

The Neglect and Importance of Emotion at Work

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This article provides an overview of the multiple roles of emotion at work. First, traditional approaches to work and well-being and their limitations are considered. The advantages of understanding more specific feeling states rather than the non-specific states of “stress” and “satisfaction” are outlined. Next, some recent developments in activity surrounding the study of emotion at work are briefly described. A distinction is made in the article between the expression and experience of felt emotion at work. The literature around the expression of emotion at work and, in particular, emotional labour is reviewed by addressing four key questions. Then, the very limited research on the experience of emotion at work is described: The importance of looking at emotion in terms of transactions and processes rather than simple cause and effect is emphasized. Some of the implications of the overview for both practitioners and researchers are considered. The article concludes with the observation that as emotion is fundamental to nearly all aspects of work behaviour its study should be integrated with existing research on work and organizational psychology.

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this article is to give a broad overview of the multiple roles of emotion at work. More specific aims are to place the study of emotions at work in an historical and conceptual context, to review past research, and to suggest some future directions for research.

Although there appears to be much current interest in emotions within work and organizational psychology and related fields these interests have not yet led to a large body of published theory and evidence nor a range of practical techniques for assessing or intervening in emotion at work. In one of the first published reviews of the field, Pekrun and Frese (1992, p. 153) claimed that “there is little research that speaks directly to the issue of work and emotion”. Most research in this field is therefore very much work-in-progress. Despite the sometimes narrow range of material on which to draw, an overview of the roles

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of emotion at work is still possible and, even where somewhat speculative, can perhaps help to serve the purpose of stimulating future research and ideas.

It is worth pointing out that it is not only work and organizational psychology that has somewhat neglected emotions and affect more broadly. Many other areas of psychology have also recently discovered or rediscovered affect (e.g. Clark, 1992; Parkinson, Totterdell, Briner, & Reynolds, 1996; Watson & Tellegen, 1985). The dominance of behavioural approaches to psychology in the early part of this century was replaced by a strong focus on cognitive processes from the 1950s onwards. It now appears that as we reach the end of the 20th century, psychology has, in general, turned its attention to affect.

First, traditional approaches to employee affect and their limitations will briefly be considered. Next, the nature of emotions and their relation to stress and satisfaction will be discussed. Third, I will describe some recent trends in research into emotions at work. Fourth, a selective review of what we know about the expression of emotion at work will be provided. Fifth, the nature of the experience of emotion at work will be considered. This distinction between expressed and experienced emotion may seem odd but it reflects a clear division in much of the research that has thus far been undertaken and the field is somewhat dominated by research on employees' displays and expression of emotion rather than their experience of emotion. Finally, some implications of this overview for both researchers and practitioners will be outlined.

STRESS AND SATISFACTION: TRADITIONAL APPROACHES

Work and organizational psychologists have certainly not ignored the role of feelings at work but have tended to do so by focusing almost exclusively on two constructs: stress and satisfaction. Although these constructs have served and continue to serve some limited though useful purposes, it is now becoming increasingly apparent that if we wish to develop a thorough understanding of employee affect then we need to look at more specific emotional states, such as mood and emotions.

The notions of stress and satisfaction are limited for three main reasons. First, they are somewhat non-specific in that they describe and attempt to explain why people at work feel in a very general way "good" or "bad". This is limited as it is not clear that people's affective well-being can be characterized in this way in theoretical terms nor that it is actually helpful to do so. With the broad category of "satisfaction", for example, there is a whole range of more specific positive feeling states which are not the same but that none the less would be included under the heading of "satisfaction". Two employees may report that they feel equally generally satisfied with their job but one is experiencing more the specific feelings of contentment and calm whereas the other feels excited and

enthusiastic: Both employees are satisfied but both also feel very differently. An analogy here can be found with medicine: If we were medical professionals, interested in understanding and treating people's physical well-being, we would certainly not describe people as just "well" or "ill" but rather look for much more specific ways of identifying people's physical states and conditions and more specific types of intervention.

A second major problem is that it is almost impossible to develop good theories about why people, in general, feel good or bad. Both theories of stress and theories of satisfaction tend to be somewhat simplistic and circular, stating that stressors produce strains or that getting what we want makes us feel satisfied. Without good theories it is difficult to conduct useful research or implement effective interventions. In addition, as will be discussed later, it is more possible to explain and generate theories about specific affective states.

A third problem is that both stress and satisfaction have both proved to be only very weakly related to important individual and organizational outcomes such as absence, performance, turnover, and health (e.g. Briner & Reynolds, in press; Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991; Harrison & Martocchio, 1998; Jex, 1998; Johns, 1997). Although specific affective states can be quite predictive of behaviours, it seems to be the case that general, non-specific affective states such as feeling good (satisfaction) or feeling bad (stress) are not predictive of specific behaviours. This has parallels with work on attitude-behaviour relationships, which demonstrates that the more specific the attitudes that are measured and the more behaviours relevant to the attitude that are measured the stronger the links between attitudes and behaviours become (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

Traditional approaches to employee affect are therefore theoretically inadequate and of very limited practical use. Characterizing employees' feelings at work just in terms of stress or satisfaction is also clearly missing out on many other kinds of affective experiences of which emotions are just one. If there is then more to feelings than stress and satisfaction, what else is there? This is discussed in the next section.

EMOTIONS AND OTHER AFFECTIVE PHENOMENA

Although the focus of this article is on emotions, it is helpful to consider emotions in the context of other types of affective phenomena. Examples of three other types of affective phenomena—moods, meta-moods, and emotionally-laden judgements—will also be briefly considered here (see also Briner, 1997) before the nature of emotions is discussed.

Perhaps most similar to emotions are moods. But whereas moods have been considered to be relatively slow-changing, weak or moderate in intensity, and not necessarily responses to specific events, emotions have in contrast been considered to be rapidly changing, strong in intensity, and always in response to

specific events (e.g. Parkinson et al., 1996). Examples of adjectives that describe moods would include calm or sad, whereas examples of emotion adjectives could be anger or shame.

A second example of another affective phenomenon is meta-moods (Mayer & Gaschke, 1988; Mayer & Stevens, 1994), which are people's thoughts and feelings about moods or emotions. In addition to experiencing a mood or emotion itself, we may also have thoughts and feelings about it's clarity ("do I know how I feel?"), acceptability ("is it OK to feel like this?"), and controllability ("can I change this feeling?"), for example. Affective experience may also include our own monitoring and appraisal of the affect we are experiencing: These meta-moods are likely to be much more significant in understanding the dynamics of affect than simply knowing that a particular mood or emotion is being experienced.

A third example is emotionally laden judgements (Briner, 1997), which appear to be particularly relevant to work. In asking people what they mean by "stress" or "satisfaction" or in listening to people talk about their feelings at work, it is often the case that they use terms such as feeling valued, trusted, appreciated, exploited, or disrespected. Although these are not moods or emotions as such, feeling valued or otherwise, for example, would appear to be a central part of affective experiences at work.

We now turn to emotions. How can they best be defined? Earlier, emotions were defined in contrast to moods in that they tend to be rapidly changing, intense, and in response to specific events. Although there are numerous definitions of emotions, most contain some or all of the following components (see Parkinson, 1995): Cognition (e.g. appraisal, evaluation); internal reaction (e.g. heart rate); overt behaviour (e.g. approach, avoidance); facial expression (e.g. frown, smile); a goal structure (e.g. loss, anger). Particularly relevant components of emotions in the work context would appear to be overt behaviours, facial expressions, and goal structures. Behaviours seem important, as one of the things we want to know is how emotions affect behaviours. Facial expressions are highly relevant as an important part of emotion at work takes place in the context of jobs in which people are required to display emotion as part of their work role (this will be discussed in the next section). Finally, goal structures seem important here as they help us understand the ways in which work and work tasks may produce experienced emotions.

Table 1 (adapted from Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988) shows some of the range adjectives which are used to describe emotions. A number of aspects of this table are worth a brief comment. First, satisfaction is included here but as an emotion or specific short-term reaction to an event rather than a general appraisal of a job or job facet. Second, even on superficial inspection it is quite obvious that all these emotions may be experienced by people at work. Third, it is striking how much more a diverse and rich range of affective experiences is represented here compared to thinking about affect simply in terms of stress or satisfaction.

TABLE 1
Examples of emotions (from Ortony, Clore,
& Collins, 1988)

Pride
Self-reproach (embarrassment, guilt, shame)
Appreciation (admiration, respect)
Reproach of others (contempt, disdain, appalled)
Gratitude (feeling indebted, thankful)
Anger (annoyance, fury, outraged)
Gratification (self-satisfied, smug)
Remorse (self-anger, penitent)
Joy (delighted, cheerful, joyful)
Distress (distracted, uneasy, shock, misery)
Happy-for (pleased-for, delighted-for)
Sorry-for (compassion, pity, sympathy)
Resentment (envy, jealousy)
Gloating (gloating, <i>schadenfreude</i>)
Hope (looking forward-to, anticipatory excitement)
Fear (apprehension, anxious, worried, scared)
Satisfaction (gratification, hopes-realized)
Fears-confirmed (worst fears-realized)
Relief
Disappointment (dashed-hopes, despair)
Liking (affection, adoration, attracted-to, love)
Disliking (detest, hate, loathe, repelled-by)

Given the obvious relevance of emotions we need to ask why work and organizational psychologists have almost ignored emotions in the past. There are a number of possible reasons for this (see also Briner, 1995b, 1999). First, work is and organizations are often viewed as rational, logical, and non-emotional, with their main purpose being the efficient completion of work tasks. Emotions may therefore be seen as not relevant to work or even something that gets in the way of effective work performance. Given that the research agenda of organizational psychologists is sometimes set by the economic interests of organizations and their managers it may be that because organizations have not seen emotions as relevant neither have organizational psychologists. A second reason for the lack of attention paid to emotions is that a perception exists that organizational psychologists are already studying affective experiences at work. As argued earlier, this is true but only in general terms of stress and satisfaction and not in terms of emotion. Third, organizational psychologists may avoid the study of emotion as it is simply more difficult to study than phenomena such as satisfaction or attitudes. Emotions are mundane and transitory and can be difficult to research using our favourite technique of the self-report questionnaire. Also, because of their rapidly changing nature, emotions can be dependent variables as they are the effect of some event at work and then immediately

become independent variables as they are then the cause of some behaviour or action by the person who experiences the emotion. In general our research has tended to focus on variables which are relatively static and which can be clearly categorized as independent or dependent rather than dynamic variables.

Emotions are experienced at work and thus far organizational psychologists have paid relatively little attention to them. In later sections of this article, we look at some of the available theory and evidence about the experience and expression of emotion at work from within and outside work and organizational psychology research. First, in order to set the following discussion in some kind of context, some recent trends in the study of emotions at work will be discussed.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AROUND EMOTIONS AT WORK

There is little doubt that emotion has become something of a fashionable topic within work and organizational psychology but also in management research, sociology, and organizational behaviour. Since the publication of the first book about emotion in organizations (Fineman, 1993) there have also been special editions of journals, other planned edited books, and many journal articles, particularly in management and organizational behaviour journals.

Two conferences specializing in emotions at work have also been held in the United States. The First Conference on Emotions in Organizational Life was held in San Diego last year and this year a conference specifically about emotional intelligence in the workplace was held in Chicago. Two web sites, related to each of these conferences, have also come into existence since 1997.

Why has emotion at work suddenly received so much attention? One reason, briefly discussed earlier, is that psychology as a whole has begun to pay more attention to affect and this has also spread to organizational psychology. Second, given the large increase in the number of employees who work in service industries such as leisure, telephone call centres, and catering, the demands for emotional expression in the context of customer service have also increased considerably (this will be discussed in the next section). Finally, an important influence has been the popularization of emotional intelligence and the subsequent application of this to work.

The notion of emotional intelligence was devised by Salovey, Hsee, and Mayer (1993) and refers to three related skills or abilities: accurate appraisal of mood and expression of emotion in oneself and others; adaptive regulation of emotion in self and others; and utilizing emotions (e.g. in problem solving). This idea was popularized by Goleman (1995) in his best-selling book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* and has since then been applied to work and organizational settings by Goleman (1998), *Working with Emotional*

Intelligence, Weisinger (1998), *Emotional Intelligence at Work: The Untapped Edge for Success*, and Cooper and Sawaf (1998), *Executive EQ: Emotional Intelligence in Business*. All these popular books make the claim that emotional intelligence is crucial for individual and organizational effectiveness and do appear to have captured the imagination of at least some organizations, managers and practitioners.

However, in spite of these developments, research into emotions at work, particularly research from work and organizational psychologists, remains, as indicated earlier, somewhat limited.

DISPLAYED EMOTIONS: THE EXPRESSION OF EMOTION AT WORK

In work, as in any social setting, the emotions that people display play a central role in the nature of the interactions that take place. In some kinds of work, however, displays of emotion are a central feature of job or task requirements. Hochschild (1983, p. 7) coined the term emotional labour to refer to “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labour is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value”. Emotional labour has been studied in a number of occupations including bill (debt) collectors, air attendants, supermarket cashiers, trainee hairdressers, nurses, McDonald's counter servers, and criminal interrogators (Briner, 1995b).

Such jobs are classic emotional labour jobs in that the expectations of emotional display are relatively explicit, all involve interactions between an employer and a customer or client and the employee could not probably do their job if they did not engage in emotional displays. However, many, if not most jobs also involve the management of feelings and displays of emotions, hence the distinction between jobs that have emotional labour and those that do not is unclear. For example, almost any managerial or supervisory job is likely to involve an element of emotional labour as managing people effectively may involve the suppression of some emotions and the display of others. Hence, some of the points which will be made here apply to a number of kinds of jobs and not just classic emotional labour jobs.

The literature on emotional labour is now of a reasonable size and much more developed than research into the experience of emotion at work (which will be discussed in the next section). As mentioned earlier, little of this work is found in work and organizational psychology journals and is more likely to be found in management, sociology, and anthropology journals. Rather than provide a comprehensive and, by necessity, somewhat long review of this body of work, we will instead provide an overview of thinking in this area by addressing a number of key questions (for recent reviews, see Leidner, 1999; Steinberg & Figart, 1999; Wharton, 1999).

Question 1: Why do employers want employees to display particular emotions?

An important initial question we need to address is why such demands for emotional display exist. The most obvious answer to this is because employers believe it will enhance the performance of their employees. It seems reasonable to suppose that the emotional displays that convey the warmth of the air attendant, the anger of the police interrogator, and the concern of the nurse all contribute to their effectiveness in those roles. Such displays are likely to enhance performance in at least two ways: First, friendly customer service or the meeting of customer expectations of emotional displays (e.g. a sad or serious-looking undertaker) may be rewarded with repeat business; second, emotional displays may influence the customer or client to behave in ways that confer more immediate benefits to the employee (e.g. the salesperson gets the deal or the debt collector gets the debtor to agree to make a payment).

A further reason why employers might want employees to display particular emotions is that it is taken by the employer to be indicative of experienced or felt emotion and the employer may believe that the way the employee feels is related to their performance. The employer's perhaps implicit reasoning here is that if an employee looks happy they probably also feel happy which means they will work more effectively on some tasks. In this situation the employer wants employees to display emotion not because it has performance benefit in terms of interaction with customers but because the employees' feelings will affect their performance more generally. An example of this is the notion of "morale", in which a collective feeling of enthusiasm is seen as leading to higher levels of motivation and performance. Although there may be relatively little empirical evidence to support the idea of the happy-productive worker (e.g. Wright & Staw, 1999), it remains a popular idea with many employers and managers.

Employers may, therefore, have a number of reasons for wanting employees to display particular emotions and these seem, not surprisingly, to revolve around performance. It is also noticeable that attempts to implement culture change often also involve employers attempting to influence the emotions employees both display and feel (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989) and this is sometimes done through mission statements that tell employees that they should feel proud of the organization they work for and its products or enthusiastic about the organization's goals (see also Briner, 1999).

Question 2: What determines which emotions employees display?

In many social situations, implicit or explicit rules exist about the kinds of emotions it is acceptable and desirable to display. We are all aware, for example, of the different kinds of emotional display rules that exist at a party and a funeral.

In jobs with a high level of emotional labour the rules that govern the emotional displays required of employees may be explicitly stated and rigorously applied.

These explicit display rules have been observed in the training of employees in emotional labour jobs. In the case of air attendants, Hochschild (1983, p. 4) reports the trainer imploring the trainees thus: “Now girls, I want you to go out there and really *smile*. Your smile is your biggest *asset*. I want you to go out there and use it. Smile. *Really* smile. Really *lay it on*.” Sutton (1991, p. 255) took part in training for debt collectors and was told: “Come on, don't be such a wimp. You've got to be more intense—where is that urgency in your voice?” In McDonald's, written instructions to counter servers include: “Be enthusiastic and smile. You never get a second chance to make a first impression” (Leidner, 1993, p. 69).

In addition to these explicit display rules found in emotional labour jobs, more implicit and perhaps less strictly applied rules can also be found in organizations more generally. Employees who are part of a team or who are encouraged to believe they are part of a team may also feel certain obligations towards other team members in terms of the emotions they display and to be a “team player”. This may involve displays of enthusiasm towards other team members and the work of the team. Likewise, organizations where people are encouraged to feel they are part of “one big happy family” may also feel obligations to display respect and liking towards those they work with. While these more implicit display rules are certainly more subtle they will also, like explicit display rules, influence employee behaviour.

Of course, the mere existence of rules does not mean they will be followed. So why do employees follow emotional display rules? In emotional labour jobs, following display rules is likely to be rewarded in terms of bonuses or tips. Sanctions may also exist to punish employees who do not conform to the required emotional displays. In addition, organizations may observe systematically the behaviour of employees to make sure they are behaving in desired ways. In call centres, for example, it is routine for managers and supervisors to listen in on calls to monitor employees' performance. Under such circumstances employees may have little choice but to follow display rules.

In other jobs, however, people may follow display rules simply because of the pressures of social conformity. In addition, it is possible that people in jobs that have relatively low levels of explicit emotional labour may also get rewarded for their emotional displays. For example, the manager whose emotional displays (particularly those that take place in the presence of more senior colleagues) consist largely of great enthusiasm and respect, may also be the manager who receives rapid promotion. Employees whose emotional displays show fear or disinterest are, on the other hand, unlikely to be selected so readily for promotion.

Question 3: How do employees manage their emotional displays?

Hochschild (1983) uses the ideas of deep and surface acting to explain how employees manage their displays of emotion. Deep acting is somewhat analogous to method acting in that emotion is produced by using thoughts, images, and ideas that are likely to evoke the emotion. A nurse, for example, who wants to display concern and compassion for a patient may try to imagine that they or one of their friends or relatives is the patient, thus producing the required emotions. Surface acting, on the other hand, is where emotions are displayed but the person is not experiencing the emotion in any way.

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) suggest two other ways in which emotional displays are regulated. First, where work identity is part of broader social identity, where employees feel that who they are is partly the work they do, feeling and displaying emotions may be relatively effortless and not require surface or deep acting. For example, a teacher who displays concern for a student may do so because they also “automatically” feel concern as that is part of who they feel they are as a person—their identity. A second mechanism may be through the use of cognitive scripts and schemata in very routinized work such as that undertaken by some salespeople, call centre operators, and staff in restaurants, for example. In the case of some sales jobs and some call centre work, the interaction with clients and customers is also literally scripted such that almost everything that is said, including expressions of emotion, is written down in the form of a script which the employee is expected to follow (see Leidner, 1993).

There are, therefore, a number of mechanisms by which employees manage their emotional displays. In managing emotional displays, felt emotions, as discussed earlier, may also play an important part unless the employee is only engaging in surface acting. This means that there may be quite a complicated relationship between displayed and felt emotions. It is to this issue we now turn.

Question 4: What is the relationship between displayed and felt emotion?

As indicated earlier, in order to display an emotion an employee may also have to feel it. In this case, therefore, the requirement to display emotions also leads to a requirement to *feel* those particular emotions. After one week working as a telephone debt collector following a week's training Sutton (1991, p. 255) reports “I found that, rather than the sympathy and fear I felt at first, I reacted to most debtors with feelings of intensity and vague irritation.” In other words Sutton started to actually feel the emotions he was required to display over the phone to debtors.

This kind of relationship, such that the display of emotion leads to the experience of the emotion, can be explained in terms of deep acting—that the

employee begins to feel the emotion in order to provide convincing displays. Another explanation concerns the relationship between simply displaying an emotion either in terms of facial expression or bodily posture and the subsequent effect of this on experienced emotion. There is some evidence (see Parkinson, 1995) that the display of an emotion may result in the subsequent experience of that emotion or at least a general positive or negative affective state.

Perhaps one of the most important issues concerning the relationship between felt and experienced emotion is the extent to which the employee experiences dissonance between the emotion they are displaying and the emotion they are feeling. In some kinds of jobs, particularly highly routinized emotional labour jobs, such dissonance may have little effect as the employee probably feels it is acceptable to fake being friendly as they do not identify strongly with the job or the customer or client. On the other hand, in some jobs that involve emotional labour, the experienced dissonance may be uncomfortable for reasons of personal and professional identity (see also Briner, 1995a). For example, if a nurse does not feel the concern he feels he must display to a patient, it may cause the nurse some discomfort and perhaps make him question his place in the profession. Such a process has many parallels with the phenomenon of "burnout".

In general terms, the relationships between experienced and expressed emotion are complex and not only in those jobs which involve emotional labour. Displayed emotion may lead to experienced emotion and vice versa. In other cases there is little relationship between displayed and felt emotion and this may have further consequences for felt emotion. Next, we consider what we currently understand about emotional experience at work.

FELT EMOTIONS: THE EXPERIENCE OF EMOTION AT WORK

As indicated earlier, we know very little about the experience of emotion at work. Returning to the emotions listed in Table 1, although it is very easy to think of personal examples or observations of, say, envy or anger or excitement at work, finding any kind of systematic research into such experiences is much more difficult. In this section I will first describe some of the studies that have attempted to examine the experience of emotion and work. Then we will go on to consider how emotions may affect work behaviours and cognitions and how work conditions may affect emotions. Last, a transactional framework for thinking about the processes involved in the experience of emotions at work is proposed.

The incidence, frequency, intensity, and nature of emotion at work

Table 2 gives some examples of the few papers that do report attempts to examine the experience of emotion at work. It is interesting to note that these papers draw on a very wide range of methods, come from a number of rather different

TABLE 2
Theoretical and empirical investigations of specific emotions and other
affective phenomena at work

<i>Emotion</i>	<i>Topic and Source</i>
Love, Attraction	Sexual attraction and organizational climate (Lazzari, 1997) Factors that influence participation in romantic relationships at work (Pierce, 1998) Theoretical model of workplace romance (Pierce, Byrne, & Aguinis, 1996)
Boredom	Impact of interruptions on boredom at work (Fisher, 1998) Review and theoretical framework for studying boredom (Fisher, 1993) Suggested method for reducing boredom by uncovering repressed feelings (Gemmill & Oakley, 1992)
Flow	Flow or optimal experience (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988) occurs when skills and challenges <i>are at a high level</i> for that person People in flow “feel more active, alert, concentrated, happy, satisfied, and creative—but not necessarily more cheerful or sociable” (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989, p. 816)
Shame	Theoretical overview of the nature of shame at work and a model for understanding shame at work (Poulson, 1998) Overview of the benefits of understanding shame at work and the analysis of two clinical vignettes (Walsh, 1999)
Pride	Relationships between pride and organizational citizenship behaviour in ethnographic studies (Hodson, 1998) Economic psychology analysis of the effects of pride on behaviour at work, applying for state benefits, and in negotiation (Lea & Webley, 1997)
Anger	Experimental study of impact of anger and compassion on negotiation performance (Allred, Mallozzi, Matsui, & Raia, 1997) Effects of displays of anger on ratings of supervisor–subordinate interactions (Glomb & Hulin, 1997)

disciplines, and are theoretical as well as empirical. This work is so diverse and so limited it is simply not possible to draw any general conclusions about the incidence, frequency, intensity, and nature of emotion at work. We will return later to a consideration of the kinds of research that could most usefully be conducted in this area.

It is, however, worth reflecting on the distinction between emotions that are experienced because of the conditions or nature of the work task versus emotions that are experienced as a consequence of being in a social situation and interacting with other people. In the case of, say, getting angry with a colleague, it may be that the broader design of the work task or team is the fundamental cause rather than the kind of relationship one has with one's colleague or a personality clash. Although this distinction is sometimes less than clear, considering where the causes of emotions may lie has important theoretical and practical implications.

How might emotion affect work behaviours and cognitions?

Although we know relatively little about the incidence of emotion at work it is, however, possible to think about the ways in which the experience of emotions may have effects on a range of work behaviours and cognitions. The central role of positive affect in general and pro-social behaviours such as helping has been demonstrated a number of times (e.g. George & Brief, 1992; Isen & Baron, 1991). Table 3 gives examples of other organizational phenomena that may be related to experienced emotion.

Though there is currently little empirical work, a number of authors have taken behaviours of interest to work and organizational psychologists and suggested ways in which emotion may play a role in those behaviours. George and Brief (1996), for example, suggest that emotion (and affect more generally) is central to motivation. They suggest that employees have motivational agendas that are related to the attainment of different "selves": In other words we may strive to achieve different kinds of goals at work as they relate to different aspects of the self including who we are and who we would like to become. They argue that emotion is central to this process as it is emotion that provides us with information about the value, or otherwise, of these different goals to the self. Kidd (1998) has attempted to apply emotion to career theory, suggesting, again,

TABLE 3
Examples of organizational behaviours and cognitions likely to be influenced by emotion

<i>General Category</i>	<i>Specific Behaviours and Cognitions</i>
Withdrawal/engagement	Intention to quit, absence, turnover, affective and continuance commitment
Motivation	Focusing of attention, initiating action, sustaining action, anticipation of rewards, avoiding negative emotions (avoidance motivation), self-efficacy, counter-productive behaviours
Pro- and anti-social behaviour	Organizational citizenship behaviours, extra-role behaviours, aggression, harassment, criticism, misbehaviour
Careers	Career transitions, career decisions, psychological contract, learning and personal development
Teamwork	Team climate, interpersonal relations, coordination, communication
Relationships	Charismatic leadership, manager-subordinate relationships, leadership effectiveness, co-worker relations, relational systems
Cognitive processes	Decision-making, social judgements, attention

that emotions play a central role in careers and career transitions and that thus far career theorists have tended to ignore emotions. It has also been suggested that emotions underlie the nature and strength of attachments we have to others at work so forming the basis of relational systems at work, which in turn has profound impacts on work behaviours (Kahn, 1998).

Although it is helpful to speculate about the ways in which emotions impact on work behaviours, and it seems quite obvious that they do in very important ways, there is no clear theory to suggest how and why emotions lead to specific behaviours though, as mentioned earlier, emotions contain within them action tendencies, such as approach or withdrawal, which may help to account for their influence. Likewise, emotions have a strong influence on information processing, which is in turn likely to affect longer-term cognitions and behaviours.

Having now briefly considered how emotions may impact on work behaviours, we now go on to consider how work impacts on experienced emotion.

How might work affect experienced emotions? Towards a transactional approach

How and why are emotions produced? This is a big question with a large, incomplete, and somewhat complicated set of answers (see Parkinson, 1995). Although there are very different theoretical perspectives on the more distal causes of emotion, most current theories of emotion tend to focus on the roles of events and situations as proximal causes. Indeed, as mentioned previously emotions are usually defined in terms of short-term intense affective reactions to specific events.

It is interesting to note that traditional approaches to employee well-being in terms of stress and satisfaction rarely consider the role of *events* but rather tend to focus on the role of job *characteristics* as causes of stress and satisfaction. This approach usually includes characteristics such as workload, autonomy, opportunities for skill use, job scope, and so on. The notion here is that jobs contain or are perceived by employees to contain a certain quantity of each of these characteristics and it is the quantity of these characteristics and the relationships between them that determines employee well-being. It is certainly questionable whether jobs really “have” characteristics in this sense or not and, even if they do, we can also question the extent to which they are important influences on emotion and affect compared to events. In other words, does thinking about traditional job characteristics tell us about why emotion is produced at work? It is interesting to note that a very similar event-based approach has recently been proposed as a means of better understanding the behaviour of whole organizations (Peterson, 1998).

Affective Events Theory (AET; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) is perhaps the very first attempt to develop a framework to explain affective and emotional experiences at work, and it takes work events, rather than job characteristics, as the central cause of emotion at work. Weiss and Cropanzano also argue that job

satisfaction is *not* affect but a neutral, positive, or negative judgement of either the job as a whole or particular facets of the job. In other words, traditional work and organizational psychology approaches to employee's affect may, as was stated earlier, be actually missing out on affect altogether because of the use of the concepts of satisfaction and, I would argue, stress, and the way they are operationalized in research.

Although it is difficult to argue against the idea that it is events that cause emotions through the way they are appraised and their significance, this is not the end of our analysis but rather the beginning: Perhaps the central feature of emotional experience, and affect more broadly (see Parkinson et al., 1996), is its very dynamic nature: Emotion occurs in ongoing processes that contain the ebb and flow of emotion, behaviour, and cognition; emotion occurs in the context of a personal narrative—our history, present, and anticipated future. For example, in order to understand the significance of someone becoming angry at work, knowing about the proximal event that triggered the angry response is certainly important, but what may be much more relevant is the history of that person and their situation, how the event came to have meaning, what that person does as a consequence of being angry, and how what they do then impacts on future emotions, cognitions, and behaviours. This approach is also emphasized within AET: “While each of the events during the [emotional] episodes can be described in discrete terms, the episode itself has coherence and a set of features that suggest it should be treated as a unit of analysis” (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p. 42).

The idea of going beyond simple cause and effect in understanding emotions and the importance of looking at the person and environment together can also be traced back to the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 294) and their notion of person–environment transactions:

Another distinguishing feature of transactional thought ... is that transaction implies a newly created level of abstraction in which the separate person and environment elements are joined together to form a new relational meaning. In interaction, particularly in statistical analyses ... the interacting variables retain their separate identities. From a transactional perspective, the characteristics of the separate variables are subsumed.

In other words, it is the *relationship* between the person and their context and how this unfolds over time that is of central interest in understanding emotion rather than proximal causes or immediate effects. From this perspective it is the constant processes of interaction between person and environment that is important, rather than particular qualities or characteristics of the person or environment at any particular time.

Examples of such processes can be seen in Table 4 (adapted from Briner, 1999—the numbered stages are somewhat arbitrary and are here simply to facilitate use of the example). These processes are described here as emotion–

TABLE 4

Example of an affect–cognition–behaviour sequence (adapted from Briner, 1999)

-
- (1) Peter is in his first long-term job and works as a manager in an IT firm.
 - (2) He enjoys the job but feels he would like to advance more quickly and believes he is competent enough to work at a higher grade.
 - (3) He is asked by his boss to undertake a difficult task, usually given only to more experienced colleagues, and feels valued and trusted but also a little worried as he has never done anything so difficult before and the deadline is tight.
 - (4) He agrees to do the task as it sounds interesting and challenging and he believes it may help with either a promotion, a pay rise, or will raise his profile with the boss.
 - (5) While working hard on the project his emotions range from excitement and elation to fear and frustration as things go well or badly and as the deadline approaches.
 - (6) He completes the task well and on time and feels proud and very relieved.
 - (7) Peter tells his boss what he has done and shows the boss his completed work.
 - (8) Boss gives no thanks or praise and picks out a trivial error and then seems to ignore Peter.
 - (9) He then feels resentful and angry and thinks that he will never again “put himself out” or do anything extra for his boss. He also feels exploited.
 - (10) Thinks about looking for another job and wonders why he works in the organization if this is how he is going to be treated.
 - (11) He stops volunteering to do additional tasks.
 - (12) Still feels angry.
 - (13) Speaks negatively about the organization to people inside and outside the organization.
 - (14) He starts to feel sad and disappointed.
 - (15) Puts relatively little thought or effort into his job.
 - (16) Starts to find work boring and uninteresting.
 - (17) Updates his CV and starts looking at job advertisements regularly.
-

cognition–behaviour sequences though this does *not* imply any particular ordering or sequence between emotion, cognition, and behaviour. In this example it is clear that, whereas each of Peter's emotional reactions can be explained to some extent by the events that precede it, much more significant is the whole episode and history of Peter's involvement with the organization and the task. It is also noteworthy how Peter's emotional responses lead to behaviours and cognitions that in turn influence the environment in which he operates and the nature of his work. At Stage 4, for example, he agrees to take on the difficult task, which in turn means that he is more likely to experience greater challenges and threats in his work, which then means he is more likely to experience the intense emotions experienced at Stage 5. Similarly, when Peter withdraws effort at Stage 15 this means his job becomes less challenging, and hence at Stage 16 his emotional reactions to work include boredom and disinterest.

This is just one hypothetical example, which has been provided in order to illustrate just some of the ways in which the effect of work on emotional experience is probably best considered in terms of transactional processes and emotional episodes (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) rather than simple cause and effect.

IMPLICATIONS OF CONSIDERING EMOTIONS AT WORK

The implications of the previous overview of research about the expression and experience of emotion at work can be considered under three broad themes. The first theme is moving our thinking about work and well-being beyond the very general affective states of stress and satisfaction towards the much more specific and detailed domain of emotions. The second theme concerns the apparently increasing demands for emotional labour in jobs both inside and perhaps outside service industries. The third theme concerns the ways in which work affects our emotions and also how our emotions affect aspects of our work behaviour. Each of these themes will now be considered as they relate to work and organizational psychology researchers and practitioners.

Some implications for researchers

The major implication of thinking about more specific feeling states is that the concepts of stress and satisfaction will need to be abandoned or at least given much less emphasis. This is not, of course, to reject the general idea that work can affect how we feel but rather to accept that it does so in more subtle and specific ways than are suggested by stress and satisfaction. This will present a major challenge to work and organizational psychology researchers, as our thinking about work and well-being has been almost entirely dominated by these concepts for the past three decades. A great deal of theoretical work, which attempts to specify how work might cause specific emotions and in turn how these emotions may affect work behaviours, will be required. In terms of empirical work, the understanding of the kinds of affect-cognition-behaviour sequences described earlier is one priority (this will be discussed in more detail later). There is, however, a great deal of initial and very basic descriptive empirical work to be done to answer some really very fundamental questions about the incidence and intensity of emotion at work. For example: How often do people experience specific emotions such as remorse, shame, or affection at work? Is the incidence of specific emotions different across different kinds of job or organization? As emotions are not easy to assess and self-reports remain vital, this approach will need to be supplemented by a range of other methods (see Marsella, 1994; Mossholder, Settoon, Harris, & Armenakis, 1995; Temme & Zapf, 1997; White, 1996).

Another basic though important issue is the extent to which there are relationships between employees' general perceptions of stress or satisfaction and more specific emotional states (Gourlay, Briner, & Jones, 1998; Temme & Zapf, 1997): In other words, are employees' general judgements of stress and satisfaction based on more specific emotions?

Turning now to the second theme of emotional labour, researchers have, for some time, been concerned about the possibly damaging long-term effects of

engaging in emotional labour and also of having multiple emotional labour roles both at work and home (Wharton & Erickson, 1993, 1995). However, work in this field, like research on burnout, remains theoretically limited. We need to ask exactly how and why demands to display certain emotions at work might have consequences for well-being and, equally importantly, what are the *specific* consequences we might expect. A more detailed analysis of emotional dissonance and emotional deviance may also help with this task (Briner, 1995a). Other important research topics include the assessment of the job demands and characteristics of emotional labour jobs (e.g. Brotheridge & Lee, 1998; Fritze, Jones, Best, & Downey, 1998; Grandey, 1998) from a job design perspective: The emotional labour performed by some call centre employees has been compared to the worst kind of Tayloristic jobs, as it involves a high pace and volume of work with very little employee autonomy or discretion and simplified work processes.

If the argument presented earlier in favour of thinking about emotions at work in terms of processes and affect–cognition–behaviour sequences, such as that presented in Table 4, rather than simple cause–effect has any validity then perhaps the major challenge for researchers in the field of emotion at work is to devise methods and designs and theories that will permit such processes to be explored and assessed. Although many work and organizational psychologists claim to be interested in processes, when we look in detail at the theories and empirical work undertaken these are very often not about processes at all but rather about cause and effect. Relevant methods would certainly be both qualitative and quantitative and perhaps also involve introspection and observation. Designs would, ideally, need to be longitudinal in order to track over time the ebb and flow of transactions. Equally important, however, is to have sound *theories*, which inform and determine our methodologies rather than allowing our methodologies to determine our theories or the way in which we look at phenomena. Theories concerned with personal narratives, life histories, and autobiographical memory may be a good place to start (e.g. Baumeister & Newman, 1994; Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1995; Leith & Baumeister, 1998; Musson, 1998).

Some implications for practitioners

Practitioners are often involved in helping organizations with issues surrounding stress and satisfaction. What are the implications of abandoning these ideas and, instead, looking at specific emotions? One immediate implication is that the initial assessments carried out by practitioners typically using “stress audits” or questionnaire measures of job satisfaction should perhaps be supplemented by techniques that can assess emotion: Knowing that a group of workers is, say, angry or feels resentment, is probably more useful than simply knowing they are reporting high levels of stress or low levels of satisfaction. A further implication is that a whole new range of intervention techniques will need also to be

developed as more traditional kinds of stress intervention are incapable of dealing with specific emotions. Persuading organizations to take specific emotions seriously may present a challenge to practitioners. Although many organizations realize the importance of emotion it appears that relatively few are prepared to explicitly recognize and engage with the emotions of their employees. Work and organizational psychology practitioners may also find themselves working with or using techniques developed by clinical psychologists (e.g. Walsh, 1996) in order to make emotion interventions effective (this issue will be discussed further later).

What are the implications for practitioners of the apparently increasing demands for emotional labour both in service organizations and outside? From an employee's perspective, it is important that emotional labour is safe in terms of its possible effects on well-being. From an employer's perspective, the quality of the product or service is vital and so too, therefore, is the ability of the employer to perform emotional labour in a way that is effective. Practitioners may have a role in advising both employees and employers on how both these goals can best be met. This may include examining the selection of staff as personality and other characteristics seem to be important predictors of effectiveness in emotional labour jobs (e.g. Kruml & Geddes, 1998; Parkinson, 1991), training people to do emotional labour, and, as mentioned previously, paying careful attention to the design of emotional labour jobs.

Whereas some practitioners may, when making initial individual or organizational assessments, automatically take account of the kinds of affect-cognition-behaviour sequences described earlier, it is also the case that others may rely on more cross-sectional or relatively static approaches to assessment where employees' emotional reactions are seen simply as a short-term response to a recent event. As discussed, there are many potential benefits to recognizing that employees' emotions have a past, a present, and an anticipated future, and that understanding such a process may give us vital information about how and when to intervene. In this sense, practitioners may have to adopt the kind of approach taken by psychotherapists to individual clients. In the case of groups or indeed whole organizations, this is by no means simple but such approaches to consultation and intervention have been used in other contexts (e.g. Czander, 1993; Kets de Vries, 1995). A further implication of looking at emotional processes in organizations is that this has to be done in a much broader way to take account of both positive and negative emotional states, as it may be the relationship between the two and how they change over time that is the central issue rather than simply the degree or quantity of negative emotion. Interventions could be aimed at increasing certain positive emotions rather than simply attempting to remove negative emotions, often seems to be the case in stress interventions.

Another set of implications, which is of more relevance to practitioners, surrounds the ethical basis of trying to intervene in people's emotions at work:

Trying to “manipulate” employees emotions does have sinister connotations. For example, should work and organizational psychology practitioners help organizations to more effectively implement display rules in emotional labour? Hochschild (1983, p. 127) reports a story told to her by many of the air attendants she studied: “A young businessman said to a flight attendant, ‘why aren’t you smiling?’ She put her tray back on the food cart, looked him in the eye, and said, ‘I’ll tell you what, you smile first, then I’ll smile.’ The businessman smiled at her. ‘Good,’ she replied. ‘Now freeze, and hold that for fifteen hours.’ Then she walked away.” Clearly some of the air attendants in Hochschild’s study regarded the display rules as unreasonable.

Should practitioners be involved in culture change which, again, often involves trying to make people feel particular emotions (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989) or, for example, in selecting employees on the basis of their ability to display certain emotions, which has been described by Fineman (1996) as like emotional eugenics? Managing emotions is, itself, an emotional issue that also has a number of important ethical implications.

A final implication for researchers and practitioners

The role of emotion at work has recently begun to be taken more seriously by work and organizational psychology as an important phenomenon that has been neglected for too long. One of the great dangers of this new interest, however, is that emotion may come to be studied as a phenomenon that is somehow separate from behaviour and cognition at work: That we look at emotion as a new and separate aspect of work psychology. To take this approach would be a fundamental mistake as, to repeat the point I have made many times already, emotion is intrinsic to work behaviour and not a separate part of it. When we think about teamwork or motivation or any of the other work behaviours listed in Table 3, it is obvious that emotion is a part of these phenomena already, rather than something separate or new: It is simply that in the past we have tended to ignore or play down its relevance. For researchers and practitioners who are interested in emotion, a key task is to put emotion into what they are already doing, thereby helping to integrate emotion with their existing research and practice. If this is not done, the theoretical and practical relevance of emotion to almost every aspect of work behaviour will remain unexplored and emotion will once more become marginalized within work and organizational psychology.

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