Emotions at Work
Theory, research and applications in management

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Emotions at Work
Janice M. Beyer, a dedicated scholar and pioneering leader in the field of management, passed away on 20 June 2001. The chapter in this book represents one of her last publications and the only piece focusing on the topic of emotions. Within these pages, Jan shares some thoughts about an emotion that her autobiography (Beyer, 1996) shows she cared very deeply about—the feeling of belonging. This personal interest in “belonging” might offer some explanation for her sustained professional interest in the subject of culture. If so, then this chapter represents a small tribute to who Jan was as well as what she studied. She would no doubt be very pleased to know of the book’s dedication. While we will continue to learn from her, those who had the good fortune of knowing her will miss her dearly.


Houston, Texas

David Niño
## Contents

About the editors ix  
List of contributors xi  
Preface xix  

### Part I  The nature of emotion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Varieties and functions of human emotion</td>
<td>Robb Stanley and Graham Burrows</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Emotion, mood, and temperament: similarities, differences, and a synthesis</td>
<td>Elizabeth Gray and David Watson</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Discrete emotions in organizational life</td>
<td>Richard Lazarus and Yochi Cohen-Charash</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part II  Measuring and assessing emotion at work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Emotions in the workplace: biological correlates</td>
<td>Maurice King</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Measuring emotions at work</td>
<td>Roy Payne</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part III  Organizational influences on emotion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Affect at work: a historical perspective</td>
<td>Howard Weiss and Art Brief</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Culture as a source, expression, and reinforcer of emotions in organizations</td>
<td>Janice Beyer and David Niño</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>Origins and consequences of emotions in organizational teams</td>
<td>Carsten de Dreu, Michael West, Agneta Fischer, and Sarah MacCurtain</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>Emotions and organizational control</td>
<td>Stephen Fineman</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>Helping individuals manage emotional responses</td>
<td>Rose Evison</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>Organizational management of stress and destructive emotions at work</td>
<td>Cary Cooper and Sue Cartwright</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>Emotion and offices at work</td>
<td>Ian Donald</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part V  Emotions and the future**

| Chapter 13 | Future work and its emotional implications | Peter Herriot | 307 |
| Chapter 14 | Inner technology: emotions in the new millennium | Ayman Sawaf, Harold Bloomfield, and Jared Rosen | 327 |
| **Conclusion** | | Roy L. Payne and Cary L. Cooper | 343 |
| Index       |                                            |                | 345 |
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Preface

This book was prompted by a request from the publishers for an update of the books we had edited previously on stress in the workplace: *Stress at Work* (1978), *Current Concerns in Occupational Stress* (1980) and *Causes, Coping and Consequences of Stress at Work* (1988). Whilst that was tempting, it seemed to us that the late 1980s/1990s had brought a renewed and broader concern with emotions of all kinds. There was a growing interest in the more positive emotions such as happiness, and Michael Argyle’s book *The Psychology of Happiness* (1987) is an exemplar of that work, as well as a burgeoning interest in the nature of emotion itself. Ekman and Davidson’s book *The Nature of Emotion* (1994) contains works by the leading scholars in the field and it illustrates vividly the debates raging amongst them. There is, of course, a very large literature on stress at work that deals with a restricted range of the negative emotions. There is a huge literature on positive emotion, captured in the concept of job satisfaction, but many other emotions have largely been ignored in work psychology, though the influential work of Weiss and Crapanzo (1996) on affective events theory in the workplace, heralded the developing interests of both academics and managers. The interests of the latter were also strongly stimulated by Goleman’s *Emotional Intelligence at Work* (1998). With this activity in the background, it was decided to broaden the book to deal with a comprehensive range of emotional experiences.

The title *Emotions at Work* is deliberately ambiguous, hence the subtitle “Theory, research and applications in management”. The title does, of course, convey the central focus of the book which is on emotions in the workplace, but the other possible meaning of “emotions at work” is a concern with the processes involved in the production of emotional experience. The first part of the book is entitled “The nature of emotion” and it introduces the reader to what is known about emotions and the processes that bring them into being. Chapter 1 is by Robb Stanley and Graham Burrows from the Department of Psychiatry at Melbourne University. They define emotions and list some of the main emotions described by workers in the field. They also describe the emotional process, strongly linking emotion to motivation and behaviour. The chapter also deals with the function of emotions in this overall process, describing the range of positive and negative
emotions and their significance in detecting conditions which may be of clinical significance. The conceptual and empirical difficulty of being precise in this field is strongly signalled.

These difficulties are perhaps suggested by the need to have a chapter solely on the distinctions between emotion, mood, and temperament. Chapter 2 is by Elizabeth Gray and David Watson from the Department of Psychology at the University of Iowa. They present a thorough review of the literature on the three and use the concepts of duration, focus on the object/situation, intensity of the emotional experience, the frequency, the function, and the type of the state to differentiate between them. They finally offer an integrative schema, starting with a distinction between positive and negative affect and then defining emotions, moods, and temperamental traits that arise within the two broad states. It is convincing in its parsimony and clarity.

The nature of emotions is further explored by Richard Lazarus and Yochi Cohen-Charash from the Department of Psychology of the University of California at Berkeley. This chapter examines the main epistemological approaches to the study of emotions and does so specifically focusing on the work that has been carried out in work organizations. A total of 15 discrete emotions are defined and each is considered in the context of stress and coping in work situations. The theoretical emphasis is on the need to approach the study of emotion within a cognitive–motivational and relational meaning framework. This tool can be effectively used to “ask, about each adaptational encounter at work, what might have brought an emotion about, how it is coped with, and what the consequences might be” (p. 75). Having explored the variety of emotions and provided classifications of those that are relevant to the workplace in particular, we are immediately faced with the question, “How well can we measure these different emotional states?”

Part II of the book is called “Measuring and assessing emotion at work.” It continues the concern with processes by concentrating on the biological correlates of emotion in Chapter 4, which is by Maurice King who was Head of the Institute for Behavioural Research in Health at Curtin University in Perth when the chapter was written. The history of biological studies of emotions commences with Darwin, William James and W. B. Cannon and moves through the limbic system, brain opiates, psychoneuroendocrinology, and brain imaging. It moves on to psychoneuroimmunology and lists the main indicators of emotional activity and how they may be measured. The role of the brain is also described briefly but comprehensively. It is concluded that “… while the central nervous system generates emotional perception, it does so only in concert with the peripheral nervous system, so that measuring peripheral system variables makes pragmatic sense” (p. 98). The last part of the chapter considers the practicality of collecting data on physiological, endocrinological, and immunological activity in the workplace. It concludes that such measures do seem capable of helping to distinguish between cognitive and emotional reactions, and in helping to discriminate between different emotions.

Reading Chapter 5 by Roy Payne may well convince the reader that the psychological sciences could do with all the help they can get from the biological sciences.
The chapter concentrates on self-report measures of emotions and moods. The recent debate about the size of the correlation between measures of positive and negative affect is presented as well as frameworks for classifying emotional experiences. A number of measures that have been used in work organizations are described. They include measures of emotion and mood, and it is indicated where some measures can easily be adapted to assess them as well as temperament. Whilst there is much work on positive and negative affect, and a reasonable amount on anger, the chapter calls for more work on emotions such as envy, jealousy and guilt, and describes some measures developed by clinical psychologists that might be adapted for use in work organizations.

Having prepared the way, the book begins to move into the heart of its focus on work organizations and Part III is concerned with “Organizational influences on emotion”. Part III commences with a blockbuster history of affect at work by Howard Weiss from Purdue University and Art Brief from Tulane University. Having briefly set the intellectual context in the early 20th century, they describe how a paradigm of research into the dissatisfied worker developed in the 1930s and how ‘... the end of the decade saw the study of affect at work become the study of job satisfaction by way of questionnaire’” (p. 142). The correlates of job satisfaction ruled for the next 30 years and the 1960s became the golden age of job satisfaction research. The work of all the major players is described (Herzberg, Vroom, Locke, Cain Smith, Loftquist and Dawis), but their works are presented as the strands that make a history, with the emphasis on story. The 1970s is seen as a period of consolidation with major reviews but few new ideas, except for Salancik and Pfeffer’s introduction of the idea that satisfaction is much affected by the processing of information generated in the work context. The 1980s brings a shift towards a broader interest in the nature of affect, as well as a strong concern for the influence of temperament on job satisfaction and other indices of psychological well-being. The role of cognition in the affective process also becomes a developing theme as well as the way in which culture/climate can influence affect in the workplace. The authors also identify the trend to a broader interest in affect and the development of emotional intelligence as characterizing the 1990s. The key themes, and how they have played a part in bringing job satisfaction research into the 21st century, are eloquently presented in the discussion.

The role of culture in developing and sustaining emotions in work organizations is the focus of Chapter 7 by Janice Beyer and David Niño from the Graduate School of Management at the University of Texas at Austin. They explore how cultures:

- manage the anxieties posed by uncertainties;
- provide ways to express emotions;
- encourage and discourage the experience of emotions;
- engender identification and commitment;
- produce ethnocentricism.
They do this by summarizing a recent and dramatic event on the campus of Texas A&M University. Students were building a large bonfire, continuing the tradition of associating it with the annual football game against their arch rival the University of Texas. The bonfire collapses, 12 people are killed and 27 injured, some very seriously. As the story unfolds, the authors use it to provide vivid and dramatic examples of the positive and negative emotional forces that cultural identification can produce.

The strength of people’s identification with their colleagues is the focus of Chapter 8 that examines “The origins and consequences of emotions in organizational teams”. The authors are Carsten de Dreu, University of Amsterdam, Michael West of Aston Business School, the University of Aston in Birmingham, UK, Agneta Fischer who is also at the University of Amsterdam and Sarah McCurtin, University of Limerick. Having established the power of the drive in human beings to belong to groups, and the positive and negative emotions that can arise from those drives, the authors show how feeling that we belong to a team has a protective effect on the frequency of experiencing negative emotions. They then tackle the question of how well group identification, and the emotions attached to it, can control the nature and quality of the interpersonal processes that develop in a team. This leads to an interest in their relationship to team performance including team creativity.

“Feeling out of control” could well be used as an operational definition of stress. As is pointed out above, it is also crucial to good teamworking. It is such a central concept to understanding the nature of organizations, and the effect they have on people’s experience, that it was deemed worthy of a chapter all of its own. Steve Fineman’s chapter (Chapter 9) is entitled “Emotions and organizational control.” Steve is at the School of Management at Bath University, UK. The chapter starts with the argument that the best organizations function on pure rationality, and emotion is controlled out of the equation. Having raised doubt about the validity of this assumption, the author explores how managers in organizations actually exert control, and how their workers attempt to control them. The second half of the chapter uses descriptions/accounts of the visit of a pollution inspector to an organization, and what it is like to be a doormat for a senior broker in the financial services industry. It provides an excellent example of the use of qualitative methods to research emotions in organizations.

Having established the problematics of emotions in organizations, Part IV of the book is concerned with “Managing emotions in the workplace”. Chapter 10 is by Rose Evison who is a psychologist and consultant in personal development and interpersonal relationships, currently resident in Pitlochry, Scotland. The chapter focuses on how to help individuals manage “the production and enhancement of emotional states associated with optimizing performance, and minimizing emotional states associated with performance decrements or health hazards” (p. 241). The chapter distinguishes functional emotional responses (FER) from dysfunctional emotional responses (DER) and examines the role of learning, in shaping them. It draws on emotional theory to indicate how they may be changed,
which leads to recommendations about how they can be managed both by the individual and by managers of other individuals.

Cary Cooper and Sue Cartwright’s chapter (Chapter 11) focuses more on the organization level and concentrates on stress and destructive emotions. They are from the Manchester School of Management at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. They indicate the different actions that managers in organizations need to take, depending on whether their strategy is primary prevention (reducing the causes of stress), secondary prevention (improving people’s capacity to manage stress and their emotional reactions to it), or tertiary prevention (providing support to people who have stress through counseling and other forms of intervention/support). The chapter concludes with a section on the broader implications of creating healthy work environments and the importance of considering the needs of small and medium enterprises.

One aspect of the work environment that has not been widely considered in stress research itself is the physical environment. Chapter 12 is by Ian Donald who is an environmental psychologist at the University of Liverpool. Ian concentrates on offices as physical environments. In discussing the nature of emotion in organizations, he draws on the concept of emotional labour and how different theories of organization might influence it. Academic and architectural interest in how office design might influence emotions and behaviour is a relatively recent phenomenon, and Ian points to an emphasis on function rather than psychological effects in the design of most offices. The office as status symbol is treated in some depth and the loss of its role in open planning. There is also a section on the role of lighting in influencing mood. In looking to the future, Ian ponders on the home as office and the emotional consequences that trend might bring about.

The final part of the book is about “Emotions and the future.” The first chapter (Chapter 13) in Part V is by Peter Herriot who lives near London and practises as an occupational and organizational psychologist. Peter emphasizes the social nature of emotions and how the employment relationship is fundamentally social in nature. The changing nature of the employment relationship is outlined and the potential differences that are developing between senior managers in organizations and the rest of the people they employ. The expectations for compliance, for difference (the need to develop a competitive advantage) and for change (the organization’s ability to adapt and be flexible) are considered in some detail. Some surprising comments occur: “It is not so much that it is the survival of the fittest that is the order of the day, rather it is the survival of the biggest” (p. 319). This leads to a somewhat pessimistic view of future employment relationships for the majority of workers, though Peter concludes this is not inevitable if senior managers manage with intelligence and a concern for the emotional consequences of their actions.

Emotional intelligence and the future are the focus of the final chapter (Chapter 14). Ayman Sawaf, Harold Bloomfield, and Jared Rosen are consultants with Whole Life Expo in the USA. Their chapter is entitled “Inner technology: emotions in the new millennium.” This chapter too considers how changes in
the economies of the world are changing the requirements of effectively dealing with the changes. Emotional intelligence, and shared emotional intelligence in particular, are seen as vital assets. The chapter examines how emotional intelligence develops in both individuals and in organizations. The acronym FIRE is used to convey the importance of integrating Feelings, Information, Responsibility, and Energy to meet the challenges of the future. The chapter is both polemical and practical, in keeping with the aim of the book to move from theory to practice. The authors encourage us to stop being guilty for feeling emotions, to stop feeling shameful for being alive, to stop hiding from grief and sorrow, and to forgive others so that love can become the engine of our actions, and “emotions the modem to the soul” (p. 341).

The book itself is a modem to information—we hope you have good feelings about it.

References

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Roy Payne and Cary Cooper
Part I

The nature of emotion
Chapter 1

Varieties and functions of human emotion

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THE NATURE OF EMOTION

The concept of emotion is central to all aspects of human experience and yet the concept is quixotic when it comes to defining what emotion is precisely. Many aspects of emotion are described differently depending on the context. Like other aspects of human experience there are often common-sense understandings and theoretical definitions that do not precisely match, and yet without precision research into the nature of normal and abnormal emotional reactions is compromised.

When considering the nature of emotions, the components of subjective experience, verbal description, accompanying physiological response, motivational influences, behavioural expression, and consequences need to be considered. The components may be consistent with each other or there may be discrepancies between them. Depending on their orientation, some researchers view emotions as primarily biological and physiological (Panksepp, 1988) while others view them as primarily psychological (Lazarus, 1991).

The subjective experience of emotional states is only available to us via the verbal descriptions that are applied. The language used to describe emotions varies considerably from person to person, as do individual familiarity with emotional states. Some people are cut off from their emotions while other people are dominated by their emotions. Some are expressive of their emotions while others seldom show significant emotions. Does this mean they experience
them differently? Or has personal experience, biological differences, or cultural acceptance simply altered the expressive component of emotions? Because of the complexities of subjective experiences and expression emotions are difficult to study.

Emotions and feeling states direct attention to events, thoughts or stimuli, organize perceptual and thought processes, as well as activating and motivating many, if not most, aspects of human behaviour. The central role of emotion in human functioning applies both to interpersonal (or social behaviours) and personal solitary behaviours. Whether in the social, work, family, or solitary sphere of human endeavour, human emotions and affects direct much of our functioning. The universal nature of the principal emotions and the presence of recognizable emotional states within animal behaviour underscore both the biological and the adaptive functions of emotions. In spite of the universality of emotional states, there is considerable debate over the precise nature of the fundamental emotions.

The expression of emotion also has a significant secondary role in complex social communication, indicating to the observer not only the impact of contemporary events but also the likely response of the person being observed. The expression of anxiety may communicate to an observer the desire to avoid or escape, joy the likelihood of persisting and anger an intention to defend.

Emotions vary in terms of whether they are positive or negative experiences, in arousal and intensity (i.e. strongly aroused to weakly aroused), reactivity (i.e. whether easily aroused), centrality (i.e. whether they dominate consciousness or are peripheral experiences), and, of course, the situations that arouse them (i.e. universal situations to highly idiosyncratic situations). Given the multidimensional nature of emotional experiences and of emotional expression, it is not surprising that the boundaries of when an emotional reaction is considered inappropriate, pathological, or representative of a psychological or psychiatric difficulty are poorly defined. Emotional reactions that are extreme in relation to the situation, or that persist beyond a reasonable time, or that are attached inappropriately to the situation, may each be labelled as pathological or representative of a psychological or psychiatric difficulty. The boundaries of what is excessive, too persistent, or inappropriate are not fixed and are subject to interpretation.

Emotions are associated with a range of other related states, such as feelings, affects, and temperaments. All these form related aspects of our general emotional functioning. While having a degree of independence, immediate feeling states are responsive to the situation but also related to the other emotional realms of affect, emotion, and general temperament. The precise nature and delineation of emotions, affects, and temperament are seldom agreed upon, the concepts varying from researcher to researcher.