1 | *The Theory of Micro-sociology*

This first chapter introduces the logics, assumptions, and theoretical underpinnings of micro-sociology in the context of peace and conflict research. A critical question when studying macro-social phenomena like peace and conflict is how micro-interactions between individuals shape larger patterns of conflict escalation, war, or peacebuilding. In this chapter, I therefore present and discuss how macro-phenomena are composed of micro-interactions. I then proceed to introduce key concepts and elements of the micro-sociological framework developed in this book, including interaction rituals, emotional energy, social bonds, micro-sociality, and socioemotional credit and discredit. These concepts are central to the micro-sociological study of peace and conflict and will be engaged throughout the book. Equally central are the dynamics of different modes of interaction. This chapter conceptualizes four forms of interaction that shape global politics, peace, and conflict: friendly interaction, conflictual interaction, dominant interaction, and low-intensity interaction. These modes of interaction can be analyzed both to understand concrete situations but also to grasp larger patterns of resistance, repression, trust building, and power. Throughout the chapter, I provide examples of how the four modes of interaction produce solidarity or tension and energize or de-energize participants, as well as how they feed into each other and constitute a larger web of conflict and peace. The chapter also discusses how modes of interaction can be changed and challenged, how interactions are also shaped by practices and material circumstances, and how intergroup conflicts and peace may imply different forms of interaction.

Micro-foundations of Macro-Social Phenomena

The micro-sociological study of peace and conflict starts with micro-interactions. In 1908, Simmel (1971 [1908], 23) argued that "society

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exists where a number of people enter into interaction." Similarly, peace, conflict, nonviolent resistance, and war can be said to exist or emerge when a number of people enter into interaction.

In traditional accounts, conflicts are often explained in structural terms; and even when micro-interactions seem to change the course of events, they are merely considered "trigger events" that initiate the already existing conflict; for example, by pointing to the many structural conditions fostering resistance in the Arab Uprisings (Salih 2013). Conversely, the micro-sociological argument is that macro-social phenomena comprise micro-situations. As argued by Collins (2004, 259), "micro-situational encounters are the ground zero of all social action and all sociological evidence. Nothing has reality unless it is manifested in a situation somewhere." Hence, even structural and cultural violence consists of everyday micro-interactions, such as going through a West Bank checkpoint, not receiving eye contact from higher castes, or being denied access to education. The structural is micro-practical.

Collins (1981) describes macro-social phenomena as aggregated micro-interactions, but importantly, it is not a simple math exercise of aggregating micro-interactions. The sum is more than its parts and, yet, it *is* its parts (just as a symphony consists of, e.g., the violinists, cellists, and pianists, but is also more than its parts).[1] This does not mean that all phenomena must be analyzed in micro-sociological detail; rather than an empirical imperative, it is an ontological argument that macro-social phenomena should not be considered an abstract, "vertical layer above the micro" (Collins 2009a, 21), but rather as larger patterns composed of micro-interactions in a complex system (or emergent symphony).

That said, one of the biggest challenges in micro-sociological studies of global political phenomena is the move from studying particular situations to investigating larger developments, such as how a civil resistance campaign succeeded or why a peace process fell apart. To study a phenomenon like the onset of civil war, we should ideally study all of the micro-situations from the conversations between a leader and their spouse about the prospects of going to war to the micro-situations

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[1] This thinking of emergence is not unlike complex systems theory, which has gained traction within peacebuilding in recent years (De Coning 2018, 2021).

happening on the frontlines. However, this is simply not possible (just as it is impossible to get access to all of the discourses surrounding a civil war). Thus, it is necessary to collect a sample of relevant situations and to triangulate with other data sources (e.g., interviews, reports, news) to understand the larger patterns (Collins 1981, 1983). Here, the micro-sociological framework has researchers looking for which interactions energize or de-energize individuals and groups, what contributes to a certain momentum, how momentum is sustained, how conflicts are generated at different levels, and how interactions generate social bonds or conflictual tension.

As I will show in Chapter 2, researchers and students of micro-sociology can also analyze key events, such as the signing of a peace agreement or a crucial state visit. How should we think of key events in the context of understanding macro-social phenomena as composed of micro-interactions? Do all interactions not have equal status or weight as they make up macro-social phenomena? I would argue that in the complex web of interactions making up macro-phenomena, some interactions, people, symbols, and artifacts are more "well-connected" than others; that is, they have more links to other situations than others. Such key events are often loaded with symbolic meaning, sometimes for generations to come. And similar to the "nodal points" within Laclau and Mouffe's (2014, 161) discourse theory, key events can structure the social formation around them. Such symbolic or key events can, for example, be violent atrocities that are remembered across generations, handshakes between politicians, or reconciliatory meetings between actors who subsequently travel around to tell the story of their transformative encounter.

Similarly, some individuals are more well-connected to others, engaging in more intense social interactions with more people. Highly energized people benefit from centrality in the network and have the potential to further increase their connectivity. As argued by Collins (2020a, 2), "it isn't enough to just count how many network ties someone has. Charismatic persons build networks: they attract followers (…); they create connections to people who become their allies, or their rivals or enemies." Hence, like the key events, they structure the social formations surrounding them. Borrowing the term from Laclau and Mouffe (2014), I refer to the people, artifacts, events, and concepts that hold great symbolic weight and are well-connected in the complex web of interactions and nodal points.

Interaction Rituals

My main inspiration for the theorization of micro-interaction derives from Randall Collins' (2004) theorization of interaction rituals. Collins takes the term "interaction ritual" and its implicit theorization of micro-interactions and the productive power of the situation from Goffman (Collins 2001, 17), and he is "guided by the implicit logic of Durkheim's analysis" (Collins 2004, 65) in arguing that interaction rituals generate emotional energy and solidarity (Durkheim 2001). Collins' contribution to the Durkheimian and Goffmanian approaches to interaction rituals is his concretization of the concept, specifying ingredients and outcomes, rooting it in biological research, and most importantly perhaps the ability of his model to if not measure then at least assess the successfulness and intensity of a ritual (Holmes and Wheeler 2020).

Scholars are increasingly recognizing how rituals "generate and stabilise but also trouble and unsettle through multiple, non-linear, and contradictory intersectional relations of people, protocols, and policies in world politics" (Aalberts et al. 2020, 243). But whereas the analysis of rituals often focuses exclusively on formal rituals, the notion of "interaction rituals" does not necessarily refer to formal rituals but rather to all social situations in which individuals come together in bodily copresence, mutual focus of attention, and shared mood with a barrier to outsiders (Collins 2004). These can be informal rituals, such as saying "goodnight" or "goodbye," or highly formalized rituals, such as weddings or religious ceremonies. Hence, unlike the Kustermans et al. (2022) description of rituals in International Relations (IR), Collins (and Goffman) does not see interaction rituals as something other than "the everyday." Moreover, contrary to the commonsensical connotations of the word "ritual," Collins does not emphasize repetition as a necessary condition for something to count as a ritual. For social bonds to persist, continuous interaction rituals are necessary and often repeat themselves, but it is entirely possible to have a successful interaction ritual with, say, a stranger you meet on an airplane without ever repeating that ritual. The criteria for determining whether something is an interaction ritual are, thus, the ingredients listed by Collins and not whether a given phenomenon is repeated. The theory of interaction rituals does not focus on how ritual elements are normalized and socialized, such as whether you should wear black at a

funeral or how you should approach a stranger in a bus. Rather, the focus is on the social ingredients and outcomes of rituals; that is, their social function rather than their specific details, norms, or cultural variance.

Collins theorizes interaction rituals in terms of ingredients and outcomes. The ingredients for successful interaction rituals are (1) group assembly with bodily copresence, (2) barriers to outsiders, (3) mutual focus of attention among the participants in the same object or event, (4) shared mood. The two latter ingredients reinforce one another in rhythmic entrainment. A central element in interaction rituals is the rhythmic nature of the interaction (speech, breathing, body movements), in some cases even accompanied by music and dance. Rhythmic interaction implies a back-and-forth interaction and responsiveness between two or more actors (like a good conversation) or acting in the same rhythm (like dancing or marching). Rhythmic interaction can be observed in the "the pace of turn-taking" in actions and talk (Collins 2020b, 479). As noted by Solomon (2019, 1003), "human rhythms are rarely as perfectly metronomic as a ticking clock, and it is often this 'imperfection' through which social rhythms proceed at different speeds and frequencies yet maintain perceptions of tempo." Importantly, rhythms can intensify collective emotions (Solomon 2019) and can be used to build up tension.

If an interaction ritual is focused, with bodily copresence, a barrier to outsiders, and rhythmic entrainment, it can generate (a) emotional energy in individuals, (b) solidarity between participants,[2] (c) symbols of social relationships, and (d) shared standards of morality[3] (Collins 2004, 48). Mogan et al. (2017) and Draper (2014) have found empirical support for the argument that dense interaction rituals producing collective effervesence contribute to generating solidarity and social bonds over time.

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[2] Whereas Collins (2004) refers to solidarity as the outcome of interaction rituals, Holmes and Wheeler (2020) have renamed this "social bonds." In this book, I will use the two terms interchangeably. Whereas solidarity is often used in the form of "showing solidarity"; for example, toward marginalized groups. What is meant here, rather, is a form of social glue binding people together.

[3] Cultural trends may play into the equation of whether a given ritual will be successful; for example, depending on the culture, there are different codes for the length of pauses that are allowed (Collins 2004, 110).
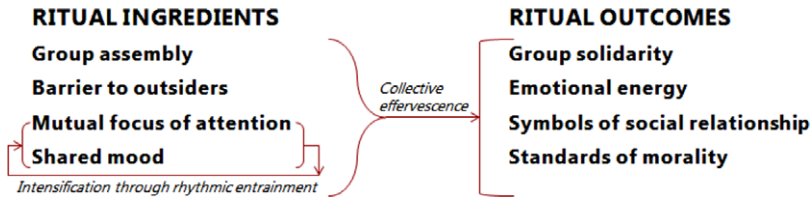
RITUAL INGREDIENTS
Group assembly
Barrier to outsiders
Mutual focus of attention
Shared mood

Collective effervescence

RITUAL OUTCOMES
Group solidarity
Emotional energy
Symbols of social relationship
Standards of morality

Intensification through rhythmic entrainment

Figure 1.1 Collins' model of interaction rituals

Collins' model of interaction rituals resembles a recipe with ingredients on the left and outcomes on the right (Figure 1.1). Talking about ingredients rather than factors, variables, or causes are interesting methodologically. Metaphorically, they imply thinking of social life not as a billiard game where balls cause other balls to move, but rather as a recipe where ingredients can be mixed together to make up a cake. In the latter metaphor, the input is, first, multiple and not a question of cause and effect; and, second, each ingredient can vary in degree, which produces differentiated outcomes. The flour, sugar, butter, and water do not *cause* the cake; rather, the presence and allocation of these ingredients tell us something about whether the cake will be tasty, failed – or be a cake at all. Similarly, the ingredients in Collins' model tell us something about whether an interaction ritual will be intense, failed, or be an interaction ritual at all.

Bodily copresence is a key ingredient in Collins' (2004, 64) conceptualization of rituals, as this enables "human beings to monitor each other's signals and bodily expressions; to get into shared rhythms, caught up in each other's motions and emotions; and to signal and confirm a common focus of attention and thus a state of intersubjectivity." The human tendency to get rhythmically entrained in bodily copresence corresponds to neuro-biological findings that human nervous systems tend to become "mutually attuned" (Collins 2004, 64) and that this attunement generates solidarity, social bonds (Mogan et al. 2017).

Technological developments have allowed people to communicate over long distances and to see those with whom they are talking via teleconference or even as a hologram. Interaction via some form of media, where actors respond directly to each other's utterings or actions via chat, email, or phone, can share similar dynamics with offline interaction (DiMaggio et al. 2018). Likewise, even an exchange of letters can be an element in long-distance interaction rituals

producing social bonds, albeit weak ones (Wheeler and Holmes 2021). However, bodily copresence often makes interaction more focused and in tune, not least because the mediation of body movements and utterings is often slightly delayed. For example, television and radio producers all try to get their interviewees into the studio rather than speaking to them via teleconference, as this supports the rhythmic entrainment and focused interaction between journalist and interviewee. Especially when it comes to large-scale interaction rituals like concerts, protests, or diplomatic meetings (Bramsen and Hagemann 2021; Vandenberg 2022), it is almost impossible to recreate attuned, focused interaction online. Online communication may be relevant for establishing connections between people, including heads of state and diplomats, but face-to-face interaction is necessary for the formation of strong social bonds (Holmes and Wheeler 2020).

Emotional Energy

A central outcome of interaction rituals is *emotional energy*, which can be seen as aggregated emotions such as "strength, confidence and enthusiasm" (Collins 2008, 19) that energize individuals. In contrast to short-term emotional outbursts, emotional energy is a long-term emotional resource that is generated in concrete interaction but carries over from situation to situation, providing individuals with energy for future actions (Collins 2004, 107). Hence, emotional energy feeds into new interactions and shapes the actor's ability to dominate or avoid domination. Emotional energy is crucial not only for how actors feel in particular situations but also for how they are in the world over time, their ability to act, to make decisions, and to avoid domination (Bramsen and Poder 2018). Emotional energy is the fuel that enables actions and decision-making and "gives the ability to act with initiative and resolve, to set the direction of social situations rather than to be dominated by others in the micro-details of interaction" (Collins 2004, 134). Hence, a person with low emotional energy has difficulties making decisions, taking initiative, and ends up being overruled in many situations. Conversely, high emotional energy levels strengthen one's capacity for action and for mobilizing and convincing others, setting the rhythm for interactions. Successful individuals have high levels of emotional energy, to the extent that they can attract and energize other people. The strength of the emotional energy concept

is that it is the aggregated level of emboldening emotions without specifying or distinguishing between particular emotions. Emotions are often mixed (e.g., you can be simultaneously angry and hopeful), but the important thing when accounting for agency is whether individuals are energized or not.

Collins' basic assumption about the human condition is that we are driven by an interest in maximizing our emotional energy and, thus, navigating preferences depending on the output of emotional energy, such as whether to be part of one group rather than another. Collins (1993, 214) specifies that "whether one is the most attracted to a church service, a political rally or an intimate conversation is determined by each individual's expectations of the magnitude of EE [emotional energy] flowing from the situation." This creates a "market place" wherein individuals move from interaction ritual to interaction ritual to obtain the greatest emotional energy (Collins 2004, 44). In this way, Collins' theory resembles assumptions in rational choice theory, but it substitutes utility maximization with emotional energy. By thinking beyond economic benefits and including emotional and social benefits, unlike rational choice, the theory of emotional energy can for example also account for peoples' engagement in altruistic behavior. People are recharged by cheering up others, helping the poor, or even sacrificing their lives for a cause, often because such charitable actions are energizing interaction rituals, such as where a grateful smile from a beggar or a charity party energizes the do-gooder (Collins 1993, 221). The drive to maximize emotional energy is not a rational calculation of emotional costs and benefits; rather, it is more like following one's "gut feeling" (Poder 2017). Just as people can be drawn toward energizing interaction, they are, according to Scheff (1997), also drawn toward social bonding with others. Malešević (2022) sees this as one of the main reasons for soldiers to go to war; because of the social community entailed by soldiering.

This book neither promotes energy maximization nor social bonding as the only or primary motivation for all human action. Rather, as put forward by Salmela (2014, 9) the book gives room for motivational pluralism that "allows us to do more justice to people's first-person accounts of their own motivation." While I recognize that human beings are often attracted to energizing interactions like demonstrations or social gatherings, the book does not presuppose that people are generally motivated to maximize their emotional energy. Rather,

I argue that people may be motivated by very different and highly subjective things but that they are *driven* by emotional energy; for example, people have the energy to act when they are energized, whereas when they are de-energized their agency is limited, even if they know what they want or that is the right thing to do. Hence, I consider emotional energy a motivational and agency-generating force or fuel rather than an end goal motivating all action. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that emotional energy is a complex, fluid matter that is built up through intense interactions[4] but manifest in context-specific ways and may wax and wane, depending on many factors.

Socioemotional Credit and Discredit

The theory of interaction rituals focuses primarily on the form rather than content of interactions: How people talk or interact rather than what is being said. Without going into the specific semantics of what is being said, I do however find it relevant to also take into account the overall content of the exchange of words. I use the term *socioemotional credit* to address that which is traded, returned, and transferred in an interaction.[5] The term is borrowed from Candace Clark (2004), who has theorized the socioemotional economy of communities, where people exchange, claim, and distribute socioemotional resources:

A socioemotional economy, though highly improvisational, is a patterned, organized system for managing the day-to-day flow, or give-and-take, of socioemotional resources among members of a community (...) It parallels and is at many points intertwined with the money-goods-and-services economy. And, it is every bit as consequential. (Clark 2004, 406)

According to Clark, socioemotional resources may amount to sympathy, gratitude, or even love. In international politics, I argue,

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[4] While people may also be energized by a walk in the forest in nature or other activities (Baker 2019), this book focuses on the energy emerging from social interaction.

[5] Socioemotional credit relates to conceptualizations of emotional capital, an addition to the four Bourdieusian capitals. However, emotional capital is theorized either as the skills and capacities to read and respond to the emotions of others (Cottingham 2016) or as competent emotional behavior (Heaney 2019). Instead, what I am getting at here are the emotional "gifts" that are traded, claimed, and exchanged in social relations and communities.

socioemotional credits can take the form of respect, recognition, paying tribute, honoring, or apologizing. When state representatives gathered in Israel in 2020 to commemorate the Holocaust, for example, they honored the losses from the genocide and paid respect to the Israeli state. At the same event, Putin indirectly accused Poland of beginning World War II together with Germany, which could conversely be regarded as a way of attributing *socioemotional discredit*. Whereas symbolic gestures or speech acts like saying "thank you," the giving of a compliment, an encouraging comment, or an apology all amount to the transfer of socioemotional credit, socioemotional discredit can take the form of disrespecting, dishonoring, ignoring, and criticizing.

Economic metaphors are also implicit in much of the (English) language used to describe acts of giving socioemotional credit: We *pay* attention, *pay* tribute, and *pay* respect. Likewise, when it comes to socioemotional discredit, revenge is referred to as payback time. Sticking to the economic metaphor, one can argue that there are different *currencies* of socioemotional credit and discredit depending on cultural traditions and personal preferences. Some symbolic gestures are of higher value in some cultures than others, and some may be misunderstood or simply not valued. Likewise, when it comes to socioemotional discredit, some acts, such as burning flags or political cartoons, are seen as very dishonoring in some cultures and less so in others. The disagreement over what counts as socioemotional credit and discredit can give rise to conflict within and between states.

One way of transforming antagonistic interaction and potentially initiating friendly interaction is to transfer socioemotional credit to one's opponent, either by apologizing for past atrocities and/or by giving symbolic gifts, such as a state visit, honoring of a particular symbol, or economic support. In interpersonal conflict, this may simply be in the form of an apology or a reconciliatory, disarming smile that potentially marks the end of conflict and the beginning of a new form of interaction. In international conflicts, this amounts to various goodwill measures or a sufficiently powerful reconciliatory move (Osgood 1962). For example, Sadat's visit to the Temple Mount in 1977 represented a way to pay great respect and recognition to Israel for initiating a new form of relationship (Koven 1977). In the IR literature, such reconciliatory moves are often referred to as "signaling;" that is, one party is signaling a change in attitude. While this may be true,

recognizing the emotional dynamics at play is also important; it is not only about signaling a different attitude, but also about initiating a new feedback loop. Transferring socioemotional discredit in conflicts is a very vulnerable process, however, as the one party's attempt at initiating a positive spiral of interaction may not be understood as such because the other party is still in a conflict mode, or the conciliatory action may be exploited (or taken for granted), and thus not met with appropriate counter measures (Kelman 2007, 175).

Socioemotional credit is not only offered and transferred but also requested. Requests for apologies are particularly commonplace in international relations (Adams and Kampf 2020) and can be considered demands for socioemotional credit. For example, when the United States' Permanent Representative to the United Nations Samantha Power asked of Russia, Iran, and the Syrian regime, "Are you simply incapable of shame?", criticizing their actions in Syria, Russian representative Vitaly Churkin responded by commenting that Power acted "as if she is Mother Teresa herself." On his way out from the meeting, he added to the journalists, "I'm expecting an apology." Likewise, China demanded in January 2020 that Danish newspaper *Jyllandsposten* should apologize for having printed a political cartoon featuring a Chinese flag in which the stars had been swapped out with coronaviruses.

The exchange of socioemotional credit and discredit often follows a reciprocal logic: Socioemotional credit is greeted with socioemotional credit, socioemotional discredit with socioemotional discredit. As Denmark made reference to freedom of speech and refused to apologize for the caricature of the Chinese flag, Twitter and Weibo ("Chinese Twitter") were flooded with caricatures of the Danish flag featuring swastikas, sanitary napkins, and the number of hours it took Germany to subdue Denmark in 1940. Similar reciprocity was seen when Polish prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki criticized French president Macron for speaking with Russian president Vladimir Putin during the war in Ukraine. Macron responded that Morawiecki is an "extreme-right anti-Semite." Hence, this exchange of socioemotional discredit reflects a retaliatory "tendency to impulsively seek immediate retaliatory satisfaction" as a response to provocations (Hall 2017, 34); a form of negative reciprocity (Löwenheim and Heimann 2008). The expected reciprocity in the exchange of socioemotional credit/discredit also becomes visible in the problems

caused when socioemotional credit is not reciprocated with socioemotional credit. Wong (2021, 362), for example, describes a meeting between the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat and Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin at Camp David in 1978, where Sadat did not return Begin's reassurance that he had "complete confidence" in Sadat: "Sadat had refused to perform what was in essence an 'obligation' in any interpersonal—let alone diplomatic—contact, that is, to return a compliment."

In conflicts, parties compete to win the most socioemotional credit for themselves by coming across as the one with "the most right" on their site; the most right to sympathy and the moral and symbolic upper hand. Goffman (2005 [1967], 24), for example, describes polite, indirect "aggressive use of face-work," where the parties attempt to score "as many points against one's adversary and making as many gains as possible for oneself."

Paying socioemotional discredit to leaders is often a crucial part of nonviolent uprisings. This takes the form of burning flags, destroying statues of the leaders or burning them in effigy, or throwing shoes at pictures of the leader. Likewise, the practice of giving socioemotional credit has been used strategically in nonviolent uprisings, where protesters kiss, hug, and praise the soldiers to win their support, initiate friendly interactions, and, hence, disrupt attempts at violent domination (Ketchley 2014).

Whereas emotional energy is an aggregated level of emboldening emotions, socioemotional credit is an overall category for the emotional gifts that can energize you but which also often require proportional payback in the form of gratitude or other emotional credits. Unlike emotional energy, which is stored in particular individuals and emerges in concrete interactions, socioemotional credit and discredit can be transferred, claimed, and given at the level of social groups and can therefore "travel," not only through direct interaction but also through media and other symbolic forms of interaction.

Although socioemotional credit and discredit can also be transferred via, for example, social media or in letters (Wheeler and Holmes 2021), it does not change the micro-sociological premise that all international politics are rooted in specific situations. When studying the exchange of socioemotional credit, one would also often have to take non-video material into account, but also analyzing video material can still add a lot. For example, studying a particular speech in which socioemotional

credit is granted, it would be crucial to look at not only what is being said but also *how* it is said (tone of voice, body language) and how it is received (e.g., clapping, smiling, laughing) (as for example in Ross' (2013) analysis of Milošević's speech).

Four Modes of Interaction

Inspired by Collins' theorization of interaction rituals and building on Bramsen and Poder (2014, 2018), I develop four modes of interaction[6]: *friendly interaction, low-intensity interaction, conflictual interaction,* and *dominating interaction*. These four modes of interaction refer to different ways and rhythms of interacting with a certain momentum that invites all participants to follow a certain "script" that is difficult to change and challenge. These "scripts" of interaction are not only (possibly not at all) conscious guidelines and norms, but rather embodied urges and scopes of action. Whether an interaction is to be characterized as dominating, conflictual, or friendly is not given by the very interaction itself, whether gift-giving, fighting, or demonstrating. Although different actions often involve particular scripts, where an action such as gift-giving is expected to be met by gratitude, the gift-giving ritual may also assume the form of domination when the receiver is belittled and dominated. But it can also take the form of equal, friendly interaction, where both parties are energized (Clark 2004, 1997; Mauss 1967).

Rather than exact or exhaustive, the forms of interaction are to be considered heuristic conceptualizations in line with the argument of Wacquant and Bourdieu (1992, 23):

The peculiar difficulty of a sociology (…) is to produce a precise science of an imprecise, fuzzy, wooly reality. For this it is better that its concepts be polymorphic, supple and adaptable, rather than defined, calibrated and used rigidly.

Hence, other forms of interaction may be identified by others or, depending on the developments in a particular case, it may be necessary to mix or go beyond the conceptualizations to comprehend the developments of the interaction.

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[6] I use the term "modes of interaction" rather than interaction rituals to include broader and more fluid processes of interaction that can change and mix more easily and without necessarily a clear beginning and end in time as an interaction ritual. However, I will continue to use the term interaction ritual throughout the book, especially when emphasizing the ritualistic characteristic of the interaction.

Friendly Interaction

Friendly interaction implies two or more individuals responding to each other's utterings and signals in a rhythmic, focused, and appreciative manner. Friendly interaction[7] corresponds to Collins' (2004, 2019) original conceptualization of what he refers to as "a successful interaction ritual." Figure 1.2 illustrates the core ingredients of friendly interaction and how it both energizes and generates social bonds between actors. The level of energy and strength of the social bond depends on the intensity and frequency of the interaction. While the model portrays a dyad, the interaction may occur between numerous participants.
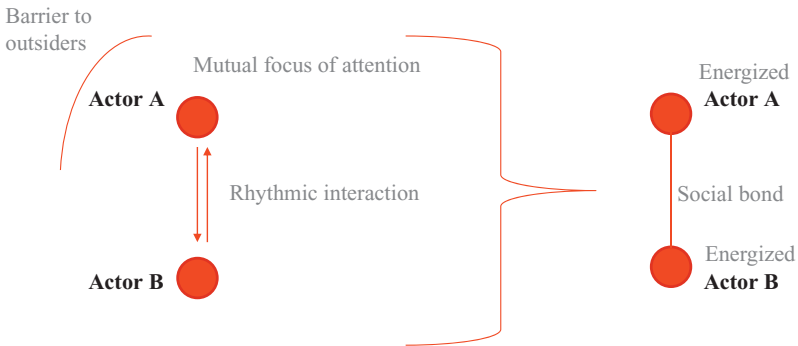

Figure 1.2 Friendly interaction

In global politics, friendly interaction occurs in many arenas, from diplomatic dinners and secret talks in the corridors of a meeting to demonstrations in the streets. Demonstrations resemble textbook examples of intense, friendly interactions that foster social bonds and energize participants. The following photograph (Image 1.1) shows

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7 Bramsen and Poul Poder and I have previously described this modus of interaction as cooperative interaction (2018) or solidarity interaction (2014). Friendly interaction is more fitting, however, as the parties need not cooperate, as such (e.g., you may have a friendly fight in sports or politics where you, although disagreeing and not cooperating, do so in an attuned manner, where you laugh at each other and respond timely to each other's utterings in a light and friendly tone). Likewise, the term "solidarity interaction" is problematic, as the other forms of interaction are not labeled in terms of their outcome.

Image 1.1 Demonstration in Bahrain 2011 (Bahrain Viewbook)

thousands of people who gathered in Bahrain in 2011 to challenge the regime and promote political rights, dignity, and participation. The bodily copresence between the demonstrators, the mutual focus of attention on the Pearl Roundabout statue, the clear barrier to outsiders (i.e., it is obvious who is participating in the demonstration), as well as the rhythmic entrainment with chants, rhythmic marching, chanting, and shared emotions, make up the ingredients of intense, friendly interaction that energizes participants and amplifies the solidarity among them.

Likewise, friendly interaction can take place in diplomatic meetings (Holmes and Wheeler 2020, Bramsen 2022b), where leaders and diplomats interact in a focused, engaged, and attuned matter, paying attention and responding timely to each other's utterings with nodding, smiling, and open body language. In turn, this strengthens the social bonds and trust between participants, which can foster conducive conditions for a peace agreement. Reflecting on his role in the Northern Ireland peace talks, then UK prime minister Tony Blair (2014, 1) describes how the enmity in the room "was counterbalanced by human interaction" and that this "counterbalance was essential." Here, Blair emphasizes the crucial factor of human interaction and how it can transform relationships, however subtly.

Low-Intensity Interaction

Not all interactions energize individuals and generate emotional bonds. Often, the ingredients of a successful interaction ritual are not present. As Collins (2008, 20) puts it: "there is a low level of collective effervescence, the lack of momentary buzz, no shared entrainment at all or disappointingly little." Participants may, for example, have their attention somewhere other than the common activity, and the rhythm of interaction may be very slow. In such situations, the interactions will not produce solidarity, and participants will instead lose emotional energy and "come away feeling depressed, lacking in initiative and alienated from the group's concerns" (Collins 2008, 20). Collins refers to these modes of interaction as "failed interaction rituals," but I find it more accurate to describe them as "low-intensity interaction,"[8] as they may not be intended otherwise (and thus not be failed); they may sometimes even be intended to drag energy out of the situation and prevent intense interaction. As illustrated in Figure 1.3, low-intensity interaction can de-energize participants and generate little or no bonding between them.

Low-intensity interaction occurs, for example, when two people with little to talk about interact with long pauses, failed attempts at discussing particular topics, and attention away from the conversation; for example at a party looking for other more exciting conversation partners. This also occurs at meetings with low levels of engagement among the participants and little direction in the conversation, such as a diplomatic meeting where no one is committed to act to prevent climate change or mediation where nobody believes a solution to the conflict to be possible. Here, the participants are left feeling exhausted and de-energized. However, low-intensity interaction can also be fruitful in IR. For example, the use of formal procedures or the introduction of a third-party mediator often slows down the rhythm of interaction due to the requirement of formal forms of address before each utterance and the third party interrupting and setting the rhythm of interaction (Bramsen and Poder 2018). In high-intensity conflicts and heated diplomatic discussions, it can be fruitful to have such détente-

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[8] In previous theorizations, I have described this mode of interaction as "disengaged." I have renamed it here to avoid the normative dimension that is implicit in the word disengaged.
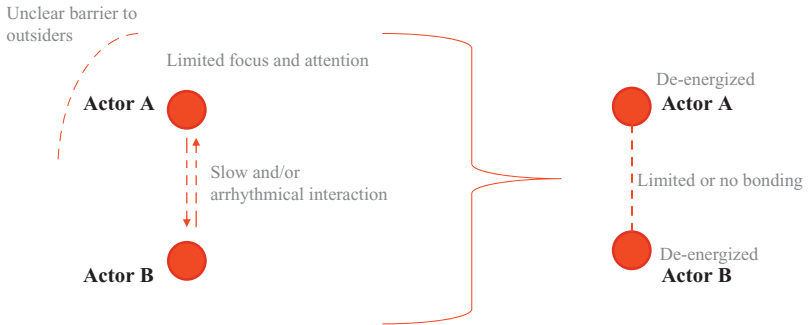
Figure 1.3 Low-intensity interaction

promoting measures to de-intensify the situation, interrupt conflictual interaction, and possibly pave the way for common solutions. Yet negotiations can also lack focus, with participants looking down, at their phones, or being caught up in formal procedures, which can make it difficult to find common solutions. I elaborate on this in the chapter on diplomatic meetings. Mediators and diplomats may benefit from greater attentiveness to the level of energy in a negotiation room, being aware of when and how to make conversations more or less intense.

Clearly, the intensity of interaction can vary and is therefore to be understood on a continuum. The following screenshot (Image 1.2) is taken from a demonstration in Bahrain in 2015 (footage recorded by the author). This demonstration is significantly less intense than the initial demonstrations in 2011. At the time of the recording, protests had been going on every Friday, sometimes for days in a row, for a four-year period since 2011. They would be taking the same route around the village, with everyone knowing exactly where they would meet the police and more or less what would happen. Moreover, people are exhausted and de-energized from regime repression and imprisonment, torture, random arrests, night raids, and the deprivation of citizenship. Hence, the interaction is less focused, with people on their phones, chanting in a slow rhythm, and chatting in an everyday manner.

Low-intensity interaction can also assume the form of conflictual and domination interaction; or, rather, dominating and conflictual interaction can occur at a very low intensity, with participants responding to each other in a simultaneously conflictual or dominant and yet disengaged manner.

Image 1.2 Low-intensity interaction in protests (Screenshot from video recorded by the author)

Dominating Interaction

The third mode of interaction is dominating interaction. Here, one participant is energized, feeling superior and confident, while the other is de-energized, feeling inferior and downhearted. As Collins (2016, 198) describes, "one side is full of initiative, confidence and enthusiasm; the other side is passive, out-of-sync, clumsy and slow-moving." This can also occur at the group level, where one or several actors are energized while others are de-energized. There are several ways of dominating others; through speech, body language, or physical violence. What these have in common is that the dominant actors dictate the rhythm of interaction; for example, by taking up most of the speaking time, speaking loudly and firmly setting the pace of the interaction, walking by a beggar shouting for help without even looking, mansplaining, or subtly criticizing one's partner (Clark 2004, 211–12; Collins 2004). As in sports, it is essentially a matter of who has the momentum and who "is establishing the initiative, who is setting the rhythm in this situation" (Collins interviewed in Walby and Spencer 2010, 98). The energy equation of dominating interaction is that the dominating actor is energized while the subordinate actor is de-energized, as illustrated in Figure 1.4.

Examples of dominating interaction can be found in numerous encounters of relevance to peace and conflict, from war to diplomacy. In international meetings for instance, dominating interaction can occur when diplomats or leaders dominate their opponent in body
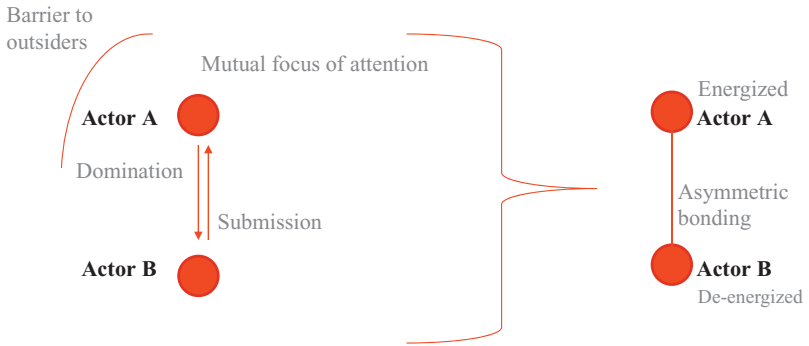
Figure 1.4 Dominating interaction

Image 1.3 Putin allows his dog at the press conference with Merkel in 2007 (TT News Agency)

language, speech, and tone of voice, or by placing their opponent in an uncomfortable, inferior position. For example, Russian president Putin reportedly arranged for his dog to be present at a press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2007, the former KGB chief undoubtedly well aware of her fear of dogs (Image 1.3). Using his

black Lab to make Merkel feel uncomfortable in front of the press established Putin's power position vis-à-vis Merkel.

In response, Merkel is quoted as having said: "I understand why he has to do this—to prove he's a man (…) He's afraid of his own weakness. Russia has nothing—no successful politics or economy. All they have is this." In so doing, she responded to the power-move with (gendered) socioemotional discredit. The canine-intimidation episode can be seen in the larger perspective of Germany being under pressure from Russia. Several chapters in this book will unfold how dominating interaction occurs across different situations: from West Bank checkpoints to dialogue sessions and diplomacy.

Conflictual Interaction

Conflict interaction comes in many forms: from blame games and battles of will to competitive victimhood and one-upmanship. The logic or script of conflict interaction is that two or more parties negate each other's statements and actions. Collins (2004, 121–4) lumps together conflict rituals and contest rituals, conceptualizing conflict as a situation of asymmetrical distribution of emotional energy, where one party loses and the other gains emotional energy (Collins 2004, 121). Here, I would argue that Collins overlooks a crucial dimension of conflict. Unlike domination, conflict is not characterized by one party being the oppressor and another adopting a submissive subject position, but rather by two (or more) parties resisting each other's respective attempts at domination. Domination implies submission, whereas conflict in the Luhmanian sense is a "no" that follows another "no" (Luhmann 1995; Stetter 2014). Etymologically, conflict stems from the Latin *con-fligere*, to strike together, which implies the Luhmanian no–no construction. In this respect, conflict should instead be considered repeated, unsuccessful domination rituals, where parties attempt to dominate others/the situation in all kinds of ways, ranging from subtle criticism and "aggressive use of face-work" (Goffman 2005 [1967], 24) to direct manipulation, orders, or violence. I would argue that *conflictual interaction* implies some form of resistance or even attack against the other, which is responded to with a counter-attack mirroring the first act (although often perceived as disproportionate). This is also reflected in linguistic research, where "conflict talk" is defined as follows:

[A]n action or utterance by a speaker A must be contested (e.g., with a contradiction or accusation) by a second speaker B. The opposed utterance by speaker B must then again be countered by speaker A (e.g., by insisting on the first utterance or by formulating a counter-accusation). The conflict sequence continues as long as the participants insist on their own standpoints or persist in contradicting or accusing one another. (Norrick and Spitz 2008, 1664)

As argued elsewhere (Bramsen and Wæver 2019), a situation first becomes a conflict when one party counters the other's act or utterance. If the "victim" of domination is either submissive, ignores the attack, or instead answers with a compliment, the situation is not one of conflict.

Interestingly, conflictual interaction resembles friendly interaction in many ways, as it shares the same characteristics of rhythmic entrainment, barriers to outsiders, and mutual focus of attention. Similar to a good conversation, intense conflictual interaction is shaped by clear barriers to outsiders; it is clear to the adversaries who *is* part of the conflict and who is *not*. Neutrals (Collins 2012) and even moderates (Mogelson 2022) are often excluded, or even attacked. Likewise, there is a mutual focus of attention; conflicting parties are often intensely focused on the same object of contention, each other, and/or the activity of conflict. If conflicting parties begin to focus primarily on other things, the conflict ritual will fall apart and the conflict will de-escalate (Collins 2012).

The intense focus on the opponent is exemplified by the following picture where two men, an Israeli soldier and Palestinian civilian, are shouting at each other in Jerusalem (Image 1.4). The picture illustrates the intense focus of the parties on one another, the mirroring of one another in terms of facial expressions, shouting, and body postures and the clear barrier to outsiders.

Like friendly interaction, conflictual interaction is also often characterized by a rhythmic entrainment whereby parties are compelled to answer each other's accusations and attacks. Conflict interaction rituals are often characterized by a fast rhythm and high speed, and they tend to de-escalate when the tempo of interaction decreases. While Collins (2008, 82) insists that violence goes against the tendency for rhythmic entrainment, he adds that

the violent situation has its own entrainment and focus: there is focus on the fighting itself, on the situation as a violent one and sometimes an emotional

Image 1.4 An Israeli Soldier and Palestinian man mirroring each other in a conflict interaction ritual (TT News Agency)

entrainment in which the hostility, anger and excitement of each side gets the other more angry and excited.

This is compatible with my argument here: As in friendly interaction, parties to conflicts become entrained in each other's micro-rhythms and emotions. A situation from a Syrian demonstration in 2011 precisely exemplifies this rhythmic entrainment in conflict interaction rituals. An activist I interviewed described how he and a group of protesters met a pro-Assad demonstration, which he calls "Shabiha":[9]

The only slogan we chanted was, "Allah, Syria, Freedom, Only" in opposition to the Shabiha's chant which was "Allah, Syria, Bashar, Only." There were two teams, two team leaders, one was shouting "Allah, Syria, Freedom, Only" and one was shouting "Allah, Syria, Bashar, Only" and then it was reduced to "freedom!"—"Bashar!" "freedom!"—"Bashar!" "freedom!"—"Bashar." (Interview by author 2016)

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[9] Shabiha is a paramilitary group that took part in repressing demonstrations in the Syrian uprising. In this example, it is unclear and not important for the example whether the pro-Assad demonstrators are actually Shabiha.
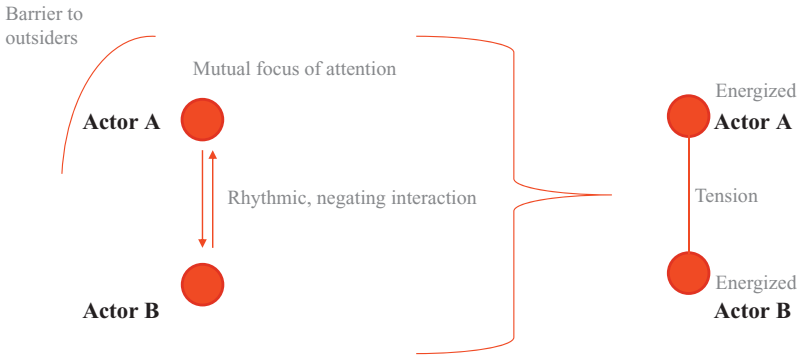
Figure 1.5 Conflictual interaction

In this example, the slogans of the anti-Assad and pro-Assad demonstrators mirror and counter each other's slogans rhythmically; as the speed of the rhythm increases, the slogans are reduced to single words that can be shouted to overpower the other.

While often equally focused and energizing, the main difference between friendly and conflictual interaction is the negating nature of conflict interaction, which often implies an exchange of socioemotional discredit, whereas friendly interaction is appreciative/acknowledging (e.g., with small signs such as nodding) and often implies an exchange of socioemotional credit.

As the model illustrates (Figure 1.5), conflictual interaction is characterized by barriers to outsiders, mutual focus of attention, and rhythmic, negating interaction where the parties reject each other's utterings and respond to each other's attacks. This process then energizes conflicting parties and generates tension between them. Interestingly, traditional scholars of peace and conflict also argue that "[c]onflict generates energy" (Galtung 1996, 70), or they speak of a "conflict energy" (Lederach 1996, 16), which indicates that Collinsian micro-sociology corresponds with more commonsensical understandings of conflict generating energy.

In addition to energizing individuals,[10] conflictual interaction produces tension, which, unlike emotional energy, is *intersubjective*.

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[10] Boyns and Luery (2015) have developed the negative emotional energy concept on the basis of Collins' original theorization of emotional energy to capture the phenomenon that conflicting parties are often energized to act. They argue that situations of humiliation, for example, need not always de-energize actors, but

Understanding conflict not as an anomaly or antisocial behavior but rather as a form of interaction implies that parties are immersed in each other's bodily rhythms and develop a certain social bond, albeit a tense, hostile one (Bramsen et al. 2016; Holmes and Wheeler 2020; Salice 2014). As I have described elsewhere (Bramsen and Wæver 2019), tension characterizes the state of the strained relationship between conflicting parties. Whereas solidarity brings people together in a common understanding of each other's perspectives and experiences, the opposite is the case in tense relations. Tension emerges from conflictual interaction (i.e., attempts at domination that are rejected) but it also reinforces and generates conflictual interaction. Like solidarity, tension is an intersubjective emotional state that can also be characterized as an emotional "field" or "atmosphere," and it can characterize a relationship over time. Similar to how friendly interaction can vary in intensity depending on the barriers to outsiders, the rhythm of interaction, and the mutual focus of attention, conflictual interaction may also be more or less intense depending on these factors. For example, if parties are unfocused and it takes a lot of time to react to the other's accusations or attacks, less tension will be produced, whereas a rapid action–reaction rhythm generates high levels of tension and enmity. Likewise, bodily copresence is crucial for producing tension and emotional energy. Keeping parties separate (e.g., through a buffer zone) is a well-known tension-reduction strategy, both in interpersonal and international conflicts.

Characteristics of Interaction

The four modes of interaction sketched out above are characterized by certain logics and scripts that I refer to as *micro-sociality*. Likewise,

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can in fact energize them; however, not in the positive sense of the word with "enthusiasm and confidence" but rather, the force driving further action is a "negative emotional energy" consisting of emotions such as anger, fear, and resentment (Boyns and Luery 2015, 160). However, I stick to the term "emotional energy" without specifying its negative or positive loading as the important thing whether actors are energized or not, and this emotional energy may be caused by both negative and positive emotions. Moreover, distinguishing between negative and positive emotional energy may give the impression or a normative distinction with positive emotional energy being more pleasant and/or leading to morally correct actions; however, anger may be equally pleasant and lead to constructive behavior.

interaction is often characterized by a certain momentum that can be difficult but possible to change. In what follows, I will further elaborate on these characteristics of interaction. I will also outline the different material and practical factors that shape interaction.

Micro-sociality

I define the foundational, social dynamics and logics of micro-interactions as *micro-sociality*, which is essentially an inter-bodily sociality implying a tendency to fall into certain rhythms and scripts of interaction and exchanging socioemotional credit/discredit (Clark 2004; Collins 2004; Goffman 2005 [1967]).

One of the situations in which the workings of micro-sociality are most visible is in the potential of the face-to-face interactions intended to transform enemy relations, if even for brief, elusive moments (Bramsen and Hagemann 2021). As I will argue in Chapter 6, when parties representing two sides of a conflict spend time together where the circumstances foster dialogue and conversation – either directly at the negotiation table, in smoking breaks, in the corridors, or at the dinner table – the micro-sociality emerging in such situations can slowly transform the relationship, if only momentarily. Likewise, the book will show how the foundational logics of micro-sociality shape violent interaction, nonviolent resistance, dialogue, and diplomatic meetings.

Often, micro-sociality coincides with dynamics of performativity, with polite gestures for instance being responded with a smile. However, micro-sociality may also contradict logics of performativity. In Chapter 7, I will discuss how diplomats may sometimes go against logics of micro-sociality, for example, deliberately not returning a smile with a smile, for strategic reasons. Another example of micro-sociality interfering with logics of performativity can be found in the Bahraini activist, Zainab al-Khawaja's description of a situation in the military court in Bahrain:

"[O]ne of the tortured prisoners mother was on the stand, and she was very sweet and talkative and funny, at one point, the prisoners, the judge and the lawyers, all of us really, were laughing at something she said. It was very strange and ridiculous, and I think the judge realized it was "inappropriate" and suddenly yelled at her, I think the blurring of the lines was a bit too much." (Personal communication 2022)

Investigating and theorizing how micro-sociality shapes peace and conflict challenges realist conceptions about anarchy in the international system (Sylvester 2002) and human nature as egoistic, as it shows how we are continuously formed and transformed in interaction with others, not just in an ideational and discursive relationality but in a very concrete, inter-bodily relationality. Following Mac Ginty (2021, 61), sociality "dwells, to a large extent, in the affective realm," thereby challenging ideas about *homo economicus*. Unlike Mac Ginty, however, I do not consider micro-sociality as necessarily implying empathy, altruism, or collaboration. In Chapter 3, I show that while Collins' argument that violence is difficult because it goes against the human tendency to fall into each other's rhythms is true with respect to the beginning of a fight, once a fight has broken out, it resembles a dance-like sequence whereby the parties respond rhythmically to each other's attacks; in this sense, the difficulty is to avoid responding to an attack with another attack. Hence, violence is not antisocial behavior and reflects a micro-sociality that we know from friendly or collaborative interaction (see Chapter 3). As argued by Malešević (2010, 2): "Being social does not automatically imply an innate propensity toward harmony and peace. On the contrary, it is our sociality, not individuality, which makes us both compassionate altruists and enthusiastic killers."

While there is a degree of unpredictability regarding how something like a verbal attack will be met, logics of micro-sociality nevertheless provide a certain script that one can follow or disrupt. Each mode of interaction is related to a particular script. In friendly interaction, the modus operandi is to respond positively (and often rapidly) to each other's utterings and actions; in conflictual interaction, opponents are expected to retaliate; and in domination interaction, the repressed are expected to be submissive. One participant suddenly breaking the script (e.g., by paying a compliment in the middle of a conflict, turning the other cheek, or standing up against domination) disrupts the mode of interaction. An analogy for this is tonality in music: In music, certain tones can be followed by certain tones and not others, and the music can be composed in ways that break this and create tension, and yet there are certain tones that would simply sound "off" when following others. Similarly, micro-sociality and the scripts of interaction rituals make certain acts follow logically from others, and people would come across as "odd" or rude if they do not follow logics of micro-sociality. But such scripts can also be disrupted (in social life and music alike).

Momentum and Change

Changing interaction can be a challenging task. As Collins (2004, 71) describes, "once a conversation takes off, it builds a self-sustaining momentum." This is the case for all modes of interaction, and since interaction feeds into new interaction, there is inertia in all interaction ritual chains. This has at least two consequences: (1) interaction rituals are difficult to change when the momentum is strongest; (2) the momentum is lost at some point, and it can therefore be very difficult to sustain momentum of any given mode of interaction if it is not continuously cultivated.

Because it is difficult to change the mode of interaction, considerable emotional energy is often required. Collins refers to an example of a speaker galvanizing an entire audience with a powerful talk; when the speaker is done, most of the audience will have forgotten all of their questions and be unable to change the interaction ritual from one of speaker–listener to Q&A. Only individuals with very high emotional energy are able to break through such a wall of silence and pose questions. Once the Q&A gets going and "momentum flows another way," others will also be able to engage in the conversation (Collins 2004, 72). Likewise, it is difficult to shift between conflictual interaction and friendly interaction. When involved in a high-paced conflict where the involved subject positions and dynamics urge parties to respond to each other's verbal or physical attacks, it is difficult to slow down the rhythm of interaction – let alone initiating friendly interaction. This dynamic is also captured by Kelman (2008, 175), who argues that "the dynamics of conflict interaction create a high probability that opportunities for conflict resolution will be missed. Parties whose interaction is shaped by the norms and images rooted in the history of conflict are systematically constrained in their capacity to respond to the occurrence and possibility of change."

Similarly, it can in fact be difficult to initiate a conflict when the everyday modus of interaction is attuned or of low intensity. Many things that may be annoying or offensive are ignored in times of peace or complained about to everyone but the perpetrator. As noted by Collins (2008, 79), "people are much more likely to express negative and hostile statements about persons who are not immediately present, than to express such statements to persons who are in conversation with them." Then, when a conflict is initiated, past grievances are

reactivated and feed accusations, blame games, and the mutual exchange of socioemotional discredit. Changing between types and rhythms of interaction – to change the flow of momentum – can therefore be challenging and require abundant emotional energy.

The fact that intense interaction rituals can be challenging to change or disrupt does not mean that most interaction is not a mixture of several forms of interaction. The four forms of interaction may be considered basic forms, which, like basic colors, can be mixed in multiple ways. For example, conflictual interaction can be characterized by a power asymmetry where one party fights with more force and confidence. Likewise, friendly interaction can be marked by a power imbalance, as in a parent–child relation. Moreover, interaction may be characterized by one form with elements from another mode of interaction. For instance, a friendly conversation may have subtle elements or instances of domination or conflict. In this way, interactional dynamics may change very quickly, overlap, and be much "muddier" than proposed with the four modes of interaction. What I also argue, however, is that intense interaction (e.g., fighting, making love, or dancing) has a certain momentum that is often difficult to disrupt by doing something completely "off script" of this interaction ritual.

Like interaction rituals, chains of interaction or relationships can have momentum; if a meeting is preceded by friendly interaction, it will be shaped by a pre-generated connection and solidarity. As stated by Holmes and Wheeler (2020, 19), "a positive social bond may result in suspension of risk-calculation," whereas tense social bonds produce rigid opposition, and the actions of the opponent are considered "untrustworthy and threatening." In trustful relations or security communities,[11] the social bonding and trust generated in previous interactions shape future interactions to the extent that violent conflict becomes unthinkable.

Conversely, interaction preceded by conflict will be marked by a strained atmosphere in which the air is heavy with tension and parties tend to misunderstand each other or even disregard each other's intentions (Deutsch 1973). This can result in a tense relationship where future conflict is expected (Goldmann 1974, 19) or even a "spiral of

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[11] A security community is a community of states within which war has become highly unlikely or even unthinkable, such as the EU or the Nordic countries (Tusicisny 2007).

violence," where previous violent interactions shape future interactions (Scheffran et al. 2014). During the Cold War, the tense East–West relationship clearly colored and fed into numerous interactions, which thus came to characterize the conflict itself (Bramsen and Wæver 2019).

Collins (2004) argues that solidarity and social bonds can be stored and hence prolonged through symbols of the social relationship, such as a flag, revolutionary monument, religious symbols, or a national anthem. In peace diplomacy, a symbol or nodal point that establishes and stores a social relationship is often an official handshake that marks the signing of a peace agreement. Likewise, conflictual tension is often stored in particular symbols or nodal points, like songs, sayings, monuments, or events, such as *al-nakba* (Arabic for "the catastrophe," referring to the day Israel was established in 1948). Objects that may have been of less importance to the parties prior to a conflict may suddenly become immensely important once they become part of the conflict. As noted by Collins (2004, 41–2), "the flashpoints of conflict, the incidents that set off overt struggle, almost always come from the precedence of symbols and the social sentiments they embody."

As not only the different modes of interaction but also the chain of interaction rituals have momentum and create precedence, it can be very difficult to change an interactional pattern, which is part of the reason why conflict transformation prior to and after signing a peace agreement is inherently challenging.

Factors Shaping Interaction

Questions remain regarding the predictive power of the four forms of interaction. After all, the theorization of interactions is descriptive, sketching different forms of interaction, but does not predict whether one action will engender one or the other reaction. For example, it is not given that dominant interaction will lead to submission; it might as well lead to conflict and a cycle of attempts at domination. People who are subjected to domination may even respond with fraternizing acts attempting at generating connection and solidarity. The reactions of actors will depend on the level of emotional energy produced in previous interactions (Collins 1983). One is likely to act submissively if subjected to domination and already de-energized, whereas energized

actors are likely to fight back. Besides emotional energy produced in previous interactions and shaping the ability of individuals to dominate, interact, and connect with others, interaction is also formed by habitus (Collins 1983, 191; Pouliot 2008). Hence, the dynamics and nature of action and interaction patterns depends on the "corporal knowledge" and practices with which actors are familiar. Whether an actor is trained in combatant fighting or nonviolent resistance, for example, matters for how they will react if attacked (Bramsen 2019b).

Moreover, material conditions and artifacts may also shape the interactions with objects, entailing particular scripts. Hence, when analyzing particular interactions, such as in video material, it may be relevant to not only map the interaction pattern and rhythmic engagement but also the material conditions shaping the interaction, such as the room, table, pictures on the wall, and other artifacts. This can for example be the table used for peace talks or the materiality available for protesters. It may also be important to consider the different practical, corporal knowledge of the actors and how their actions are shaped, not only by micro-social inclinations to fall into the rhythms of the opponent but also by their previous experiences with similar situations. However, this book primarily focuses on interactional dynamics and how different forms of interaction generate emotional energy and solidarity or tension, as well as how this shapes further actions and interactions.

While the four forms of interaction cannot predict precisely how interaction will develop, they can provide an insight into how the types of interaction that we observe will shape the social relationships as well as the agency of the parties involved. Hence, analysis of current interactions can inform what shapes further action and interaction. But again, this is not deterministic and may change relatively rapidly. For example, Palestinians may be de-energized by the domination rituals at West Bank checkpoints, which reduce their energy to act and revolt against suppression. The following day, however, they might engage in powerful anti-occupation gatherings with fellow protesters and be empowered to act and resist domination. The challenge in micro-sociological analysis is to grasp and analyze how energizing and de-energizing rituals feed into each other, and the remainder of this book will cast light on the analytical power of this approach and the nuances and dynamics made visible by a micro-sociological lens.

A Complex Web of Interactions

The four forms of interaction outlined above (and the numerous variations hereof) all feed into a complex web of interaction making up larger patterns of peace and conflict. To illustrate this, I will now discuss different modes of interaction in peace and conflict, respectively.

Different Modes of Interaction in Conflict

Interpersonal conflicts often merely consist of limited conflictual interaction in which parties come together, quarrel, and resolve the conflict, but they may also continue for years and include domination interaction, low-intensity interaction, and friendly interaction; for example, when conflicting parties bond with their friends about the evilness of their opponent. Likewise, in international conflicts, a conflict may be short and only consist of a few interaction rituals, such as a conflictual diplomatic meeting, but may also take several decades and involve numerous interactions, some friendly interaction rituals, some domination interaction rituals, and some conflict interaction rituals (Bramsen and Poder 2014). For example, we can have a civil war where members of the warring groups encounter each other daily and where the elites representing the groups have several meetings. Some encounters may resemble a domination ritual, where one party is humiliated and de-energized; some encounters may turn into conflictual interaction, where the parties counter each other's domination and attacks; while others yet can resemble friendly interaction, such as the celebration of martyrs. As argued by Shesterinina (2022, 1) in the case of civil wars:

> Multiple nonstate, state, civilian, and external actors, which are more or less relevant for specific dynamics, form and transform as they relate to one another in the context of conflict. The dynamics that their interactions engender emerge at different points in the conflict, intersect, and shift over time.

There is therefore often no clear-cut difference between peace and war (Mac Ginty 2022b). As argued by Söderström et al. (2019, 5), "peace and war can co-exist in webs of multiple interactions." The Israeli–Palestinian conflict, for example, consists of numerous interactions, from friendly interaction and conflict resolution efforts in the peace village Neve-Shalom/Wahat-al-Salam to domination interaction at the checkpoints, conflictual interaction at demonstrations and the

frontlines, and low-intensity interaction when Israelis and Palestinians meet at the local market or perhaps at the negotiation table. It is obviously impossible to account for (let alone obtain access to) all of these interactions occurring all the time. However, a better understanding of how these interactions feed into each other and energize or de-energize participants can provide a better sense of how Palestinians are repressed, how trust can be generated, and how the conflict is sustained through mechanisms of friendly interaction within each party, energizing them to continue the engagement in conflict activities and strengthening their opposing views.

The different modes of interaction and levels of emotional energy can thus give insights into how conflicts emerge, escalate, and continue, as well as how they can be transformed. Without internal solidarity, groups lack the energy to engage in conflict with others (Collins 2004, 41; Simmel 1955 [1908]). You may hate your opponent, but if a group's emotional energy is low, it is unlikely to engage in conflictual action: "[E]ffective conflict is not really possible without the mechanisms of social ritual, which generate the alliances and the energies of the partisans, as well as their most effective weapons of dominating others" (Collins 2004, 41–2). Emotional energy is necessary for the conflict to continue, whether in the form of hope that one's own group will win or out of anger toward the others. This emotional energy is often generated in intense interaction, where outrage over actions by the component (socioemotional discredit) is transformed into in-group social bonding and energized individuals (Collins 2012).[12] In contrast to friendly and conflictual modes of interaction that drive agency and thus potentially promote conflict, low-intensity interaction slows conflictual interaction. This might be useful in ending a conflict, as parties gradually lose the energy to continue conflictual behavior (Collins 2012).

Different Modes of Interaction in Peace

From a micro-sociological perspective, peace is not an abstract phenomenon to occur in an undefined future but rather a practice of

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[12] Agonistic approaches to peace research have stressed how conflict is not only unavoidable in society but also constructive and constitutive of identities (Mouffe 2000; Shinko 2008; Strömbom 2019). Micro-sociology brings a new dimension to this, adding that conflict is productive not only in terms of shaping identities vis-à-vis an "other" but also in terms of generating in-group social bonds and solidarity (Collins 2004, 2012; Simmel 1904).

non-enmity (e.g., goodwill measures) or relational non-enmity gener-
ated in interaction. Regarding the four forms of interaction presented
previously, one may ask: What types of interaction can be characterized
as peaceful? At first glance, one may think of peaceful interaction merely
as friendly interaction. In an interview, Johan Galtung (Interview by
author 2018) provided a very simple definition of peace that is quite
different from the conceptualization of negative/positive peace with
which he is often associated: "Peace is: I do good to you, you do good
to me." Albeit stated very bluntly, this is a precise description of peace
as the mutual exchange of socioemotional credit and/or material goods
and peace as friendly interaction. However, peaceful interaction can
also assume other forms. If peaceful interaction is not defined by
friendship (Söderström et al. 2019) but rather more modestly by *non-
enmity*, peaceful engagement can also take the form of low-intensity
interaction, conflictual interaction, and even dominant interaction.

First, low-intensity interaction can be considered peaceful inter-
action. This is reflected in the writings on everyday peace, where
especially the early writings on the concept by Mac Ginty emphasize
conflict avoidance and polite yet disengaged interaction as critical to
everyday peace. For example, he describes how "actors in an inter-
group exchange might engage in semi-scripted interchanges that care-
fully avoid any behavior or language likely to cause offence and risk
escalation" (Mac Ginty 2014, 557). He argues further that everyday
peace is by no means trivial; it can be critical and "provide the social
glue that prevents a society from tipping over the edge." Based on
micro-sociological observations of peacebuilding activities in Uganda,
Lund (2017) argues that more less-intense, ordinary interactions pro-
ducing moderate levels of emotional energy can have a constructive
impact on peacebuilding processes, because they mark a shift from
previous tense relationships and interactions. Likewise, as described in
this chapter, formality and the presence of a third party may have a de-
energizing effect on peace talks, for example, which can reduce ten-
sions in a constructive manner and cultivate détente. However, every-
day peace as described by Mac Ginty (2014, 555) as involving some
element of conflict avoidance can also be problematic, as it shrinks the
space for airing dissent and thus reduces the potential for change
(Bramsen 2017, 2022a).

Second, conflictual interaction can also be conducted in a peaceful
manner in the form of agonistic dialogue (Maddison 2015) and

agonistic interaction (Bramsen 2022a). From a micro-sociological perspective and drawing on a Mouffe (2005) understanding of agonism, conflictual interaction that is agonistic implies that the conflicting parties approach each other as legitimate adversaries rather than enemies. This would imply exercising and expressing disagreement without antagonistic attacks and with an acceptance of the legitimacy of the opponent without agreeing. Like friendly interaction, conflictual interaction is generative of emotional energy (although often in the form of anger). And the connection between conflicting parties, while tense, it is at least more connection than not engaging at all. Moreover, conflictual interaction often allows parties to express issues with which they are dissatisfied that would be difficult to express within the script and mode of friendly interaction (Collins 2004, 79). Hence, there is considerable potential in conflictual interaction in terms of airing dissent and creating some kind of connection. Paradoxically, it can therefore be productive to make space for conflictual interaction in dialogue meetings, mediation efforts, and other platforms for continuing/engaging in conflict with nonviolent means. However, the "no–no" construction of conflictual interaction, even if expressed in an agonistic manner with little or no exchange of socioemotional discredit, makes it very difficult to reach any agreement, should this be the aim of the encounter. Moreover, agonistic conflictual interaction holds the potential of escalating into antagonistic and violent interaction (Mouffe 2005).

Third and perhaps controversially, defining peaceful interaction in terms of non-enmity does not entail non-domination and thus implies that peace does not necessarily need to be a peace between two equals. One can even exercise domination with compassion; for example, when caring for a child or cheering up someone. Dominant yet peaceful interaction may also take place between a wife and husband in a society where women and men do not have equal rights but where the women accept these conditions and feel no frustration regarding their position vis-à-vis their husbands. In other words, peace does not necessarily imply equality, as in positive peace. One may therefore want to work both for human rights and equality as well as for peace – or even jeopardize peace to promote rights. If domination is repressive, violent, or involving a form of neglect of the other, however, it cannot be defined as peace (Hopp-Nishanka 2013). Moreover, conflict would often occur due to disagreement over power distribution, and the

conflicting parties in a conflict situation would often resist any form of domination from the opponent. Parties would often compete in terms of who gets to speak the most, loudest, or who comes across as most right, just, or superior; hence, dominant interaction is often best avoided in conflict-transformation activities.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the theoretical underpinnings of micro-sociology, including the essential phenomena of interaction rituals, the workings of emotional energy, as well as the novel concepts of micro-sociality and the exchange of socioemotional credit and discredit. These concepts are critical for understanding micro-dynamics of peace, diplomacy, violence, and conflict. The chapter has presented the characteristics and workings of four ideal types of interaction: friendly interaction, low-intensity interaction, dominating interaction, and conflictual interaction. These four modes of interaction shape how conflicts develop, whether actors are energized or de-energized, whether diplomatic talks lead to rapprochement, and whether violence comes about. The four forms of interaction can play out simultaneously in a situation of international or intergroup conflict and may take both violent and peaceful forms. The concepts and theoretical ideas presented in this chapter will be applied to concrete cases and examples throughout the remaining chapters of the book analyzing matters of diplomacy, conflict, violence, and nonviolence.