



Interaction Ritual Chains (Princeton Studies in Cultural Sociology)

Randall Collins

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Sex, smoking, and social stratification are three very different social phenomena. And yet, argues sociologist Randall Collins, they and much else in our social lives are driven by a common force: interaction rituals. *Interaction Ritual Chains* is a major work of sociological theory that attempts to develop a "radical microsociology." It proposes that successful rituals create symbols of group membership and pump up individuals with emotional energy, while failed rituals drain emotional energy. Each person flows from situation to situation, drawn to those interactions where their cultural capital gives them the best emotional energy payoff. Thinking, too, can be explained by the internalization of conversations within the flow of situations; individual selves are thoroughly and continually social, constructed from the outside in.

The first half of *Interaction Ritual Chains* is based on the classic analyses of Durkheim, Mead, and Goffman and draws on micro-sociological research on conversation, bodily rhythms, emotions, and intellectual creativity. The second half discusses how such activities as sex, smoking, and social stratification are shaped by interaction ritual chains. For example, the book addresses the emotional and symbolic nature of sexual exchanges of all sorts--from hand-holding to masturbation to sexual relationships with prostitutes--while describing the interaction rituals they involve. This book will appeal not only to psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists, but to those in fields as diverse as human sexuality, religious studies, and literary theory.

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