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Article

Negative Emotional Energy: A Theory of the "Dark-Side" of Interaction Ritual Chains

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Abstract: Randall Collins' theory of interaction ritual chains is widely cited, but has been subject to little theoretical elaboration. One reason for the modest expansion of the theory is the underdevelopment of the concept of emotional energy. This paper examines emotional energy, related particularly to the dynamics of negative experiences. It asks whether or not negative emotions produce emotional energies that are qualitatively distinct from their positive counterparts. The analysis begins by tracing the development of Interaction Ritual Theory, and summarizes its core propositions. Next, it moves to a conceptualization of a "valenced" emotional energy and describes both "positive" and "negative" dimensions. Six propositions outline the central dynamics of negative emotional energy. The role of groups in the formation of positive and negative emotional energy are considered, as well as how these energies are significant sources of sociological motivation.

Keywords: sociological theory; sociology of emotions; rituals; social interaction; group dynamics

1. Introduction

One of the sociological theories developed in recent decades is Randall Collins' Interaction Ritual Theory (IRT). Building upon the works of Emile Durkheim [1] and Erving Goffman [2], Collins' theory has sought to demonstrate the importance of rituals and emotional solidarity in everyday life. Though it

is widely cited, Collins' theory has been subject to little theoretical elaboration. While several studies have empirically investigated IRT (e.g., [3–14]), few have expanded the architecture of the theory. We contend that this is due to the underspecified nature of one of Collins' critical concepts, *emotional energy*.

While Collins clearly conceptualizes what he means by emotional energy, it remains ambiguous how emotional energy might be operationally defined or empirically measured. It is also uncertain how emotional energy can be linked to concrete, primary emotions—like fear, anger, sadness, or happiness—or to secondary elaborations of primary emotions [15–17]—like pride, shame, love, and embarrassment.

Additionally, and of primary import for this paper, little theoretical work in the tradition of IRT has been directed toward specifying different *qualities* of emotional energy and, in particular, emotional energy that is *negative*. Because Collins' theory focuses primarily upon emotional energy that is positive, and that "feels good" [18], it hasn't reached its full expression in articulating the ritual dynamics of the dark-side of emotional experiences.

This is not to say that IRT has not been used to examine negative emotional states, events, and experiences; Collins' own work on violence [19] is an example of this. However, while he frequently discusses negative emotional experiences, like hate, vengeance, humiliation, rage, and resentment, he does not demonstrate how they fit into his theory of emotional energy. The ambiguity in the theory regarding the role of negative emotions raises several questions for the further development of IRT. What kind of an emotional energy state is produced by social conditions that create negative emotional experiences? Do negative emotions produce forms of emotional energy that are qualitatively distinct from their positive counterparts? Are negative emotions indicative of high or low levels of emotional energy? Can emotional energy be gained through negative emotional experiences and, if so, how might it be distinct from the emotional energy of solidarity? This paper seeks to address these questions, and to develop a theoretical elaboration of Collins' theory of interaction rituals. We contend that by specifying different types of emotional energy and, in particular, those that are positive and negative, we can articulate a richer, more dynamic, and more empirically applicable theory of IRT.

The present paper begins with a review of IRT as articulated by Collins. It examines the historical development of the theory, and summarizes its core propositions. The paper then moves to a discussion of a valenced emotional energy and makes key distinctions between both "positive" and "negative" emotional energies. Next, the argument outlines the central dynamics of negative emotional energy and specifies six central propositions that are fundamental to understanding a valenced emotional energy. The paper also outlines the role that groups play in the formation of both positive and negative emotional energy, and concludes with a discussion of how both forms of emotional energy can become significant sources of motivation to action.

2. The Theory of Interaction Ritual Chains

Collins' theory of interaction rituals finds its initial expression in his early work on conflict theory [20]. Here, Collins argues that the ritual dynamics of class-based interaction provide the foundation for the emergence and maintenance of class cultures and systems of stratification. This theory is further developed in Collins' seminal article on IRT [21] where he asserts that interaction rituals are the "microfoundation" by which class cultures, group life, and social interaction develop and change through time. Here, Collins describes the central elements of what he calls "interaction ritual chains", and

demonstrates how they facilitate the emergence of a marketplace of cultural and emotional exchanges that serve to utilize and reproduce two fundamental resources: *cultural capital* and *emotional energy*.

In IRT, the exchange of cultural capital is defined as the manifest content of a given social interaction. For Collins, conversation is the means by which individuals locate and connect themselves within a socio-cultural matrix of interpersonal relationships. Cultural capital can either be general to a given social or cultural sphere, or it can be particular to a specific group of individuals or encounter. While cultural capital is employed as an ignition mechanism to "spark" a social interaction, Collins argues that the essential and implicit consequence interaction is the exchange of emotional energy among the participants. For Collins, the exchange of emotional energy is the vital building block of social bonds, group solidarity, interpersonal relationships, class cultures, networks of creativity, intellectual communities and, ultimately, macrostructures.

While in more recent works Collins has elaborated these initial ideas [22–25], the core premises of IRT have remained consistent. According to Collins, the cultivation of emotional energy signifies the presence of a stable social bond between participants in an interaction, and is a function of both the successful exchange of cultural capital and the size of the group. In Collins' theory, the more successful the exchange of cultural capital among the members of a group, and the larger the group, the greater will be the emotional energy gained by individuals participating in the interaction.

In order for emotional energy to be exchanged, the following ritual conditions must be concurrent: physical co-presence, mutual focus of attention, common emotional mood, and a boundary to outsiders [21–23,26]. When the conditions of successful interaction rituals are present, and high levels of emotional energy occur, Collins theorizes that individuals seek to preserve the memory of this emotional energy through the use of symbols. The emotional charge carried by symbols, however, has a natural half-life and will tend dissipate over time unless they are "revitalized" through subsequent interaction rituals [22,24]. Levels of emotional energy are directly related to feelings of group solidarity such that greater amounts of emotional energy result in higher levels of solidarity among the participants, as well as a greater desire to repeat similar interactions.

Following the work of Kemper [27], in Collins' theory, emotional energy is also contingent upon the individual expectations of situational interaction partners. Because emotional energy payoffs are circumscribed by the dynamics of social exchange, individuals frequently enter situations with expectations regarding emotional energy outcomes. If these expectations are satisfied, their initial emotional energy levels will be maintained. However, experiences that positively transcend an individual's expectations will be more likely to produce increases in emotional energy, while situations that underwhelm or contrast an individual's expectations are more likely to result in decreases.

In the flow of daily life, emotional energy outcomes are important because they influence the overall disposition of individuals in their everyday routines, as well as the interpersonal choices they make in the marketplace of social interaction. In Collins' articulation of IRT, individuals who accumulate increased levels of emotional energy in their interactions will become more likely to manifest spontaneity, creativity and confidence in their daily life, while individuals whose emotional energy reserves become depleted will become more likely to experience depression, isolation and alienation.

Because the acquisition of emotional energy has positive outcomes, Collins contends that individuals will gravitate toward encounters that are more likely to provide higher emotional energy payoffs. The end result of this inertia toward accumulating emotional energy is the emergence of patterns of

interactions that align along the exchange of common stocks of cultural capital. These exchanges crystallize in a group life that becomes both patterned and stable as individuals cycle through interaction rituals that are both culturally familiar and emotionally rewarding. A summary of the exchange dynamics of Collins' theory of interaction rituals is presented in Propositions 1–7 in Table 1.

Table 1. Core propositions of the theory of emotional energy.

	Emotional Energy and Social Exchange
1	Emotional energy is a product of the successful exchange of cultural capital and signifies a stable social bond.
2	The success of an interaction ritual among a group of individuals, and subsequent emotional energy exchange, increases as the following ritual conditions are met: physical co-presence, mutual focus of attention, common emotional mood, and boundary to outsiders.
3	Emotional energy is stored in social symbols. These emotional energy "charges" have a natural half-life which and will dissipate unless the emotional energy is "revitalized" through subsequent interaction rituals.
4	The greater the amount of emotional energy produced from an interaction ritual the stronger will be the solidarity among the participants in the interaction.
5	The greater the number of interactions between a set of individuals the more likely these individuals will be to share cultural capital and emotional energy.
6	High levels of emotional energy produce spontaneity and confidence while low levels of emotional energy result in depression and alienation.
	Emotional Energy and Power/Status Dynamics
7	Emotional energy will increase if situational outcomes are greater than an individual's expectations and decrease if situational outcomes are below an individual's expectations. Emotional energy levels will be maintained if an individual's expectations are satisfied.
8	In situations with power disparity, those who are able to dominate another will gain emotional energy, while those who are dominated will lose emotional energy. The amount of emotional energy gained or lost will be directly proportional to their relative power.
9	In situations with status disparity, those who are superordinate and are able to give orders will gain emotional energy, while those who are subordinate and must take-orders will lose emotional energy. The amount of emotional energy gained or lost will be directly proportional to their relative status.
10	In situations of power or status equality, individuals who are successful in reaffirming a common group membership will all gain emotional energy. The amount of emotional energy gained will increase directly proportional to the relative power or status of the group which is reaffirmed.
11	The greater the social, symbolic, or physical power of the group with which an individual has a successful ritual exchange the higher the levels of emotional energy gain will be for that individual.
	Emotional Energy and Thinking
12	The emotional energy dynamics of thinking parallel those that drive interaction ritual chains.
13	Thinking tends to stream into internal conversations that have the highest emotional energy payoff such that the greater the emotional energy derived from an interaction the more likely that interaction is to be a source of future thought.
14	Chains of interaction rituals produce sacred symbols resonating with high levels of emotional energy. The greater the emotional energy attached to a symbol the more likely will be that symbol to be an object of future thought.
15	The greater the emotional energy derived from an interaction the more likely that interaction is to "reverberate" into, and inspire, future thought.
16	The greater the degree of emotional energy in "reverberated thought" the greater will be the potential for creative thought.

As Collins has developed IRT, two additional processes have become salient in elaborating the dynamics of emotional energy: power and status inequality [25,28], and the role of internalized

interaction rituals [22]. Following IRT, in situations of power disparity, individuals who are able to dominate others will gain (or steal) emotional energy, while individuals who are subordinated will lose emotional energy. The amount of emotional energy gained or lost is directly proportional to the relative differences in power between the interaction partners. Similarly, in situations of status disparity, those who are superordinate and are able to give orders will be able to gain emotional energy, while those who are subordinate and must take orders will lose emotional energy. Overtime, the emotional energy advantages of power and status are cumulative, such that high levels of power matched with high status produce an even greater potential for emotional energy accumulation than do either power or status in isolation. In situations characterized by power or status equality, individuals who participate in interaction rituals that reaffirm a common group membership (largely through the successful exchange of cultural capital) will gain emotional energy. The amount of emotional energy to be gained by each individual is directly proportional to the relative power and status of the group compared to the levels of power and status of other groups. In addition, the greater the social, symbolic, or physical power of the group with which an individual has a successful ritual exchange, the larger the level of emotional energy gain will be for that individual. A summary of the power and status dynamics of Collins' theory of interaction rituals is presented in Propositions 8–11 in Table 1.

Collins' work on the internalization of interaction rituals builds upon his earlier work in the sociology of thinking [29,30] by expanding the theory of interaction ritual chains into the subjective realm of what Mead [31] calls the "internal conversation". Collins [22] argues that the emotional energy dynamics of thinking parallel those that drive face-to-face interaction ritual chains, such that encounters that produce high levels of emotional energy resonate into patterns of thought that persist once the encounter is concluded. Interaction rituals that generate large amounts of emotional energy are more likely to be translated into subjective thought that reverberates with that emotional energy to preserve the memory of the ritual encounter. Thus, for Collins [18], because individuals are "emotional energy maximizers", thinking tends to stream into internal dialogue that has the highest emotional energy payoff. As a result, the greater the emotional energy derived from an interaction, the more likely that interaction, its participants, and its symbols are to be a source of future thought.

According to Collins, thinking is akin to a subjective reflection of dynamics of social interaction. Those interactions that resonate with considerable emotional energy are more likely to constitute the horizon of an individual's imminent thought. For example, the greater the emotional energy attached to symbols highly charged by previous interactions, the more likely those symbols are to "reverberate" in consciousness, and become the subject of, or inspire, future thought. Reverberated thoughts containing high amounts of emotional energy are likely to generate creativity, feelings of solidarity, and other productive activities. Thus, by producing high levels of emotional energy, interaction rituals chained together into networks of encounters can stimulate and inspire enthusiasm, innovation, intellectual activity, and ultimately (when individuals who have high emotional energy thoughts join together), intellectual communities [3,4]. A summary of the emotional energy dynamics of thinking is presented in Propositions 12–16 in Table 1.

Overall, what emerges from the core ideas of IRT is a picture of social life that depicts individuals as "emotional energy maximizers" who seek to protect their existing levels of emotional energy, while attempting to gain greater levels of emotional energy in a marketplace of interactions [18]. Because emotional energy "feels good", builds confidence and enhances creativity, individuals continually

navigate through a social space of existing "market opportunities" (and through their thoughts), seeking out situations of cultural capital exchange where their existing levels of emotional energy can be preserved and elevated.

Despite its innovation, what is striking, and somewhat conspicuous, about IRT is its one-dimensional conceptualization of emotional energy. For Collins, emotional energy resides on a continuum that ranges from low to high levels. Individuals who have few meaningful social attachments or who are excluded from group life are left with low levels of emotional energy and, as a result, experience depression, social alienation and a lack of self-confidence. By contrast, individuals who have a large number of meaningful social attachments and experience highly energized bonds of social solidarity generate high levels of emotional energy and, as a result, experience high levels of self-confidence, efficacy, and creativity. Therefore, for Collins, an infinite level of emotional energy reflects a highly intense, ecstatic engulfment in social relations, a sociological "oneness" with group life; this is Durkheimian collective effervescence at its zenith. By contrast, a zero-level of emotional energy indicates a complete lack of social bonds and concomitant feelings of group disconnection and disaffiliation; this is social alienation at its most extreme. While Collins' conceptualization of emotional energy is clear, it is important to note that within IRT emotional energy, at either low or high levels, is always *positive*.

In Collins' model of interaction rituals, *there is no direct conceptualization of negative emotional energy*. While it is easy to understand how Collins' model might explain the alienation and loss of emotional energy experienced by order-takers while taking commands from order-givers [28,32], it is more difficult to see how the theory might help illuminate the intensely negative emotions that often grow among individuals in interpersonal relations. For example, Collins' theory discusses, but does not seem to account for, many of the highly charged negative emotions that have been the focus of considerable analysis, like righteous anger [1], rage [33], resentment [34], shame [33,35], moral indignation [36], and vengeance [37]. In other words, Collins' model is one that primarily describes the dynamics of what we will henceforth refer to as *positive emotional energy*.

In IRT, negative emotional experiences and the "dark-side" of emotional energy dynamics, are left largely under-theorized. While Collins does articulate a model of short-term, transient emotions [22,38] as well as of the emotional energy dynamics of violent conflict (as expressed in forward panics, domestic violence, and the staged violence of sports contests) [19], this model neither accounts for different *types* of emotional energy, nor specifies the social dynamics that might produce a distinction between positive and negative emotional energy. In fact, under Collins' current statement of the IRT model, the emotional energy that drives violence and conflict appears to be indistinguishable from that producing religious ecstasy, enthusiastic patriotism, and romantic love. We suspect that the dynamics of emotional energy are more nuanced than Collins alludes, and that interaction rituals are organized around a wider spectrum of emotional experiences. With this in mind, we contend that there is occasion for a theoretical elaboration of Collins' IRT that works toward the conceptualization of a "valenced" emotional energy—one that is both positive *and* negative.

3. Toward a Conceptualization of Valenced Emotional Energy

In outlining this concept of a valenced emotional energy, it is useful to begin with a discussion of the different types of interaction rituals that, in Collins' argument, serve to produce emotionally energized

outcomes. For example, Collins ([22], p. 43) argues that emotional energy can be the outcome of a number of markedly different interactions among individuals:

> …whether participating in some great collective event such as a big political demonstration; or as spectator at some storied moment of popular entertainment or sports; or a personal encounter ranging from a sexual experience, to a strongly bonding friendly exchange, to a humiliating insult; the social atmosphere of an alcohol binge, a drug high, or a gambling victory; a bitter argument or an occasion of violence.

Emotional energy is, thus, the result of both the euphoria of contagious public gatherings, the ecstasy of sexual encounters, the bonding of friendly exchanges, *and* it is an outcome of humiliating experiences, heated arguments, and violent episodes. Clearly, emotional energy is the product of distinct and qualitatively different types of social interaction, some of which that could be considered polar opposites.

To help outline these differences, we suggest that it is valuable to conceptualize interaction rituals as resulting in two unique and divergent types of emotional energy: both positive and negative. *Positive emotional energy* (ee$^+$) is to be understood as emotional energy proper in Collins' theory and generally reflects an individual's favorably charged emotional disposition *toward* membership in a group or a social encounter. *Negative emotional energy* (ee$^-$), on the other hand, is to be conceptualized as an individual's adversely charged emotional disposition *against* membership in a group or a social encounter. In this way, ee$^+$ describes the emotional energy of *affinity* while ee$^-$ describes the emotional energy of *enmity*. According to Collins [38], low levels of ee$^+$ result in feelings of sadness and depression, and can create social experiences of boredom, alienation and isolation. High levels of ee$^+$ result in feelings of joy, love, ecstasy, passion and enthusiasm; emotions that Collins characterizes as "dramatic". Collins suggests that these emotions can produce social experiences like belonging, spontaneity, trust, confidence, and solidarity. In our re-conceptualization, we add that low levels of ee$^-$ result in feelings like avoidance and irritation, and the social experiences of unfriendliness, aloofness, and frustration. Higher levels of ee$^-$ can manifest as more highly-charged, "dramatic" emotions like embarrassment, resentment, anger, hatred, vengeance, rage, and fear; and result in the social experiences of conflict, aggression, distrust, cruelty, and revenge.

An illustration of the analytical distinction between positive and negative emotional energy is articulated in Table 2. This table is offered as a heuristic device to clarify the distinction between positive and negative emotional energies, and to guide further theoretical elaboration and empirical inquiry into IRT. The specific emotions included here are drawn from those commonly considered in Collins' work. For example, Collins [22,26,38] describes high levels of emotional energy as "powering" emotional experiences like ecstasy, enthusiasm, and love; and lower levels of emotional energy as resulting in experiences of depression, shame, withdrawal. While specific emotions are classified as reflective of either "low" or "high" levels of valenced emotional energy, empirical investigations into these emotional experiences will be necessary to refine these classifications. These classifications also help to frame important questions for advancing both IRT and the sociology of emotions, namely, how emotional energy is affected by, is converted into, or powers specific emotional experiences.

Table 2. Analytical distinction between positive and negative emotional energy.

	Positive Emotional Energy	**Negative Emotional Energy**
Symbolic direction	towards symbolic object	against symbolic object
Affective direction	affinity	enmity
Low-level expression	sadness, depression	avoidance, irritation
Social experience	boredom, alienation, isolation, loss of motivation	unfriendliness, withdrawal, frustration
Higher-level expression	joy, love, ecstasy, passion, enthusiasm	embarrassment, anger, shame, resentment, hatred, rage, fear
Social experience	belonging, spontaneity, trust, confidence, solidarity	conflict, aggression, distrust, cruelty, revenge

Under these definitions, it is important to point out that both the gain of ee$^+$ (which creates solidarity or creativity) and the loss of ee$^-$ (resulting in atonement or reconciliation) result in emotional energy outcomes that move in a positive direction toward affinity; while, the gain of ee$^-$ (producing feelings like hatred and resentment) and the loss of ee$^+$ (resulting in deflation and isolation) both have emotional energy consequences that shift negatively. In either affective direction, both emotional energies are significant sources of motivation to action. As will be argued, ee$^+$ mobilizes one toward group solidarity; ee$^-$ rallies one against a threat imposed by an enemy. It is the relative quantities of both forms of emotional energy that work together to provide the sociological inertia that drives interaction rituals.

The theoretical distinction between positive and negative emotional energy is a new contribution to Collins' theory of interaction ritual chains. However, a close reading of Collins' work, and other discussions of IRT, suggests intimations at the idea of ee$^-$, but without the concept ever being fully developed. For example, Collins [22,38] argues that negative emotions—like hatred, anger and rage—can be related to the dynamics of emotional energy, but primarily as transitory outcomes of interaction rituals. Additionally, Collins [19] suggests that the forward panics that often result in violent atrocities are fueled by emotional energy, but it is not clear if this is the emotional energy of group solidarity, the emotional energy of hate, or both. Theorists articulating IRT [12–14] also discuss the dynamics of negative emotions (like anxiety, shame, and guilt), but do not go so far as to connect them to a concept of valenced emotional energy. In fact, even though Turner [39] uses the term "negative emotional energy" in his summaries of IRT, he does not clearly and conceptually distinguish it from Collins's more general notion.

Neither is our concept of ee$^-$ far removed from the primary intellectual tradition that supports IRT—which was derived from the works of Collins' theoretical predecessors, Emile Durkheim and Erving Goffman. Durkheim [37] suggests that small groups are catalyzed and solidified by moral cohesion (which emerges by way of mechanical solidarity), and emotional effervescence (which comes from the collective structure and is often felt in religious life) [1]. For Durkheim, solidarity is a valanced idea, where positive solidarity is prescriptive, establishing moral guidelines for behavior and setting standards for group affiliation and membership; and negative solidarity is proscriptive, creating moral standards for normative prohibitions and the punitive measures that should be undertaken against those who violate them.

Much like with emotional energy, both kinds of solidarity are significant and distinctive motivating forces for individual and group action. Similarly, Goffman's [2,36] discussion of the "ceremonial" nature of everyday social life focuses on two categories of prominent rituals. Presentation rituals occur when, in following the obligations and expectations of the group, individuals seek to portray themselves in a manner consistent with the normative codes of deference and demeanor. Such rituals are affirmative and serve to establish and reinforce individual affiliation with, and loyalty to, the group structure and the moral precepts of interpersonal social life. Avoidance rituals, on the other hand, delineate those aspects of self-presentation, comportment and social interaction that are considered taboo, reprehensible and immoral. In social encounters, these are the actions that must be strictly avoided if one is to be regarded as a faithful member of the group. On the micro-level of interpersonal interaction, presentation rituals affirm the positive solidarity of the group while avoidance rituals establish the boundaries of negative solidarity.

In the analyses of both Durkheim and Goffman, it is clear that there are two opposing but complementary components of the solidarity structure of societies, and both are organized around interpersonal rituals that have both positive and negative dimensions. While Collins draws his idea of interaction rituals, and its central concept "emotional energy", from both of these works, his conception of emotional energy reflects primarily one dimension of the theoretical tradition developed by Durkheim and Goffman (that of the positive cult outlined by Durkheim, and the affirmative presentation rituals described by Goffman), without giving a rich theoretical treatment of the dimensions of social life that characterize Durkheim's negative solidarity and Goffman's avoidance rituals.

The conceptual difference made in this paper between positive and negative emotional energy is not intended to be merely a theoretical and an analytical distinction. Instead, we contend that there are also highly salient qualitative and empirical differences between the experiences of ee^+ and ee^-. Simply put, the lived experiences of ee^+ and ee^- are both felt and apprehended differently; as such, both ee^+ and ee^- resonate into unique experiential outcomes.

The positive feelings of exhilaration, passion, and warmth resulting from encounters filled with the ee^+ of Durkheimian collective effervescence are unmistakable in the camaraderie, solidarity, and sense of connectedness they produce. They are also qualitatively distinct from the lived experiences of ee^- that often accompany the transgression of sacred symbols, the violation of social relationships, and the contravention of trust, and build into negative emotions like hatred, resentment, and vengeance. In other words, ee^+ is likely to emerge when the collective dynamics of social rituals are successful; ee^- is likely to manifest when the social bases of ee^+ are challenged, undermined, or unfulfilled. In short, ee^- results as a consequence of failed or contentious social relationships and as a result of the attenuation or contravention of ee^+. In either affective direction, both emotional energies are significant sources of motivation to action. As will be argued, ee^+ mobilizes one toward group solidarity; ee^- rallies one against a threat imposed by an enemy. It is the relative quantities of both forms of emotional energy that work together to provide the sociological inertia that drives interaction rituals.

4. The Dynamics of Negative Emotional Energy

Introducing the idea of negative emotional energy into IRT allows for a richer and more dynamic conceptualization of the social processes that drive, and result from, social encounters. However, the conceptual difference made in this paper between positive and negative emotional energy is not intended

to be merely a theoretical distinction. Instead, we contend that there are also highly salient observed and felt differences between the experiences of ee$^+$ and ee$^-$, which resonate into unique experiential outcomes. As we argue in this paper, ee$^+$ and ee$^-$ (which are frequently interrelated and often exist simultaneously) are motivational reserves derived from interaction rituals, and contribute to a more complex and nuanced understanding of IRT.

Taken together, both positive and negative emotional energy are exchange resources that exist at varying levels of intensity on a continuum from low to high levels. It is our contention that both ee$^+$ and ee$^-$ are governed by similar dynamics, but in different directions. Thus, as proposed by Collins' theory, the levels of both positive and negative emotional energy are a product of participation in interaction rituals. However, while the rituals that produce both ee$^+$ and ee$^-$ share common, sociological ingredients, they result in a divergent set of emotional experiences and states. It is this last feature that makes a multidimensional conceptualization of emotional energy valuable in expanding the scope and applicability of IRT.

In the argument that follows, we outline six propositions that serve to expand Collins' theory and clarify the idea of negative emotional energy. These propositions formulate key elements of IRT central to Collins' articulation of contentious emotional relationships, namely the stratification of social exchanges and conflict. The first proposition begins by first offering a definitional statement regarding ee$^-$ and its relationship to failed social exchanges during interaction rituals. Here, ee$^-$ is conceptualized as a product of unsuccessful exchanges (Proposition 1). The next three propositions (Propositions 2, 3 and 4) expand Collins' insight into the stratified nature of interpersonal exchanges, and outline the relationship of ee$^-$ to group solidarity. As Collins suggests, because emotional energy is a product of group dynamics, ee$^-$ is also a consequence of the stratification inherent in many interaction rituals. Power and status divisions create different "market opportunities" for the acquisition of emotional energy, and have important consequences particularly for the cultivation of ee$^-$. As a result of the complexity of an individual's market opportunities for interaction rituals, the combination of positive and negative emotional energies shape the "in-group/out-group" dynamics of social exchanges. The final two propositions (Propositions 5 & 6) explore this point further to examine a topic that has been central to Collins' IRT, namely conflict. While Collins argues that emotional energy is a central factor in conflict, we suggest that ee$^-$ is an essential component in the emergence and intensity of conflict.

> **Proposition 1:** Negative emotional energy is the product of the unsuccessful exchange of cultural capital and indicates a failure to create, or the defilement of, a secure social bond.

Like ee$^+$, ee$^-$ builds upon stores of emotional energy that have been acquired from prior social interaction. The principal difference between these two forms of emotional energy is that while ee$^+$ is derived from successful interaction rituals, ee$^-$ is the result of failed or contested interactions. Collins theorizes that during social encounters in which an individual does not share common ritual ingredients with a group (and therefore cannot effectively participate in the ensuing interaction ritual), the individual will become socially alienated from the group and lose ee$^+$. At the same time, group members who successfully exchange cultural capital will gain ee$^+$ and experience an enhanced sense of solidarity. Drawing from this framework, we argue that excluded individuals may also experience growing resentment because of their exclusion, such that in losing the ee$^+$ of group solidarity they gain ee$^-$ against the group.

Such a loss of ee$^+$ matched with a concomitant gain of ee$^-$ is increasingly likely when this situation becomes overtly rife with conflict, and is exacerbated as it persists through time. Additionally, when ee$^-$ becomes ritually generated and accumulates over time, it can become the symbolic focus of future interaction rituals among those individuals who share antagonistic views toward a common group. This process is commonly found in in-group/out-group dynamics where groups commonly use negative emotions against a vilified group as a basis for the buildup of solidarity within their own group [40–42].

Collins argues that the gain of ee$^+$ makes one feel good and that the loss of ee$^+$ causes one to feel more neutral or apathetic; in our conceptualization we add that the gain of ee$^-$ makes one feel deficient or inadequate. When a person desires to become a member of a group, successful interactions with group members produce feelings of inclusion and solidarity, and all members will accumulate ee$^+$. If future successful interactions follow, the group will become further integrated and its members will desire to meet more frequently to recharge the ee$^+$ that emerges from their interactions. Even when apart, the group members will continue to experience the positive effects of their group membership status, including feelings of inclusion, belonging, confidence and value. However, if the person desiring to be a member of a certain group has an unsuccessful interaction with its members and is not welcomed into the group, the person will experience feelings of exclusion, like embarrassment or shame, and will gain ee$^-$. Thus, whereas gains in ee$^+$ reaffirm one's status in a group that they value and produce positive feelings, gains of ee$^-$ create negative feelings that, through repeated unsuccessful interactions, will build upon negative feelings and ultimately solidify one's experience as an outsider.

It is our assertion that both ee$^+$ and ee$^-$ can be, and typically are, simultaneously present within individuals' affective states and in the dynamics of interaction rituals. Both forms of emotional energy can be cumulative and contribute to an overall reserve of emotional energy; they can exist concurrently and in combination with one another; and they can both manifest in substantial quantities. As such, it is not merely the case that emotional energy *in general* is simply gained or lost within interaction rituals. In some instances, positive forms of emotional energy can be gained, while negative forms may be lost, and *vice versa*. In other instances, both forms of emotional energy may be simultaneously gained or lost.

With this preliminary proposition in mind, in the propositions below, we specify a set of conditions under which both ee$^+$ and ee$^-$ accumulate, decline, and combine in chains of interaction rituals.

> **Proposition 2:** When an individual experiences a loss of positive emotional energy toward an individual or group whose solidarity they value, they also experience a gain in negative emotional energy against this individual or group. The degree of negative emotional energy gained is a direct positive function of the salience of solidarity with the individual or group, the intensity of conflict that produces the loss of positive emotional energy, and the number of repeated encounters in which this loss of positive emotional energy occurs.

Following this proposition, we contend that Collins' assertions about emotional energy loss are perhaps too one-dimensional. We suggest that it is not simply the case that individuals who experience social alienation from salient interaction rituals lose emotional energy and become deflated because of their exclusion. Instead, they may also become spirited by such oppositional experiences and develop emotions like resentment, shame, or vengeance. Such oppositional emotions are not necessarily low emotional energy states of being (like those that might result from the loss of ee$^+$); but rather, they can produce highly energized but antagonistic experiences (like those described by the dynamics of

high levels of ee⁻).

Much the same can be said about social situations in which power and status are crucial variables. As Collins describes in IRT, individuals commonly find themselves in a stratified set of "market opportunities" for the acquisition of emotional energy. For example, order-givers are typically theorized as gaining ee⁺ while order-takers as characteristically losing ee⁺. However, the dynamics of power and status in interaction rituals likely result in much more nuanced and complex emotional energy outcomes. In stratified situations of subordination, order-takers do not always walk away deflated and emotionally subdued; instead, they can become significantly and contemptuously energized by ee⁻, developing a sense of frustration, resentment, jealousy, or even anger toward their superordinates. Such a proposal is consistent with the research on organizational dynamics that suggests subordinates, fueled by negative emotions, often resist or subvert structural goals in conditions of isolation and disparity [43–45].

Again, the extent of ee⁻ that an order-taker develops is a direct function of the degree of disaffiliation (or conflict) they experience and the persistence of this disaffiliation through a chained series of interaction rituals over time. Because it is a basic premise of IRT that a single interaction ritual rarely stands alone, emotional energy in a given setting is the result of previous interactions and the catalyst for future encounters. Over time, a series of positive interactions will result in feelings of solidarity and increased group membership (ee⁺), whereas a series of negative interactions will diminish these feelings of group cohesion and increase disaffiliation (ee⁻). However, much like the relationship between group salience and solidarity, the degree to which an individual identifies with a group tends to determine how much negative emotion is built up as a result of failed interactions [46]. For instance, if an individual experiences negative interactions with a group toward which they hold little salience, like a group of casual acquaintances, he or she is largely left emotionally unaffected, experiencing minimal gains of ee⁻. However, if an individual strongly identifies with a highly salient group, like a close clique of co-workers, he or she would likely experience higher gains of ee⁻ if suddenly excluded from the group. Such betrayals of relational trust are one of the primary markers of the deterioration of friendships [47,48], and surely are indicated by the accumulation of ee⁻.

Gains of ee⁻ also are expected to occur in direct proportion to the intensity of the conflict that produces a loss of ee⁺. Interaction rituals filled with low-intensity conflict (like those involving an accidental snub) would be anticipated to only result in low-level gains of ee⁻ (perhaps manifesting as feelings of awkwardness or irritation) and could quickly be resolved or forgotten. However, high-intensity conflict (like those involving instances of violence) would be expected to produce large amounts of ee⁻ and result in the experience of highly energized feelings, like humiliation, shame, anger, and perhaps even revenge [49]. If negative interaction rituals are repeated through time, where individuals either lose ee⁺ through failed interactions with salient groups, or gain ee⁻ through interactions with intense conflict, increases in ee⁻ are likely to escalate through this sequence of encounters.

> **Proposition 3:** Negative emotional energy is a product of dissonant social relationships and frequently manifests as distress, tension and an imbalance of emotional equilibrium. There is a tendency toward the mitigation and resolution of negative emotional energy matched with a motivation toward the maintenance of positive emotional energy. Negative emotional energy will persist in protracted antagonisms that iterate through time and remain unresolved.

As a general principle, the respective amounts of ee$^+$ and ee$^-$ possessed by an individual are resources that represent an individual's overall emotional disposition. Individuals with greater ee$^+$ will reflect characteristics of the positive side of emotional energy; while individuals with greater ee$^-$ will exemplify more negative states. Following the basic premises of IRT, we contend that the experience of higher levels of ee$^+$, when compared with levels of ee$^-$, is a preferred emotional state. In fact, the acquisition of ee$^-$ can become problematic for an individual under specific conditions: when overall levels of ee$^-$ transcend those of ee$^+$; when interaction rituals generate spikes in ee$^-$; and when the acquisition of ee$^-$ is of recent experience.

Any of these three conditions will compel individuals to mitigate these negative emotional states. While both positive and negative forms of emotional energy can develop as a result of interaction rituals, ee$^-$ is much more unstable than ee$^+$. Unlike the maximizing inertia of ee$^+$, feelings of increasing ee$^-$ are uncomfortable and unsettling, and the tendency is to quickly reduce this tension and return to more sanguine ee$^+$ states of inclusion, confidence, and solidarity. On an experiential level, ee$^-$ is more disconcerting than ee$^+$ because ee$^-$ is the felt remembrance of negative relationships and is an embodied energy of disaffiliation. Such negative emotions are prone to be a source of subjective anxiety and interpersonal tension, and are more likely to be remembered [50]. But, while ee$^-$ may be a powerful source of preoccupation, on its own it does not provide the feelings of confidence and belonging that are so frequently the product of successful interaction rituals. As a result of the lingering memories of negative emotional experiences, ee$^-$ that is left unmitigated is likely to become amplified in experience. Because individuals tend to find comfort and exhilaration in the warm glow of ee$^+$, and because they are more likely to become preoccupied with negative emotional experiences, they are often unbalanced by the uneasiness of ee$^-$. With a tendency to ruminate over negative experiences, there is a strong inertia toward the mitigation of dissonant emotions [51,52]. Thus, we contend that there is a compelling propensity for individuals to attempt to resolve ee$^-$.

While individuals may employ various techniques toward the resolution of ee$^-$, we propose that there are three primary methods through which this occurs. First, much like the avoidance rituals described by Goffman [2,53], individuals may seek to reduce the amount of ee$^-$ that they have acquired by avoiding interaction rituals that have a history of resulting in negative emotions. This approach relies on the dissipation of ee$^-$ as a result of its natural half-life, and can be described by the adage, "time heals all wounds". In fact, research has demonstrated that temporal distance from interpersonal transgressions is very important in the dissolution of negative emotions and assisting in the forgiveness and reconciliation process [54–56].

However, we suggest that temporal approaches are self-limiting because they assume that individuals have sufficient, psychodynamic skills and opportunities to work through their negative emotions without being drawn back into the routine flow of their daily interaction rituals that likely generated the ee$^-$ in the first place. In the absence of specific opportunities for the resolution of ee$^-$, antagonisms are left unchecked and the accumulation of negative emotion is very likely to occur [57,58]. Such accumulations can result subjectively in the "feeling traps" and "spirals of shame", discussed by Lewis [59] and Scheff [35], as well as in "cycles of abuse", like those that characterize the iterative nature of domestic violence [60]. Because individuals are inclined to reduce instances of negative interactions and thus avoid ee$^-$ buildup, they will often be forced to tolerate persistent, negative interactions when they don't

have the resources (financial, psychodynamic, therapeutic, emotional, social, geographic, *etc.*) to escape them, or when the opportunity costs for leaving a difficult situation are too great [61].

A second technique individuals may utilize in reconciling ee⁻ involves attempts to reduce the overall impact of ee⁻ by balancing it with gains in ee⁺. Here, research suggests that individuals can resolve the impact of negative emotions by acquiring more positive affect through comforting interactions with friends, family members, clergy, counselors, and even social events [62,63]. Such interactions may not necessarily result in the loss of negative emotions, but they can allow individuals to build up levels of positive feelings such that the overall impact of negative experiences recedes from the immediate horizon of experience. Thus, this approach to the resolution of ee⁻ involves reducing levels of ee⁻ to a level smaller than that of existing ee⁺, either as a consequence of a gain of ee⁺, a loss of ee⁻, or even as a result of both.

Finally, people also deal with the discomfort of accumulated ee⁻ by numbing or distracting themselves through the use of alcohol, drugs, work and food, as well as through the participation in activities such as gambling, exercise and sports. Due to the intensity of the feelings of ee⁻ and the relatively short half-lives of such substances and the limited thrill of these behaviors, individuals can become dependent on these coping mechanisms in order to reduce the potential impact of negative emotions [64].

> **Proposition 4:** The greater the degree of positive emotional energy derived from an individual's solidarity with a group the greater the individual's negative emotional energy will be against opposing groups. This negative emotional energy will be a direct function of the ritual density of the group and the level of conflict (or perceived threat) between the groups.

Emotional energy, as described by Collins, is mostly a group phenomenon, though it can also be experienced the individual level. According to IRT, individuals who can generate high levels of emotional energy (whether positive or negative) in the absence of emotionally charged ritual interactions are extremely rare. Instead, it is the ritual engagement of individuals in networks of social interaction that creates the emotional energy manifested and utilized by people in the flow of their daily lives [3,21,22]. Such focused and collective interactions are able to generate positive emotions (ee⁺) that create group cohesion [38,65], increase the performance of work groups [66], inspire loyalty [67,68], and establish identities that are intimately tied to groups [69,70].

Because individuals seek to maximize the ee⁺ resources that are important for group cohesion, we contend that members will work together to protect the group that is the source of their ee⁺. In an effort to safeguard their emotional energy investments, group members are likely to develop ee⁻ against opposing groups, particularly those that pose threats. Such a proposition is consistent with research that suggests that groups often generate solidarity by making negative comparisons against those groups they oppose [42,70,71]. These comparisons facilitate the emergence of intergroup biases that encourage members to develop positive evaluations of their own group and bind individuals more closely to that group. Thus, threats to a group generate increased solidarity (ee⁺) within the threatened group, but also hostility (ee⁻) against an opponent [72–75].

Extending the idea that ee⁻ is an outcome of group threat, we contend that the amount of ee⁻ generated against opposing groups will be a direct function of the degree of group solidarity (ee⁺) that is threatened, and the level of intergroup conflict with (or perceived threats posed by) the opposing group. Such a

proposition is supported by research that suggests that individuals with high levels of personal identification with a group are more likely to show greater in-group cohesion and more out-group biases in the face of threats to their group [70,76]. Additionally, similar research has demonstrated that higher levels of negative emotions are generated by more intense degrees of conflict, particularly among groups with high degrees of solidarity [77].

When ee^- is generated against an opponent, it can not only become an energy that fuels conflict, but also an important point of symbolic focus for group members; and it can facilitate the further accumulation of the ee^+ that creates collective identification and socio-emotional attachment to the group. We contend that high levels of ee^- can be a key resource in the ritual production and maintenance of ee^+. Thus, we propose a corollary to Proposition #4:

> **Proposition #4a:** Negative emotional energy has a reciprocal effect on positive emotional energy such that the greater the negative emotional energy against an opposing group the greater will be the positive emotional energy toward one's own group.

Following this proposition, we argue that ee^- can be an important means through which ee^+ is generated. Collins' study of terrorism [67] highlights this process in his examination of the ways in which the 9/11 terrorist attacks on U.S. soil generated not only feelings of hatred and vengeance (ee^-) toward the attackers, but also widespread patriotism, empathy, and solidarity (ee^+) among Americans. Other research echoes these results and finds that intergroup conflict produces greater levels of intragroup identification [42], higher feelings of group commitment and loyalty [40], and can facilitate the construction of collective identity [78]. Taken as a whole, these research efforts illustrate the ways in which the dynamics of positive and negative emotional energy can be interrelated. Feelings of antagonism toward a group (ee^-) do not only provide a foundation for collective fear and potential conflict; they also can generate solidarity, group identification, and loyalty (all of which are hallmarks of ee^+) among members of threatened groups. It is our contention that by understanding the interrelated nature of positive and negative emotional energy, IRT can more richly conceptualize the processes of group antagonism, and outline (and perhaps predict) the emotional energy dynamics of conflict.

> **Proposition 5:** The greater the mutual, negative emotional energy between rivals the more likely conflict will be to manifest between them. The simultaneous existence of positive emotional energy between these opponents can also mitigate the conflict produced as a result of this negative emotional energy.

In IRT, the dynamics of emotional energy are clearly important in understanding the processes of both conflict and violence [19,23]. We suggest that the conception of ee^- helps to clarify some of the ambiguities in Collins' argument, and further advances our understanding of the relationship between emotional energy and conflict. For example, in his recent work, Collins ([23], p. 2) argues that the dynamics of group solidarity and conflict are causally related, and that solidarity is a "key weapon" in situations of conflict. If we follow this line of reasoning, we are drawn to the idea that interaction ritual chains that produce high levels of group solidarity increase the likelihood of conflict, and are more likely to produce more intense, protracted and destructive antagonism.

In this analysis, emotional energy clearly plays an important role in generating group solidarity, but we contend that it cannot be the case that high levels of emotional energy simply lead to conflict by

themselves. We suggest that ee$^+$ may be a pre-condition in forming the group solidarity required for conflict, but it alone is insufficient as a causal factor. Instead, we maintain that ee$^-$ is an equally important, and complementary, motivating factor for conflict. While opposing sides may utilize ee$^+$ as a resource in shaping the internal solidarity *within* their respective groups, it is the existence of ee$^-$ *between* the groups that is most likely to ultimately provide the inertia for conflict. Cohesive groups bound by internal ee$^+$ are probably not prone to generate conflict without there being some simultaneous degree of ee$^-$ between these groups.

We maintain that positive and negative emotional energies also have collective and overlapping effects such that the combination of ee$^+$ and ee$^-$ allow emotional energy dynamics to take on new characteristics. It is our contention that, while ee$^+$ may be a "key" resource in situations of conflict, it is the level of ee$^-$ between potential combatants that provides the ignition for conflict. In fact, research suggests that negative emotions (like those which characterize ee$^-$) are important catalysts for both interpersonal and group conflict [73,77,79].

Using a valenced approach to emotional energy, we suggest that there are two emotional energy dimensions to conflict. On the one hand, ee$^-$ between rivals creates the impetus and inertia for conflict; as ee$^-$ increases so does the potential for conflict. On the other hand, the levels of ee$^+$ that support the respective sides of a conflict forecast the potentially destructive nature of the conflict; high levels of ee$^+$ on either side (or both) of a conflict are likely to increase the intensity and destructiveness of the conflict. Thus, ee$^-$ is a thermostat for gauging conflict and helps us understand the temperature, build-up, and outbreak of an antagonism; while ee$^+$ is, as Collins suggests, a "key weapon" of conflict and indicates the force that respective opponents bring to the clash once it has been initiated.

While the mutual existence of ee$^-$ between rivals can create the potential for the eruption of conflict, the simultaneous existence of ee$^+$ between these opponents can also mitigate this possibility. As Coser [80] has argued, conflicts are often established around, and arbitrated through, pre-existing relationships, contracts, or guidelines. Such "rules of engagement" serve to mediate antagonisms, and are exemplified by laws for armed conflict like the "Nuremberg Principles", the "Geneva Convention", and "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights". These rules are also seen in the unspoken etiquette of interpersonal conflict where one is expected to respect a rival by not "hitting below the belt" or taking "cheap" shots, keeping quarrels "in the family", and not making of conflict a "public scene". In fact, research in personal relationships [81] suggests that balancing negative relationships with positive emotions can increase the stability of a relationship and work to reduce the degree of overt conflict. Additionally, other studies [82] find that feelings of mutual respect between potential rivals can serve to mitigate the degree of negative reactions toward opponents.

Clearly, conflict is a function of both positive and negative emotional dynamics, and both forms of emotional energy make unique contributions to the development, instigation, and intensity of antagonisms. We believe that by bringing greater specificity to the respective contributions of positive and negative emotional energy in interpersonal antagonism that we can understand their mutual and intersecting influences on conflict, and their respective roles in motivating individual and group action.

> **Proposition 6:** Negative emotional energy is an important source of motivation to action
> that takes on a different quality when it is simultaneously accompanied by positive emotional
> energy. Positive emotional energy when stimulated by negative emotional energy can

become dramatically invigorating; negative emotional energy when supported by a foundation of positive emotional energy can become considerably more destructive.

In Collins' theory of interaction ritual chains, it is clear that emotional energy is a potent force of motivation, as it provides the primary inspiration for group solidarity, creative expression, and the shape of social networks. The motivational impact of emotional energy is perhaps most poignantly made in Collins' [3,4] celebrated analysis of philosophies, where emotional energy is shown to be the inspiration for intellectual creativity and genius. Because these philosophers are embedded in dense networks of interaction and exchange, Collins argues that they are uniquely positioned within webs of interaction rituals such that they are able to accumulate high levels of emotional energy. In particular, those who occupy the central nodes of their networks are those most likely to make influential contributions and, ultimately, to have their works venerated. For Collins, it is the ability to build up emotional energy that creates the conditions for eminent, intellectual accomplishment.

While Collins demonstrates that emotionally energized relationships fuel the productivity and creativity of philosophical genius, he also reveals that intellectual conflict, network marginalization and isolation play important roles in philosophical traditions. For Collins, high levels of conflict produce deflated levels of emotional energy, network marginalization, and ultimately historical obscurity. However, in Collins' analysis of philosophies, conflict ties are important, but *on their own* are not conceptualized as significant sources of motivation. Positive emotional experiences are the primary source of individual and group motivation in Collins' theory; negative relationships exemplify the failure to generate the positive effects of emotional energy.

We suggest that there is something more complex happening in these emotional energy exchanges, which can be extended more generally to the analysis of interaction rituals; and we believe that a valenced emotional energy allows us to imagine this new set of possibilities. While throughout his work, Collins argues that ee^+ stemming from group solidarity is the primary motivating force for social interaction, we contend that ee^- is also an important source of motivation. This point can be demonstrated by an examination of the network relationships between philosophers found in Collins' analysis of philosophies.

Take for example, the analysis of major German philosophers between 1735 and 1835 ([4], p. 190). Of the six major philosophers represented in this diagram who have prominent ties of affiliation (Kant, Goethe, Fitche, Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer), four of them have important conflict ties. In fact, the two philosophers in this network who have achieved the most notoriety (*i.e.*, Kant and Hegel) have nearly as many conflict ties as acquaintance or master/pupil ties. While Collins argues that it is key network position within a set of acquaintance or master/pupil ties (organized around the exchange of ee^+) that provides the sociological inspiration for creative and philosophical genius, it is also likely that the conflict ties (most assuredly bound up in ee^-) serve as important motivational forces for creative, philosophical activity. In Collins' own analysis, creative individuals do not appear to be simply inspired by the enthusiasm and effervescence present in their social networks—such individuals are also driven by the intellectual combat and competition stimulated by rivals. In examining Collins' analysis of philosophies, it is also important to note that philosophers surrounded solely by conflict ties (ee^-) never achieve notoriety. It appears that ee^- unsupported by a foundation of ee^+ does not bear the fruit of

self-efficacy; however, ee⁻ anchored by ee⁺ provides the basis for intellectual and creative stimulation that leads to motivational energy, determination, and success.

We hold that it is the combined effects of ee⁺ and ee⁻ that can provide some of the more compelling, creative, and even destructive consequences of emotional energy. For example, we can imagine individuals, or groups, concomitantly stimulated by both the camaraderie and cohesion of in-group solidarity (ee⁺), and the tension and frustration of out-group opposition (ee⁻), like those who engage in what Durkheim [83] called "altruistic suicide". These emotional dynamics are likely to be found among opposing sides in a war, sports contest, political campaign, intellectual rivalry, or even in a school yard fight. As the degree of these emotions escalate they can evolve into cycles of violence commonly found in bullying, blood feuds, vendettas, hate groups, and gang violence. Turner's [39] analysis reinforces this point, arguing that the feelings of "righteous anger" and "vengeance" (which we see as an amalgam of ee⁺ and ee⁻) often lead to destructive conflict, and are a product of the positive affect of intense in-group solidarity (ee⁺), and of utilizing negative emotions (ee⁻) against opponents.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we have suggested that Collins' theory of interaction rituals can benefit from a more complex and valenced conceptualization of emotional energy, particularly one which examines its negative dynamics. Interaction rituals do not simply produce "ups and downs" of emotional energy; they also frequently result in negative consequences, creating enduring and potent feelings of disaffiliation and animosity—what we have called "negative emotional energy". We believe that the conception of ee⁻ can be used to expand and enhance IRT by creating additional, analytic rigor to the investigation of interpersonal and group conflict.

While we offer six preliminary propositions in introducing the idea of ee⁻, we also believe that there are several questions that remain to be answered. First, how do varying levels of ee⁺ and ee⁻ (high or low) translate into specific outcomes? For example, do two groups with high internal ee⁺, and high ee⁻ against one another, create the conditions for an intense, protracted, and perhaps violent rivalry? How does this conflict change when only one group has high internal ee⁺, or when one has low ee⁻, etc.? Second, how do attribution processes affect emotional energy dynamics? How are ee⁺ and ee⁻ related to self-based attributions? How do they affect attributions to both in-groups and out-groups? Under what conditions such attributions more likely to be made? Third, what is the phenomenological experience of both ee⁺ and ee⁻? How does the subjective experience of emotional energy affect the dynamics of self-conception, self-identity, cognition, and patterns of thinking? Fourth, what happens to emotional energy when it is disconfirmed? Is betrayed ee⁺ simply lost, or is it converted into its opposite, ee⁻? Similarly, what happens to ee⁻ when it is reconciled? Finally, how can the processes of ee⁺ and ee⁻ be used to understand real world scenarios that involve complex, positive and negative emotions, like domestic violence, gang warfare, hate group activity, or even intellectual discovery and self-efficacy?

It is our hope that a valenced understanding of emotional energy promises to advance the theory of interaction rituals, both conceptually and empirically. IRT not only is an important contemporary extension of the Durkheimian legacy of the sociology of emotions; it also helps us understand the emotional and ritual dynamics of face-to-face interaction. Developing and refining IRT though a valenced conception of emotional energy not only advances IRT; but also moves us toward a more

general understanding of how emotions develop within, and contribute to, social interaction, group dynamics, and subjective experience. As Collins ([26], p. 362) suggests, the conception of emotional energy helps to theorize the "emotional power" of our social engagements and emotional experiences. A valenced notion of emotional energy brings us closer to a more nuanced analysis of the flow of emotions in our social world, and how these emotions energize both our positive and negative emotional experiences. Clearly, there are considerable opportunities for the future development of the theory of interaction rituals. It is hoped that this paper makes a contribution toward advancing IRT and promoting an understanding of the emotional dynamics of the social world.

Author Contributions

David Boyns and Sarah Luery contributed equally to the conceptual ideas in this paper, as well as the drafting and execution of the research. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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