious consideration of the ways in which emotions may be part of knowledge production, largely due to the widely held assumption that valid knowledge results from the exercise of reason that must be opposed to and properly insulated from emotion. This, we argue, represents a major deficit in academic inquiry. Significantly, a cultural studies analysis of emotions is capable of revealing a great deal about how emotions might operate in the reproduction of subjectivity, culture and power relations. Such analysis would show how emotions can and must be thought of as collective, as well as individual, phenomena. A cultural studies approach can also be used to untangle the complex and intricate ways in which emotions may be deeply insinuated in and contribute to the production of knowledge.

In this paper, we argue for analyses of the place of emotions in the production of knowledge, culture, individual and collective identities, and power relations. We discuss the conceptual tools necessary to do this from a cultural studies perspective. We consider how concepts developed by cultural theorists might contribute to such an endeavor. To this end, we critically appraise Raymond Williams' concept 'structure of feeling' and Larry Grossberg's notion of 'economy of affect'. We outline a direction for further inquiry, which builds on and develops key aspects of both Williams and Grossberg's work. We suggest that future inquiries focus on concrete examples, and investigate how specific emotions are formed and function as part of the historical, cultural, and political contexts in which they are practiced to reproduce, and potentially to resist, hegemonic relations.

### **The case for studying emotion**

Since the Enlightenment, western societies and western knowledge production have been characterized by an emphasis on and privileging of reason

and rationality, necessarily defined in relation to (the subordinated category of) the irrational. The rational has been associated with the intellectual, the cultural, the universal, the public, and the male. The irrational has been associated with the physical, the natural, the particular, the private, and the female (Jaggar 1989). Since emotions have been conflated with the irrational, they have been perceived as antipathetical to conventional knowledge production and have been used to support the hegemonic position of rationality and its associated categories. In contrast, we argue that emotions have played a significant role in social, political, and epistemological configurations of modernity. Indeed, knowledge production cannot be detached from emotion production, and emotional experience can be seen as a creative and insightful route to knowledge.

Emotions are widely perceived to be largely individual rather than social phenomena while 'the social' and social institutions are generally understood to be rationally based. Exceptions to this, like 'mass hysteria', are seen as examples of aberrant behaviour. Social entities at national, governmental, and corporate levels of operation are presumed not to act emotionally, but, rather, are assumed to function systematically from principles of rationality. However, emotions are seen to operate at the level of the social with regard to (and constituting) certain specific social groupings, for instance women, people of color, and working class people. Discourses on the emotions function ideologically to define and subordinate specific social groups, constituting who they are, by associating them with emotions. Political minorities are often perceived as entire categories that act/react from emotion, with far reaching consequences. For instance, people of colour and women have been viewed as more subjective, biased, and irrational while at the same time, in an ideology confirming and self-defining practice, they may be culturally required to express emotions more openly. In the case of women, this is part of conforming to accepted notions of 'femininity'. The civil and women's rights movements of the past decades have had to argue continually that questions of status and disparity are political problems, and not, as they are often labelled, personal ones. Historically, the positioning of certain groups as emotional rather than rational beings has resulted in their exclusion from the sphere of 'fit' (rationally motivated) social formations and from attendant political rights and responsibilities. The assignment of reason and emotion, which bolsters the authority of dominant groups and discredits subordinate groups, constitutes a practice of emotional hegemony (Jaggar 1989). Jaggar argues that the emotions work to position individuals within structures of dominance and relations of power. At the same time, when emotions that contradict dominant positionings are felt by a sufficient number of people, they may form a basis for the formation, in discourse and history, of subcultural experiences and subcultural groups. However, the possible social/political significances of the emotions and their role in

constituting various subcultural communities have not been subjected to detailed analysis. It is this work, we argue, which is crying out to be done and to which we seek to contribute.

As stated earlier, emotions and emotional responses have largely been investigated through a range of physiological, biomedical and psychological discourses. These discourses have tended to assume an essentialist perspective in which emotions are seen as pre-existing biological phenomena - genetically inscribed and equivalent to physical responses - which are universal to all human beings and inherent in the individual (Lupton 1998).

However, in the last two decades interest in the academic study of emotions has gradually arisen in social psychology, cultural anthropology, cultural history, and sociology. Researchers working within these disciplines have tended to view emotions as socially constructed, meaning that they are 'always experienced, understood and named via social and cultural processes' (Lupton 1998, p. 15). That is, emotions are seen as learned, contextual, and intersubjective - rather than individual - phenomena (Lupton 1998, pp. 15\_ 16). Thus, a social constructionist perspective entails seeing emotions as historically, socially and politically contingent, changing and producing social and political effects (Lupton 1998). At the same time, constructionism brings together a range of theorists who conceptualize and explore power, subjecthood and social context in quite different ways and to differing degrees, presenting both insights and limitations. Here, we examine the possibilities and constraints of two specific examples of constructionist work which, in different ways, attempt to view emotion as part of broader cultural and historical processes and knowledge production. We begin with a critical appraisal of Raymond Williams' concept 'structure of feeling'.

### **Structure of feeling**

Raymond Williams' concept 'structure of feeling' is an attempt to formulate the place of emotions in culture. Specifically developed and applied to the analysis of literature, Williams understood structure of feeling as an articulation most readily accessible in the literature of a period, both 'high art' and popular fiction, but which indicates a more general cultural 'possession' or presence (1979, p. 159). He described structure of feeling as 'the felt sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time' (1975, p. 47). The emphasis on 'felt' is important; Williams was describing something 'of feeling much more than thought - a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones' (1979, p. 159). In place of the 'official consciousness of an epoch - codified in its doctrines and legislation', Williams was attempting to bring into historical and theoretical discourse the experiential results of living within a specific social and cultural context (1979, p. 159). He draws a distinction between the knowledge which can be derived from an era's institutions and social

structures versus an understanding of its emotional relations (1975, p. 67). Williams uses structure of feeling as a class-linked concept, analyzing what he believes are the principle structures of feeling for each class in a particular era. He also utilizes it as a periodizing concept, arguing that every generation develops its own, specific structure of feeling. For instance, in analyzing the 1840s as conveyed through its literature, Williams describes one of the dominant, that is, middle class, structures of feeling as ‘an anxious oscillation between sympathy for the oppressed and fear of their violence’ (1979, p. 166). Speaking of his own historical moment, he suggests:

The experience of isolation, of alienation, and of self-exile is an important part of the contemporary structure of feeling, and any contemporary realist novel would have to come to real terms with it. (1975, p. 281)

In terms of historical recovery, Williams also argues that the structure of feeling of any given time or place is extremely difficult to recapture. This is so because the historical past, ‘the period culture, consciously studied, is necessarily different from the culture as lived’ (1975, p. 59). Precisely what is missing from historical investigation, what is omitted from documentation and records and what is unamenable to institutional analysis is an epoch’s lived sense, its structure(s) of feeling. And while this difference which Williams labels structure of feeling is intangible, it is not insignificant.

In *The Long Revolution*, originally published in 1961, Williams goes to significant lengths to distinguish ‘structure of feeling’ from ‘social character’, a distinction he upholds a number of years later, in 1979, when commenting on the earlier work (1979, p. 163, p. 174). In Williams’ analysis, social character is ‘the abstract of a dominant group’ (1975, p. 61), representing ‘the official or received thought of a time’ (1979, p. 163). Social character refers to the prescribed ideas and values of a social group at a specific historical moment. To continue with the example of 1840s England, the dominant social character Williams outlines is based on the morality of the industrial and commercial middle class, although given significant competition by the social characters of the contemporaneous aristocratic and working classes. Among the attributes of the middle class social character are: a belief in work based on individual effort and culminating in financial success; thrift, sobriety, and piety as principal virtues; and the family as the central institution (1975, pp. 60\_ 1). Poverty is viewed as the result of individual failure caused by insufficient personal effort.

In contrast, structure of feeling deals ‘not only with the public ideals but with their omissions and consequences, as lived’ (1975, p. 63), that is, something

that exists beyond or in addition to the articulated beliefs and values of a specific society or social group. In the popular fiction of the 1840s, Williams argues:

The confident assertions of the social character, that success followed effort, and that wealth was the mark of respect, had to contend, if only unconsciously, with a practical world in which things were not so simple ... .What comes through with great force is a pervasive atmosphere of instability and debt.  
(1975, p. 65)

What is significant, Williams points out, is that debt and ruin recurringly occur to characters but not as a result of their own failings, personal weakness, or lack of effort. This operates in contradiction to the era's dominant social character, a belief in the value and reward of hard work, and introduces a strong element of instability and anxiety into the social landscape. It is this anxiety which Williams identifies as an important aspect of the 1840s' structure of feeling. Thus, Williams likens social character to an 'ethic' and structure of feeling to 'experience' (1975, pp. 65\_ 7). Within these terms, social character seems most comparable to concepts of 'ideology', while structure of feeling attempts to identify other omitted or overlooked categories of existence.

Williams' conceptualization of 'structure of feeling' represents an attempt to integrate a notion of experience into social and cultural analysis. He believes experience has been viewed, traditionally, as a culturally diminished form of knowledge and communication. Although 'experience' is a difficult and often troubling category of epistemology as Williams himself indicates, it is, nonetheless, an important one (1979, p. 172).

Historically, one of the limitations with the concept of experience has been precisely its intimate connection with emotion. Often, what is meant by experience is a largely affective way of being in and understanding the world. On the one hand, this is what endows experience with its authenticity because feelings are 'real' and immediate. On the other hand, its intimate link with emotion is also what makes experience epistemologically suspect as either a category of existence or as a means of analysis in conventional knowledge production.

Williams' response to the problem of epistemological suspicion is to turn to the notion of experience as 'wholeness'. While continuing to foreground its significant emotional component, experience as full consciousness is not limited to affect but encompasses the cognitive as well. The integration of cognitive and affective processes works to bring experience into the terrain of the epistemological instead of relegating it to the sidelines of analytical utility. For instance, Williams argues that 'a certain kind of disturbance or unease, a particular

type of tension' may mark a moment or site of change, perhaps conflict, between an instance of structure of feeling and an aspect of social character (quoted in Probyn 1993, p. 22). In examining this 'disturbance, tension, blockage, emotional trouble', it may be possible to locate a cause or source of the conflict, that is, to pinpoint an occurrence of cultural change (Probyn 1993, p. 22).

None of this is to suggest that in Williams' schema experience, particularly emotion experience, is a more 'authentic' or more truthful form of knowledge, as it has sometimes been positioned historically, for instance, in Romantic configurations. As Elspeth Probyn points out, experience may work just as well to obscure as to reveal social relations through, for example, 'common sense' feelings (1993, p. 21). After all, we all live within hegemonic structures and relations and, as such, experience 'can also serve to mask the construction of its own ground' (1993, p. 21).

However, Williams' analysis includes the recognition that some degree of credibility often accompanies the accounts of those who have experienced - that is, personally lived through - an event or state of being. This is the case with cultural comprehension of what it means to 'be' a particular identity formation (a racial or ethnic minority, a woman, gay or lesbian). Rational analysis cannot exhaust or 'get at' all the meanings and implications of subject identities. The credibility of experience is based on the assumption that those who immediately experience something - live it, recognize it emotionally - are better qualified to speak of it or otherwise represent it.

Experiential credibility would seem to indicate a widespread social belief that structures of feeling are not equally accessible to all. Social distinctions (gender, race, age, etc.) are experienced or felt differently depending on one's relation(s) to the social formation. This is a central point in Williams' understanding of experience: it is the linking or mediating of the social formation and individual existences.

Lived experience is the result of the interaction of the individual and the social, and never solely that which occurs in a hypothesized separate, personal realm. Following Williams, experience is the articulation of gender, class, and boundless other factors at a particular historical moment and geographical site for a specific constructed subjectivity. It is these interactions, simultaneously personal and social, that Williams seeks to identify and explore. Structure of feeling is the concept he develops to describe those interactive relations between individuals and social formations.

So that in 1840s England, anxiety about economic instability is a culturally pervasive emotion, felt or experienced by individuals but in response to contradictions and constraints in the larger social formation. Structure of feeling,



then, is one important means by which the social formation is acted on, and performed by, individuals.

Similarly, feelings of isolation and alienation are facets of existence that must be dealt with by individual modernist writers precisely because they represent significant aspects of modernist social conditions. Structures of feeling are organizing processes that constrain and suggest how an individual's emotions - her or his felt existence - are played out at any given time and place. However, in our understanding of the concept, structures of feeling are not uni-directional or top down. As individuals live their era's structures of feeling, they produce and reproduce prevalent social conditions.

Bernard Sharratt points out that one of the difficulties with Williams' notion of structure of feeling is that it serves 'simultaneously as both a mediating term and a formulation of the totality' (1989, p. 134). Structure of feeling is a formulation of the totality when used synonymously with 'culture', where it is meant to refer to the entire lived or felt experience of being part of a period's culture or a class culture. Structure of feeling is a mediating term when it is applied more specifically to the relations between individuals and larger, material and non-material social configurations. In drawing on Williams work to develop our analytical framework, we choose to emphasize the latter mediating sense of structure of feeling to indicate a productive process that constructs subject identities and constitutes an always-changing social order.

In our view, 'emotion' as a generic category, or particular emotions, in and of themselves are not structures of feeling. That would be to relate structure of feeling to culture as a totality. Emotion as an entirety is perhaps best understood as a vast discursive category akin to 'reason' or 'the body'. Structures of feeling as mediating concepts are specific deployments of emotion at specific historical junctures with particularized effects. They refer to the ways an emotion or emotions manifest at a distinct place and point in time, for instance, how we contemporarily understand anger to be gendered, or the specific forms love may have taken in the nineteenth century. To think within the terms of structures of feeling is to ask what new or changing formations of emotion has it become possible to think or feel at a given moment? How are such structures of feeling utilized, what are their meanings and effects?

Used in these ways, the concept structure of feeling opens up significant theoretical possibilities. The reintroduction of the experiential to include categories of existence beyond the rational and empirical, without rendering them irrational, is valuable. The concept allows for certain aspects of experiential existence, such as the emotions, to have specific, ascertainable, and important effects, considerations largely excluded from current theoretical formulations. In the notion of structure of feeling, the emotions are culturally constituted and culturally shared.

While feelings remain largely intangible, their structures of organization and behaviour become available to analysis. With structure of feeling, the emotions become a widely held cultural experience, not solely an individual (biological or behaviourist) one.

Because emotions have been perceived as occurring predominantly at the level of individual experience, they have been dismissed as a disturbance: irrational and, consequently, unreliable and insignificant. However, this obscures the point that they also operate socio-culturally; they act simultaneously as structures of meaning and structures of power. After all, discourses of the body also function largely experientially and at the level of the individual. However, as much recent theory has shown, discourses of the body are intimately connected to larger social operations. Indeed, they are the means by which social and cultural discursive formations are embodied. We are arguing a similar set of conditions for the emotions - they are the means by which social and cultural formations affect us, that is, render us as feeling beings in a series of complex, specific ways. Simply because emotions principally are enacted ('experienced') at the level of the individual does not exclude them from being simultaneously implicated in larger cultural processes and structures nor, for that matter, does it make them immune to theorization.

While he theorizes experience, including the emotions, as culturally constituted and shared, Williams tends to conceive of vast, singular structures of feeling representing relatively unified positions belonging to large class configurations or single generations at any historical moment or location. This constitutes an important limitation in his concept. Further, his is an outline with a minimal sense of conflict, competition, or struggle between the structures of feeling of any epoch. Indeed, there seems to be a progression or evolution of structure of feeling from one era to the next. For instance, the structure of feeling of one generation may solidify into the social character of the next (1979, p. 163). Williams himself acknowledged the possibility of a multiplicity of co-existing, alternative structures of feeling, although his own analysis did not account for this (1979, p. 158). We suggest that Williams' phrase, structure of feeling, could be pluralized in order to emphasize the wealth of structures of feeling operational at any historical moment. The concept, structures of feeling, could be used to describe the attempt to identify manifold, particularized structures within the more general structuration, organization or economy of emotion.

Additionally, Williams does not specifically link structure of feeling to concepts of hegemony or power relations. Instead, he has a tendency to see structure of feeling as something like the 'truth' of an era, overlooked and largely undocumented, as a result of being masked by the social character of the day.

Despite these limitations, Williams' conceptualization represents emotions as rich, complex sociocultural practices, with productive functions. Which is to say, emotions produce culture and are not simply the reverberations of other social formations and force relations. Williams' work broadens the concept of the sociocultural to include kinds of experience beyond the rational and empirical; it attempts to account for those felt aspects of lived existence that elude records, documents, and most historical and public accounts. His work outlines the possibilities for recapturing intellectually what has been experienced affectively. In order to build on Williams' insights and, specifically, to take account of power relations and the ways in which they might be linked with structures of feeling, we now consider key aspects of Grossberg's writings.

### **Affective economies**

Larry Grossberg is one of the few contemporary cultural theorists who have argued consistently for the necessity of work on an economy of affect. His writings on the subject matter attempt to link the individual to larger cultural processes and, significantly, to explore how power operates through affect.

According to Grossberg, the social formation is composed of many, continually changing planes of effects or economies of which the affective is one among several - 'capital, money, meanings, information, representations, identities, desires', and so on (1997, p. 241). He argues that the British tradition of cultural studies has reduced what is considered to be the pertinent range of economies to 'meaning, representation, and identity'. Indeed, 'it is the articulation of these three economies that [Stuart] Hall describes as ideology' (1997, p. 397). The result, in Grossberg's view, is a tendency in cultural studies to reduce all culture to the domain of meaning and representation (1997, p. 251). Grossberg defines meaning specifically as cognitive, semantic, or narrative systems or contents (1992, p. 43). Although meaning and representation are important and constantly active factors, they do not exhaust all economies in the social formation. Indeed, a focus on signification, representation and identity to the exclusion of other economies has resulted in a reduction of the social to the cultural (1997, p. 283).

One consequence of equating meaning and representation with culture in its entirety is that neglected economies such as the affective are reduced to sub-functions of ideology rather than considered in terms of their own distinct operations, organizations and effects: 'Emotion is itself a notoriously difficult topic for cultural critics who often try to explain it as if it were merely the aura of ideological effects' (1992, p. 79). Further, in the traditional cultural studies model, power is subsumed in meaning while Grossberg, influenced by Foucault's work, believes meaning must be located as a function or effect of power.

If the affective has been subsumed within the ideological on the one hand, Grossberg continues, it has similarly been swallowed up as a sub-category of the libidinal, for instance in the work of Screen theorists (1988, p. 282), and, more generally, in psychoanalytic theory. He suggests distinguishing between 'libidinal economies of desire and affective economies of mood' as different planes of effectivity (1988, p. 285). Grossberg's proposal is to add affect into 'the already crowded relations' of signification (meaning, representation, language), economy (material production, distribution, and consumption), and libido (desire, sexuality) (1988, p. 282). Everyday life is the articulation of all of these planes of effects operating together, along with potential others.

Defining affect as one form of 'psychic energy', he attributes to it the authority of 'investment'. 'It is the coloration or passion within which one's investments in, or commitments to, the world are made possible' (1988, p. 285). Affect, here, is a form of energy, a motivating force or intensity rather than a system of interpretation. Affect consists of quantitatively variable levels of energy that identify 'the strength of the investment' people have in their experiences, practices, identities, meanings, and so on (1992, p. 82). It determines degrees of passion, or lack of, telling people 'where, how and with what intensities they can become absorbed - into their work and their lives' (1992, p. 82). Affect determines or constitutes what matters to individuals. But Grossberg makes the important point that affect is not, contrary to much popular belief, 'anarchic excess threatening to disrupt the structures of power' (1997, p. 28). Rather, it is a structured plane of effects that forms part of the force relations working to govern people's conduct. Affect is one of the means by which power is constituted, mobilized, circulated and performed.

Here, as does Williams with structure of feeling, Grossberg links the individual with the social formation through the activities and energies of affect. But he adds the critical component of power. Indeed, affect becomes an important form of energy or intensity that motivates relations of power among individuals as well as between individuals and the social forces governing their conduct.

Turning to the example of rock and roll, he argues that only a portion of rock and roll's effects can be understood within the context of signifying practices. In order to understand its impact and importance one must also come to an understanding of its affective effects and politics, because rock and roll transforms 'the affective geography of the everyday lives of its fans' (1984, p. 101). Grossberg's point is that affect needs to be taken into account as a constitutive aspect of popular culture. It is insufficient to heed popular culture only when it is transformed, through interpretation, into either 'art' or, as in some avenues of cultural studies, ideology/hegemony, that is to say, when it takes on meaning.

A potential problem with a position that argues the prevalence of an affective dimension in popular culture is that its application may lead to too dramatic a bifurcation of popular culture from elite culture, or of feeling from thinking. This may suggest an antithetical relationship between high art and pop culture, as well as between meaning and affect, as if high culture audiences do not feel and popular culture audiences do not think. But, significantly, Grossberg observes that popular culture's dominantly affective dimension is not inherent but historically constituted and that 'a large part of the struggle over popular culture concerns the ability of certain practices to have such effects' (1992, p. 79). That is, popular culture practices have fought to represent and retain their association with affective experience.<sup>1</sup>

The 'interpretive task' facing cultural studies and left-wing politics alike is to identify the strategies and sites where affective empowerment might be possible, beginning with popular culture forms that resonate affectively for consumers (1988, p. 290): 'Those differences which do matter [affectively] can become the site of ideological struggle' (1992, p. 105). Things that matter affectively can be taken up as sites of ideological assertion or contestation. Political positions can be claimed through and shaped by modes or instances of felt popular culture.

Arguably, this is what many contemporary cultural theorists have attempted to do in the move towards the analysis of popular culture. Specific subjects from pop culture are chosen for study, not because they are a priori 'artistically' significant to a trained critical eye or carry some other elite cultural value but, precisely the opposite, because they have mass emotional appeal. To continue with the example of popular music, in the case of 'Madonna studies' critical effort has been directed towards recapturing, for historical record, the basis of her wide appeal. Theoretical activity is taken up after popular fact, in an attempt to account for the widespread emotional affiliation of fans and to pinpoint that which is so resistant, in Williams' terms, to historical investigation and documentation. What are the sources and effects of extensive popularity? Can they be turned into political statements or acts? Can such affective investments and energies be used to identify emergent subcultural identities? For instance, scholars have analyzed Madonna, particularly in her early years as a public phenomenon, in order to understand something about the existences, the growing economic impact, and the cultural influence of teenage girls (Kaplan 1988, Schwichtenberg 1993).

Grossberg's work is significant for putting affect on the 'mattering map' of theory. His outline also raises a number of critical issues for a cultural analysis of the emotions. To begin with, affect as investment is no doubt an aspect of great import, but it is not necessarily exhaustive. For instance, a potential aspect in the overall spectrum of affect is its role as an organizing or structuring circuit of social activity, regardless of degree or kind of investment. Affect may be seen as

producing dependencies, responsibilities, connections, ruptures, obligations, accountabilities, and so on. It may form a basis for the social processes of recognition and difference. Following Jaggar's arguments, for instance, emotions are pivotal in identity formations, in the recognition of alienation from or connection to. She discusses how unexplained or uncoded feelings may cause one to feel isolated or 'abnormal', while recognition of others with similar feelings can serve as the ground for the formation of subcultural groups (1989). Affect is also integral to the notion of individuality, to the sense of what makes each of us 'distinct'. As such, it plays a formative role in subjectivity. Nor do there seem sufficient grounds for dispensing with affect as a means of communication, between individuals as well as between group formations. Affect is an important means by which power is enacted between individuals and social conditions. But it is also a pivotal mechanism in the circulation of power among individuals. This communicative aspect of affect - porous quality that enables emotions to be exchanged easily with other people - assists in making us susceptible to the emotion effects and power influences of others, individuals as well as social forces and ideologies. Affect is also, in turn, a means by which we are able to exert the effects of power relations on others. As forms of communication, emotions produce relations, movement and activity between individuals.

All of the above are contexts in which what matters is not how much or how little or even which emotion is present. Of significance is how any amount (or absence) of affect is used, what functions it serves. All of the above circumstances, and more, would result in the execution of affect as a technology of power without limiting it, solely, to forces of investment and energy.

Grossberg identifies affect as quantity or intensity of feeling by differentiating affect from emotion. Emotions are 'the product of the articulation of two planes: signification ... and affect' (1992, p. 79). Emotion equals affect articulated to another plane of effect - representation, ideology, meaning: '[A]ffect can be articulated through the mediating effects of ideological narratives to produce different forms of emotional response and involvement' (1992, p. 81). Emotion exists when affect is mediated with ideology, and specific emotions exist when specific combinations of affect and ideology merge or clash. The advantage of the disjuncture between affect and emotion, in his analysis, is that it allows affect to function as passion, solely in terms of degree of feeling, by bracketing out other uses and functions of emotion.

Because his primary concern is with affect, Grossberg says relatively little about emotion or its specific distinctions from affect, leaving this important differentiation insufficiently outlined. How does one distinguish affect from emotion? What are the significances of their demarcation - why do we need or benefit from distinguishing them as concepts? For instance, describing both The

Sound of Music (Robert Wise 1965) and Wild at Heart (David Lynch 1990) as extraordinarily manipulative, Grossberg asserts that *The Sound of Music* 'works on and through emotional narrative' whereas *Wild at Heart* 'works more immediately on affective investments' (1992, p. 81). This is an intriguing observation that could usefully be developed further. In another example, he cites Jack Nicholson as an icon of the 1970s who is 'always invested in a mission, always in search of a cause' (1992, p. 224), and as such who functions as meaning, representing something. His counterpart is Dennis Hopper, icon of the 1980s, who functions as 'pure intensity or affect' (1992, p. 224). If Hopper functions as affect, then Nicholson functions as emotion. Without a more detailed analysis of the distinctions between affect and emotion, affect seems to exist in a kind of limbo, operating 'in something like the "preconscious"' (1992, p. 81). It then becomes difficult to see how this preconscious system is historically and culturally constituted rather than intrinsic.

However, configuring affect as asignifying or contentless bears the advantage, from Grossberg's perspective, of dislodging affect from the circuit of meaning relations, and placing it directly into the more fundamental circuit of power relations. Grossberg positions affect as occurring prior to or outside of meaning. As cited earlier, the differences that do matter can then become a site for ideological struggle. It is conceivable, though, that this relation might as often occur in the inverse so that those differences that do matter ideologically (are meaningful) become the site of affective investment and struggle. The relations between affect and ideology can be made clearer only with a fuller account of when, how, and in what forms affect and emotion operate separately.

In advocating the need for critical theory to account for the importance of affect in all areas of existence and epistemology, Grossberg's work provides an important cultural studies framework for, as well as an isolated voice on, the contemporary problem of affect and culture. He argues persuasively that we cannot make adequate sense of popular culture - and by extension, we believe, of any cultural forms or activities - solely by considering them as cognitive, rational or ideological practices. Affect is, indeed, the 'missing term' which might explain, for instance, why certain ideologies take hold and not others, or how, through affective investments, ideologies are internalized and naturalized (1992, pp. 82\_ 3). Grossberg's call for an account of the role of affect and the development of a critical vocabulary to describe its forms and structures, marks an important moment of departure in the cultural study of emotion (1992, p. 80). His is an attempt, akin to Williams', to bring to historical recognition and into theoretical discourse largely omitted aspects of 'the felt sense' of existence. Both Grossberg and Williams work to account for experience beyond ideology or social character,

in order to describe what it means to live the emotional effects of specific social and cultural contexts.

Here, we take up where Grossberg left off on emotion by considering it in his sense of the product of affect and ideology. We understand emotions as signifying practices already imbricated with or articulated through power and meaning effects. We do not see, at this point and without further study, how affect can be made accessible to analysis without functioning as a signifying practice. Grossberg's notion of emotion, on the other hand, engages most usefully with Williams' concept of experience as 'wholeness', of the felt sense of existence as an integration of the cognitive and affective. From our perspective, it is more productive to consider emotion within the cycle of meaning production. Although we understand Grossberg's concern that affect not be considered solely as an 'aura' of ideology, we believe that considering emotion as interconnected with signifying practices enhances the ability to analyse emotion as an important function in the circulation of power relations.

Additionally, we do not consider affect, in its function as constitutive of emotion, to be solely an energy or intensity; rather, as discussed above, we understand it as entailing other effects and operations (communication, processes of recognition and difference, construction of subjectivity as individuality, and so on). Expanding the notion of affect to effects beyond intensity also has the corollary advantage of minimizing the likelihood that affect might be interpreted as something akin to a 'drive' in psychoanalytic terms, which serves primarily to propel other formations - ideological, economic, libidinal. In the configuration we suggest, a broader notion of an affective economy (communication, recognition, and so on) becomes a 'standalone' system that produces and reproduces its own complex network of power and meaning relations, at the same time that it operates in conjunctive relations with other economies.

### **Moving on: developing cultural analyses of emotion**

In many areas of academic inquiry - notably the natural sciences and other disciplines that seek to apply the methods of the natural sciences - researchers are urged not to feel, to put feelings aside as a necessary condition of investigating thoroughly and effectively and establishing true and reliable knowledge. Indeed, since the Enlightenment and the hegemony of scientific method, emotions have been conflated with the irrational and regarded as in opposition to conventional knowledge production, so bolstering the hegemonic position of rationality. Social science and feminist critiques of science have shown that a clear opposition and separation between fact and value, objectivity and subjectivity, is not possible. In addition, postmodernist feminist philosophy and critiques of the enlightenment subject, and the binary concepts on which it is founded, direct us towards a



rejection of the binary pairs: fact and value, objectivity and subjectivity, truth and feeling, reason and emotion. Just as the subject who knows is always also an embodied subject, so he/she is always a feeling subject.

Further, we argue that emotion does not have to be seen as working against the production of reliable knowledge. In some fields of inquiry - ethnography and oral history, for example - the investigator's ability to feel with the subject enables conversation and the re-telling of experiences and confidences that constitute the data and direct its interpretation, analysis, and writing up. In many instances, clarity of thought occurs as a result of feeling emotion. For instance, often one knows unmistakably what one wishes to say when writing a business memo out of anger or frustration, when composing a love letter, or when crafting a eulogy for a funeral.

We would prefer to think of emotions and knowledge production in the following way. Emotions are always in play in any inquiry but to differing extents. That is, research operates through relations of closeness and difference (between investigator and investigated whether human or non-human) where these are context specific - depending on the area of inquiry, the subjects involved, and their experiences, the aims and purposes of the inquiry. These contexts are, of course, also always historically and politically located and part of a dynamic play of power relations. This brings us to consideration of relations between power and emotion, subjectivity and culture.

As argued earlier, Williams and Grossberg provide groundwork for conceptualizing how emotions may be part of the constitution of culture and collective identities. However, neither theorist offers a detailed analysis of the inter-relations, in practice, between individual identities and social formations. It is precisely this area of interaction that concerns us and which, we argue, is crying out for detailed analysis. Here, we consider how such analyses might be developed. We argue that such analysis should involve a thorough exploration of the relations between power and emotion and focus on specific concrete examples, that is, on particular structures of feeling. This approach is informed by the cultural studies notion of 'radical contextuality' and is designed to delineate how structures of feeling are effective at an individual micro level but always as part of macro sociocultural operations and the constant circulation of power.

Structures of feeling as technologies of power operate at the level of the relationship between the social body and individual bodies, working to make the latter disciplined and productive. We need to consider how emotions are instrumental in the (re)production of power relations. To do this, we would look at the ways in which emotions might work as techniques of discipline that help shape what we do and who we are (Harding & Pribram 2002). Here, we would be thinking about how emotions might be a means of deploying power relations.

However, as we have pointed out in a previous paper, a view of emotion-as-power does not fully account for the complexity and changeability of emotions and may tend to be overly deterministic. Instead, we need a more subtle and detailed conceptualization of relations between power and emotion, culture and subjectivity, social formations and individual identities.

We are arguing that, among other forces, emotion makes possible the exertion and reception of the effects of power relations, thereby constructing the subject and, more specifically, the emotional subject. In other words, the subject who feels is critical to the circulation of power, the establishment of social relations, and the construction of discursive and institutional formations.

Emotions are forces of energy creating ongoing movement that propels social relations. The circulation of emotion produces in and between people connections, ruptures, dependencies, responsibilities, accountabilities, and so on. In other words, people care - they are invested. If people care, certain effects are produced: they feel and act in certain ways. Individuals have emotional relations, a significant form of social relations. It is through these relations that subjects are 'affected', that they are constituted into specifically contoured kinds of feeling beings. Following Grossberg, the task facing cultural studies is to identify the strategies and sites where emotional authority might be possible, in addition to pinpointing the locations and terms within which emotions subordinate.

Williams' conceptualization of 'structure of feeling' directs us towards a concept of the sociocultural realm which includes aspects of lived experience beyond the rational and empirical and which is missing from official records and documents. Feeling is seen as something to be included and elaborated rather than expunged from public and historical accounts, as part of the production of knowledge about the past. In this way, specific structures of feeling might form the content of historical inquiry and historiography - as, for example, in Stearn's history of 'cool' or our own work on the construction of sensibility in the eighteenth century and the emergence of the emotional/ psychological subject in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, we might consider the nineteenth and early twentieth century cases of hysteria, neurasthenia and shell shock. Analysis within the framework we are suggesting indicates that they operated as structures of feeling. That is, hysteria, neurasthenia and shell shock occurred not simply as specific illnesses, but as entire organizations which coded 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' feelings and behaviour. They worked to identify, through diagnosis, and constitute, through symptoms and treatment, subcultures based on the categories of gender, class and sexuality.

The specific experiencing of a social event is what Williams meant by structure of feeling: the felt sense of existence at a particular historical time and

location, felt in these instances in terms of emotional disorders. Such an experience is something that occurs beyond the confines of an era's social character, not in the sense of an entire alternate social reality but as something that invades the dominant social order. Indeed, such emotional disorders can be understood as the repercussions or reverberations of what it means to live within the framework of the stated beliefs and values of a dominant social formation.

Following Williams, the different but related emotional disorders of hysteria, neurasthenia, and shell-shock represent the 'omissions and circumstances as lived' of the hegemonic positions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the failure to live up to the public ideals of the era. In their own time, these emotional illnesses may have served as the warnings, embodied by individuals, of the dangers involved in failing to adhere to the ideological expectations of the day: the angel of the household, the strongwilled businessman, the courageous soldier. From an historical perspective, the hysteric, the neurasthenic, the victim of shell-shock bear the lived weight, the individually experienced failures, of their era's socially-mandated roles and ideals.

Subjects can experience an era's structures of feeling in keeping with its social character or ideological imperatives - in consensus with prevailing hegemony. Or they can live those structures of feelings in discomfort with or in contradiction to an historical moment's prevailing demands, resulting in the possibility for resistance.

Grossberg's ideas concerning power and emotion serve as an antidote for Williams' tendency to see structure of feeling as a truth-value, as the unintended reverberations of existing ideologies. In describing structure of feeling as the lived experience of the unintended consequences of an era, Williams points to something that appears to be leftover from the dominant articulations of the day. In Williams' terms, structures of feeling may be interpreted as existing outside the circle of power relations and dominant discourses.

In contrast, Grossberg's conceptualizations place emotion squarely inside the system of meaning production and subject construction. Indeed, the consequence of this is to reaffirm that there is no outside or beyond the forces of energy created by and constituting power relations. Further, the introduction of power as it operates affectively adds the much needed dimension of struggle, contention, competition, and exchange - in short, movement - to Williams' relatively vast and inert sense of structure of feeling operating for entire social classes or eras.

The question of emotion's ideological/discursive role is, as Grossberg suggests, the question of how emotion governs people's conduct. Grossberg's notion of emotional investment can be further explored by considering the ways in which how we care describes who we think we are. In principle, an emotional

investment must be 'made' - directed towards something, enacted, revealed or concealed. An example might be the contemporarily popular subject of the expression of emotion - who does or should express emotion and the effects of this, in particular in its gendered connotations, as part of the ongoing construction of the category gender.

In contemporary Western cultures, a prevailing assumption exists that men suppress emotion more frequently and more extensively than women - to varying positive or negative effects - while women display and release emotions more readily. Women tend to be seen as more emotionally 'skilled' and 'fluent', which confers a positive meaning. However, in contrast, being 'more emotional' is most often equated with being less in control of feelings in a pejorative or problematic way and has served as justification for women's exclusion from any number of corridors of power.

Further, the gendered expression of emotion is dependent upon the emotion being considered. Men are regarded as better able to express certain emotions - anger, frustration, impatience. It then becomes possible to analyse emotions, such as anger or non-anger, as gendered structures of feeling.

Such views need not be construed as essentializing. Rather, gendered subjects can be seen as constructed in/through specific discursive events such as the expression or 'repression' of emotion. In this case, individual subjects must live and feel the specificities of such constructions, and they must constantly reenact - relive, refeel - those specificities in order to sustain their identities. This is a point at which inter-relations between individual identities and social formations can be explored and demonstrated - that emotions have been used as a technology in the subordination of women and other social beings.

Emotional relations do not exist between people in some kind of equivalency or equilibrium. Emotions are utilized in the exerting and reaffirming of power differentials. But how emotions circulate and subordinate as they are relayed throughout the social formation is complex, constantly changing, and insufficiently understood.

To view emotions as simply subordinating is to duplicate concepts of emotions as negative forces, as burdens we are forced to endure, and against which we must be constantly vigilant. It is to deny that emotional relations, like power relations, are productive: they not only subordinate, they create.

We emphasize that we are not conceiving of emotion in a universal or essential way. Instead, we stress the diversity of culturally and historically specific phenomena encompassed by the term 'emotion'. We think in terms of culturally and historically specific structures of feeling and, particularly, of what emotions different categories of subjects are culturally permitted to express, and how power relations, subjectivity and collectivities are brought into being through specific

articulations of emotion. An analytics of emotion must examine specific occurrences and concrete examples. It must thoroughly examine: how emotions might be constituted and experienced; how they are used, that is, what their effects might be; how they might function with/in structures of power, towards both dominant and resistant ends; and what role they play in the formation of subjectivity and identity in the everyday lives and practices of individuals.

In other words, in order to further develop an analysis of emotion and relations between emotion and power, subjectivity and culture, we think that 'power and emotion' need to be discussed in detail and in relation to concrete examples. We are interested in working towards a genealogy of specific structures of feeling and specific emotional subjects. Emotions are constructed through their establishment and reestablishment, their production and reproduction. In turn, emotions construct subjects and, in doing so, make the subject an ongoing possibility. Emotions are forms of circulating power: forces that produce human relations, energies and activities.

### **In conclusion**

Following on from Williams and Grossberg, we have attempted to show that emotions are an important and valid area of inquiry in cultural studies. We have begun to set out an approach to this work. Our analysis is not intended to suggest that emotions are somehow imaginary because they are constructed. Quite the opposite, their distinctions are experienced, which is to say they are 'real'. The point in analyzing structures of feelings, whose effects constitute emotive subjectivity as individual experience, is precisely because those effects are felt and enacted.

Structures of feeling are complexes of emotional and related behaviours, operating at particular historical moments and sites, which participate in the processes of constituting and reproducing individual subjectivities, subcultural identities and social communities. Structures of feeling as processes of mediation between the individual and the social occur in the context of socially organized affective economies imbued with power relations working towards the production and reproduction of various cultural practices. The task of an analytics, which seeks to insert emotions into the sphere of cultural theory, must be twofold. First, it should provide emotions with an epistemological basis, to mark them out as a valid area of study. Second, it is to grant them validity as experiential formations, as ways of knowing in the practices of everyday life.

## Notes

1. Grossberg also points out that high culture may be popular culture for some social fractions and, as such, involves affective experience (personal correspondence).
2. These are discussed in a book we are currently writing entitled Structures of Feeling: Emotions and Cultural Theory.

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