Emotional Management in Spanish Institutions: When Institutional Trust Draws New Horizons

Simone Belli, Department of Social Science and Innovation, Yachay Tech, Ibarra, Ecuador

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to explain how and why people join social movements. In a study of the Occupy movement, the authors set out to demonstrate that participation is a function of emotional attachments between participants – attachment through shared emotions regarding the loss of trust in traditional institutions and belief in efficacy of alternative, open, institutions. Using the concept of second-order emotions, the authors argue that the movement through horizontal democracy helps to regulate emotions through recognition of those emotions. The researchers argue that, in addition to a distrust of traditional institutions, social rituals in the Occupy movement serve to fortify collective emotions and create strong bonds between participants.

KEYWORDS

Collective Emotions, Horizontal Democracy, Indignados Movement, Institutional Trust, Second-Order Emotion

INTRODUCTION

Emotions are a perceptual construction of complex situations (Roberts, 2013). When emotions meet social movements, the situation is even more complex. We observe how people challenge the authority of “traditional” (political and economic) institutions, and where distrust in these institutions can evoke anger, anxiety, resentment, despair, depression and loss of self-esteem. A lack of trust in mainstream institutions often helps to explain the grievances and emotional dispositions that bring people to participate in movement-based communities and events, such as those affiliated with the Indignados movement in Spain.

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The case-study is based in the Spain area between 2011 and 2014 on social institutions and emotional processes involved in what normally is referred to as social movement. We present narratives by activists from these institutions because they embody a type of innovation and creation in the Spanish scenario in the last years. They offer different examples of how trust is managed through narratives and actions in horizontal infrastructures (social institutions). This study allows us to introduce institutional trust as a second-order emotion in emotional management practices of the social movements. We show how trust funnels in other first-order emotions, which represents emotional ties between activists, allowing them to achieve other emotions, where emotions are perceptual constructions of complex situations, as Roberts (2013) explains. Along this paper, we will propose the concept of a second-order emotion as a tool for social analysis in social movements.

ON TRUST AND EMOTION MANAGEMENT

For Fessler (1999), the second order emotions are a reaction to the subjective experiences of other individuals. Subjective experience is some means of measuring internal states that cannot be observed by the scientist (LeDoux & Brown, 2017). These have an important role in emotion management, considering that emotion management is not a conclusion to a process, but a phase of a continuing cycle of activity (Barbalet, 2011). Second-order emotional practices represent a tool (Jakupcak, 2003), “an instrument of freedom rather than a tool of self-oppression” (De Sousa, 1990: 446), where we cease to think of our emotions as inevitable and to view them as open to modification. A person may ‘regulate’ anger against an institution, constructing trust, promoting rewarding actions, sharing knowledge and information, etc.

For Barbalet (2011), emotions can be regulated in an implicit social regulation and through processes of self-monitoring, in an explicit way. Emotions can only be regulated interactionally with other subjects and so require cooperation among individuals in trust relations as a social movement, hundreds of persons fighting together for the same cause. The regulation of the person’s activism draws on other emotions, such as anger or love, and is composed by other second-order emotions such as sincerity, trust or blame. Emotional states that are not so basic can be termed as second order emotions (Lahankar, 2009).

People rarely express fear, anger, jealousy, chagrin, joy, and so on, by using the corresponding words in a self-description (Harré, 2009). An angry person might verbally show anger by shouting “F##k the politicians!” but not “I am angry with them” without turning red in the face. First- and second-order emotions in our narratives emerge in multiples ways, rarely using the corresponding words. This matters for how we recognize our usage of these second-order emotions in our narratives. Spiraling
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