

# THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY ON MORAL EMOTIONS AND MORALITY

Ioana Anisa ATUDOREI<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *This paper analyses the impact of social solidarity on moral emotions such as embarrassment, shame and guilt at a social level. The effect of moral emotions on individual morality is presented. The paper emphasizes the fact that solidarity, which is generally perceived as having positive effects, may also produce social anomie. This situation is reached by a silent agreement concerning intellectual fraud which goes unpunished at a social level and can, thus, lead to deviant behaviour being considered tolerable as a result of rational reasoning which could shake social structure.*

**Key words:** *social solidarity, moral emotions, social anomie, deviance, tolerable, social structure.*

## 1. Introduction

The study of society and of the laws by which it develops represents a permanent preoccupation for each sociologist. In order to study this evolution, I shall refer to the role of social solidarity as far as moral emotions are concerned which should represent the guide of human actions, so important in the development of social deeds, which, in their turn, determine the evolution or involution of society in a certain direction.

If some of the founders of sociology, chief among whom Émile Durkheim and Max Weber placed high importance on morality, when the latter got to a secondary place Richard Stivers (1996) published the article „Towards a Sociology of Morality”, in order to bring sociology to the fore again and to revive the interest of scientists and especially of sociologists in the study of morality. The author mentioned that “certainly, the absence of a sociology of morality is one of the biggest weaknesses of academic sociology, it is a mysterious absence” (Stivers, 1996, p. 1).

The new element in this paper is represented by the analysis of the consequences of intellectual fraud committed by students for the social structure starting from the toleration of intellectual fraud.

In recent studies on morality and social solidarity, Gert H. Mueller and Joseph R. Pearce (2014) appreciate that ideology and morality involve the greater conscious effort and enhanced power to convince, believes that solidarity is as elementary as it is unreflexive, at as analyzes social stratification as labor, wealth and power, the moral

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<sup>1</sup> Transilvania University of Braşov, [ioana.atudorei@unitbv.ro](mailto:ioana.atudorei@unitbv.ro)

order as solidarity, ideology and morality, and culture systems as art, science, and religion; Peter Kivisto and Giuseppe Sciortino (2015) on the Universality of Civil Society the civil sphere is based on solidarity and morality, and autonomous from the government; H. T. Engelhardt's essay on solidarity relies upon two crises that constitute the "post-modernism dilemma" in ethics Kurt Bayertz (1999) which exam the concept of solidarity, its history, its scope and its limits; Vincent Jeffries (2014) studying altruism, morality and social solidarity; according to Martin Schlag and Juan A. Mercado (2016) both Durkheim and Comte had a strong moral motivation to argue for solidarity as a way to combat individualism and to create. Scientists can be guided by moral values, but they should never use factual statements as an argument for moral; Daniela Sorea (2015) speak about justyce and charity, Gabriela Răţulea (2015) brings into discussion the concept of social cohesion, based on social solidarity and moral order.

## **2. About Solidarity**

The term solidarity comes from the Latin „*in solidum*” which designates the relationship between two or more debtors when one's insolvency has direct consequences on the other members. The word „solidarity” appeared in the 19th century and it refers to a fact, or an aspiration which, at group level, develops reciprocal dependence. Social sciences use this term, for example in social work, as one of the basic principles of the functioning of social protection, alongside well-established values (Bódi, 2006). Emil Durkheim shows a deep preoccupation with the study of social life which “derives from a double source: similar knowledge and the division of social work [...] the source, if not the only, at least the main one of social solidarity.” (Durkheim, 1893/2001, p. 151). Solidarity appears in the middle of an already constituted group and the role of collective environment is not at all neglected because “the collective environment in which occupational association determines interaction is made up of various individuals who fill up the social horizon” and “conscious states which represent this have the same character” because these states define the leveling and modeling place due to the emotions that develop between those who form it, determining thus, the appearance of “mechanical solidarity” (Durkheim, 1893/2001, p. 304). Emotions reorient individuals, because regulating factors of morality as well as moral and social solidarity springing from the collective consciousness of social actors come into play in relation to the norm. Solidarity is influenced by a series of factors such as „consensus” and „cooperation” which, „once it appears, it strengthens social connections and turns society into a more accentuated individuality” (Durkheim, 1893/2001, p. 295).

### **2.1. The role of Social Solidarity in Generating Moral Order according to Émile Durkheim**

There are inherent dissensions at the level of social interaction which require the identification of necessary resources for producing social unity. One of the resources that unity produces is represented by the „spontaneous consensus of parties” which represents that „internal solidarity which is not only as indispensable as the regulating action of superior centers but it is their necessary condition because all they do is translate it into another language and, so to speak, establish it” (Durkheim, 1893/2001, p. 376). When consensus is inexistent one resorts to contract, which is regarded as a means of producing

social balance by matching attitudes and behaviours to the norm. But, it does not offer a complete solution to the problem. The sources of moral order which assure social order are rooted in the emotions that the individual has towards the other members that he interacts with. The idealistic perspective of „organic solidarity” is characterized by intimacy, social exchange, power, emotions, trust and its moral laws are solid. The concept of „organic solidarity” is characterized by collective consciousness which „is formed very slowly and it changes at a similar pace. It takes time for a particular type of behaviour or belief to reach a level of generalization and crystallization as it takes time for them to lose this characteristic. Therefore, „organic solidarity” is entirely the product of the past (Durkheim, 1893/2001, p. 308).

### 3. Emotions and Social Structure

The term „social structure” comes from the Latin *structura*, from the verb *struere* (to build). The use of this term has been multidisciplinary: in architecture it referred to the resistance area on which the building was to be erected and its borders; in human anatomy it means interdependency between the component parts of the body; in sociology it was used by Karl Marx in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the preface of his paper “Contribution to the critique of political economy” (1859) where he analyzes society structure.

Why emotions and social structure? As Karl Marx stated (1859) people unwillingly enter relations formed for developing production relations which actually represent the economic structure or the basis as the author called it. The basis represents the pillar which supports and upon which material life is built. But material life is built starting from social life characterized by social conscience based on the idea of social existence. We have here a chain of determinations because production involves action, action involves purpose and purpose is based on emotions (Rimé, 2005/2007, p. 14). As a result, social structure is based on emotions too.

Social structure represents “all relatively steady relations which characterize the social system of a given society, made up of communities, collectivities, classes, categories and social groups at a given moment. Social structure includes all inter and intra relations of various forms of living together and human activity in a society at a certain socio-economic development point” (Zamfir and Vlăsceanu, 1998, pp. 612-613).

The concept of „social structure” refers to interaction schemes and structured actions between individuals which are not accidental. The actions of social actors are determined by their purpose. Hence, the voluntary intention of channeling effort towards actions which shape individual behaviour. Within an organization they are coordinated and conduct either identical or different activities but still integrated. This interaction represents the basis of social structure. Social structure must be approached as a complex reality, at multidimensional level because motivational factors, individual and collective actions, conflicts, communication processes, mediation, negotiation and, last but not least, emotions come into play.

The study of social structure has been of particular interest to Siegfried F. Nadel (1957) who approaches two important aspects: „role” and „network”. Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown (1940), who was preoccupied with the difference between structure and function, Talcot Parson (1961) who introduced the notion of „system” and stated that the longevity

of the structure of social systems is dependent on normative models which are culturally institutionalized. In Talcot Parson the interest is focused on aspects concerning the harmonization of actions and of everything that they involve. In his opinion actions assure continuity. This is different from ideas according to which the basis is represented by the distribution of social structure.

Georg Simmel (1908) conducted a micro-sociological analysis of dyads and triads, of the form as compared to the component elements of the group. The connection between emotion and social structure takes place in different ways because „emotion may be defined as being „about” social relations. The direction of the emotional system will reflect these relations and, through emotion, the social behaviour and its structure will be built (Lutz and White, 1986, p. 420). By analyzing the connection between the social network and the marital conflict, Gotea (2014, p. 7) asserts that the role of social networks in the couple life is ambivalent - supporting and coercion: on one hand, the social network is a fundamental source of social support in different moments of family life and, on the other hand, the social network is also a source of more subtle or more direct pressures (such as suggestions, recommendations, advices or conditionings). Both supporting and constraining actions of social network members generate emotions (positive or negative), which underlie the maintenance or restructuring of social relationships.

#### **4. Research and Methodology**

This research is fundamental, explanatory, quantitative and basic. It was conducted between 20th and 27th June, 2014 on a sample of 384 respondents (N=384). Sociological inquiry and interview technique were used. A structured questionnaire was used and this was put into practice for data collection by the test method. Proportional stratified random sampling was used. This research was conducted on students enrolled for a Bachelor's Degree at „*Transilvania*” University of Brasov according to the Rector's report for 2013-2014. This report also served as sampling starting point. The results have a margin of error of  $\pm 5\%$  ( $E^2 = \pm 5\%$ ) for a confidence level of 95%. The data were processed by SPSS.

#### **5. Research Results**

A total of 90.1% cheated at least once in high school; 82.3% cheated at least once at university; 14.8% consider that at university level there are severe and clear sanctions against all types of fraud while 85% do not hold this belief. In the case of uncovered emotions there are no differences between the moral emotions experienced in faculty. I used a count index from the questions: „Did you personally cheat at least once during *high school*?” and “Have you personally cheated at least once at *faculty*?” The calculation of the weighted average index for the three moral emotions was made according to each separate context (undiscovered fraud, fraud discovered by colleagues or by teachers) for those who cheated in high school or in faculty in order to be able to compare them. Only students who repeated the cheating were selected. The paired sample t-test was used.

A decrease in intensity from 2.9 in high school to 2.7 in faculty was noticed in the case of emotions exposed by colleagues. Statistically speaking, the difference between the two averages is significant ( $p=0,001$ ). Therefore, the repetition of the same type of emotions may cause a decrease in intensity which regulates morality. An increase in intensity from 3.8 in high school to 3.9 in faculty was noticed in the case when intellectual fraud was discovered by teachers. Statistically speaking, the difference between the averages is significant ( $p=0,003$ ) and it may account for the different perception of the teacher status in high school as compared to faculty and, by the fact that the older an individual gets, the higher the internalization of emotions becomes. In the case of moral emotions which were not exposed there is no association relation but it appears in the case of emotions discovered by colleagues and teachers. Moreover, in the case of shame, differences are related to the other's significance. That is why it could be said that, for the one who breaks the rules, shame is directly proportional to the significance of the one who discovers it. When others do not cheat and the student is the only one cheating, guilt is most strongly internalized as compared to embarrassment which comes next and shame which is least frequent. Significant differences can also be noticed when the student is the only one who commits intellectual fraud as compared to the situation when the other colleagues commit intellectual fraud too, as shown in the figure below.

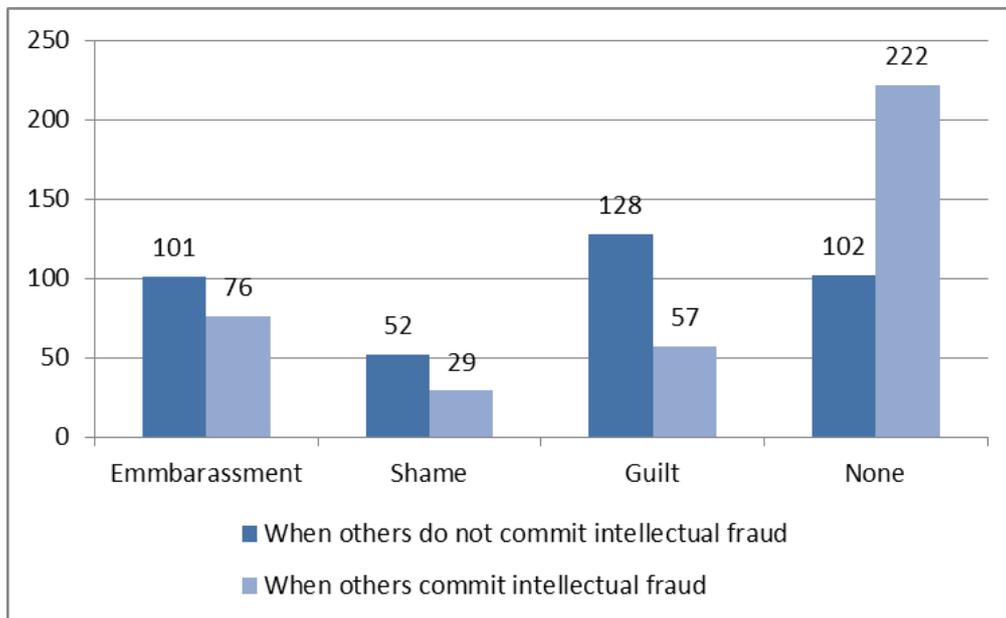


Fig. 1. *Measuring as frequency: Experiencing moral emotions according to context: when others do not commit intellectual fraud or when others commit intellectual fraud*

The graph above shows that a number of 222 students would feel no emotion whatsoever when others commit intellectual fraud and „only” 102 students would feel no emotion at all when others do not commit fraud. Embarrassment (101 case), shame (53 Embarrassment (101 case), shame (53 cases) and guilt (128 cases) register higher

values when the others do not cheat as compared to 76 cases of embarrassment, 29 cases of shame and 57 cases of guilt when others do commit intellectual fraud. It could be noticed that the relation to a context in which intellectual fraud is reproduced decreases the internalizing of moral emotions which confirms the so called „tolerable deviance” as Ştefan Boncu (2002) stated.

Starting from the sociological research conducted on the students from „Transilvania” University of Brasov, this paper analyzed students’ behaviour in the case of fraud. Although some break the rules and others notice this aspect, they choose not to take action in order to emphasize this anomic behaviour. As a result, a negative solidarity appears because there is no action for reducing anomic behaviour. This is tolerated by others who, apart from the fact that they do not try to stop it, they even join in increasing thus the proportion of intellectual fraud.

## **6. Final Comments**

The fact that intellectual fraud is not exposed constitutes the basis of group solidarity. Tolerance and complicity can be interpreted as being a sort of gift because somebody who does not break the rule may, at a certain point, decide that intellectual fraud could be a variant. Therefore, the tolerance for another member of the group will determine the person in question to adopt the same attitude that is the gift would come back as Marcell Mause (1923/1993) would say.

A decrease in emotion intensity is felt when intellectual fraud becomes group practice and with it, the „establishment” of morality because the deviance becomes tolerable while embarrassment, shame and guilt, which are regulating emotions, become less intense. Thus, in this situation, solidarity could be regarded as negative as the students lack the knowledge which, in the case of a medical doctor for example, could affect the quality of future medical practice. Therefore, the deviation from the norm would equate with the lack of morality which determines dysfunctions at the level of social structure.

As a result, negative solidarity determines the decrease of moral emotions, weakens morality and may affect social structure. Why is solidarity negative? Because it takes place while defending the self not the social structure. Human beings find a base for the self in situations consisting of good or bad feelings and the attention that they pay to achieving one’s goals.

Sticking to the conception of Siegfried F. Nadel’s (1957) who emphasized the importance of the „role” and of the „network” we can also take into consideration people’s fear of being excluded from the group in case they would expose those who commit intellectual fraud. Moral emotions are key components of social relations „regulating masters of attitudes, behaviours and social actions” while „embarrassment, shame and guilt determine conscience which is in turn connected to two big concepts: ethics and morality” (Atudorei, 2014, p.124) .

A new research direction could concentrate on the study of values regarding personal identity- perhaps in correlation with the wide *à la carte* religiosity of the Romanian students (Sorea, 2016), which would allow the creation of connections concerning the relationship between social structure and individual values which constitute the basis of morality and determine in one way or the other the internalizing of moral emotions.

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