



**CIRANO**  
Center for Interuniversity Research  
and Analysis on Organizations

**BURGUNDY REPORT**

# **EMOTION AT WORK**

**URSULA HESS**

Fellow, CIRANO  
Professor, Université du Québec à Montréal

(July 2003)

**2003RB-03**

## Les Rapports bourgogne

Documents de synthèse portant sur des questions d'intérêt général produits par des Fellows CIRANO, les Rapports bourgogne contribuent à alimenter la réflexion et le débat public sur des questions d'actualité. Les idées et les opinions émises dans ces rapports sont sous l'unique responsabilité des auteurs, et ne représentent pas nécessairement les positions du CIRANO ou de ses partenaires corporatifs, universitaires et gouvernementaux.

### The Burgundy Reports

The Burgundy Reports are written by CIRANO Fellows on issues of general interest, and aim at encouraging discussion and debate. The observations and viewpoints expressed are the sole responsibility of the authors; they do not necessarily represent positions of CIRANO or its corporate, university or governmental partners.

## CIRANO

Le CIRANO est un organisme sans but lucratif constitué en vertu de la Loi des compagnies du Québec. Le financement de son infrastructure et de ses activités de recherche provient des cotisations de ses organisations-membres, d'une subvention d'infrastructure du Ministère du développement économique et régional, de même que des subventions et mandats obtenus par ses équipes de recherche.

*CIRANO is a private non-profit organization incorporated under the Québec Companies Act. Its infrastructure and research activities are funded through fees paid by member organizations, an infrastructure grant from the Ministère du développement économique et régional and grants and research mandates obtained by its research teams.*

### Les organisations-partenaires / The Partner Organizations

HEC Montréal  
École Polytechnique  
Université Concordia  
Université de Montréal  
Université du Québec à Montréal  
Université Laval  
Université McGill  
Ministère des Finances du Québec  
Ministère du développement économique et régional (MDER)  
Alcan inc.  
AXA Canada  
Banque du Canada  
Banque Laurentienne du Canada  
Banque Nationale du Canada  
Banque Royale du Canada  
Bell Canada  
Bombardier  
Bourse de Montréal  
Développement des ressources humaines Canada [DRHC]  
Fédération des caisses Desjardins du Québec  
Gaz Métropolitain  
Hydro-Québec  
Industrie Canada  
Pratt & Whitney Canada Inc.  
Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton  
Ville de Montréal

© 2003 Ursula Hess. Tous droits réservés. All rights reserved.

Reproduction partielle permise avec citation du document source, incluant la notice ©.

Short sections may be quoted without explicit permission, provided that full credit, including © notice, is given to the source.

People are emotional. Hebb<sup>1</sup> once called humans “*the most emotional of animals.*” Thus it is not surprising the people are emotional at work. They experience anger at co-workers, superiors and their computers. A survey conducted by Mori, "Rage against the Machine", found that four out of five computer users had seen colleagues hurling abuse at their PCs, three quarters admitted that they swear at their computers, and more than half had been on the verge of fisticuffs with their IT systems.<sup>2</sup> Complaints about mobbing and violent behaviour at the workplace abound, and a study by Integra Realty Resources (2000) suggests that one in ten Americans say they work in an atmosphere where physical violence has occurred, with 42% saying their workplace is a place where yelling and verbal abuse takes place. The employees in this survey blamed stress for this state of affairs.

At the same time people fall in love at the workplace, are jealous of their co-workers, afraid of the team bully and happy about a success. In fact, the workplace is just as emotional as any other place in our life. Nonetheless, business tends to uphold the idea of the rational, i.e., unemotional employee, discourages emotions in work teams, and generally tries to portray the ideal workplace as one where calm and rationality reign. Yet, emotions are also in demand. Thus, the sales person is expected to be enthusiastic about their products, the receptionist is expected to be genuinely happy to see a client, and health care professionals should express real distress at the misery of their patients.

The present report aims to look at emotions at the workplace – what is good about them, what is bad about them and what we have learned about them in recent years.

The report is divided into three sections. The first section attempts to define emotions and to distinguish it from other, related but different phenomena, such as satisfaction and stress. The second section discusses good and bad emotions – and situations where good emotions are bad and bad emotions are good. The third section considers the question of whether emo-

---

*“...one in ten Americans say they work in an atmosphere where physical violence has occurred, with 42% saying their workplace is a place where yelling and verbal abuse takes place. “*

---

tions and their consequences are the same for everyone. In this section, I will also touch on the use of emotion in the context of transformational leadership.

### What are emotions?

*Emotions are many splendored things (Averill, 1994) <sup>3</sup>*

---

*“Emotions are triggered by an individual’s interpretation of an event.”*

---

This is the response of one well-known emotion researcher to the question. In the field of emotion research, one problem is posed by the vast number of definitions that have been proposed in the course of the over 100 years since Charles Darwin’s seminal book, written in 1872: **“The expression of the emotions in man and animals.”** <sup>4</sup> Although it is true that there is no one single definition, there is nonetheless a consensus regarding the key elements of what an emotion is -- as well as what emotions are not. Emotions are triggered by an individual’s interpretation of an event. Thus the sight of a bear may elicit fear and terror in me but pleasant anticipation in a hunter with the appropriate hunting license. When emotions are triggered, they elicit reactions in many bodily systems. They can increase our heart rate or make us sweat. Emotions are often shown in the face, the voice or the body. Although these expressions are genetically based, they are in adults usually strongly influenced by culture. Thus our natural tendency to eject an awful tasting food will be restrained when we are served – to name an example - Brussels sprouts for dinner at our boss’ house. We may even manage to smile. Importantly, emotions communicate information. Thus sadness communicates a sense of loss, whereas anger communicates the presence of an obstacle. Finally, emotions are adaptive, they are processes that allow us to respond to changing environmental and social challenges. And finally, emotions are not irrational. In fact, in order to behave rationally we need emotions.

---

*“...emotions are not irrational. In fact, in order to behave rationally we need emotions.”*

---

This is illustrated by a group of people who – through accidents or a stroke – have a damaged emotion system. These people generally do well

on a range of tasks that involve memory and certain types of logical reasoning, such as are demanded by standard intelligence tests. Yet, at the same time, they have trouble to make rational decisions in real life. For example, they may not be able to arrive at simple decisions such as how to decide what to do when two people want to see a different TV program at the same time.<sup>5</sup> While successful before the accident or stroke, they now choose unsuitable friends, enter inadvisable business relationships and engage in ill-advised activities.<sup>6</sup> This behaviour rapidly leads to financial losses, career termination, and loss of affection of family and friends. Antonio Damasio has described vivid examples of this lack of rationality in his book “*Descartes Error*”.<sup>7</sup> He shows that emotions allow us to avoid potentially problematic choices because we have a “feeling” or a “hunch” that something about a certain choice is “off.” Without this feeling we might not notice anything amiss or we might get lost trying to reason out unimportant differences between options.

### *Satisfaction and stress*

Although emotion researchers do not always agree on what emotions really are, they tend to be clear on what emotions are not. Emotions are distinguished from such states as moods, long lasting feeling states without clear cause, and sentiments, such as likes and dislikes. In this sense two classic domains concerned with “emotion” at the workplace, job satisfaction and stress, are not truly dealing with emotions per se. That is, a satisfied worker is not the same as a happy worker nor is a stressed worker necessarily the same as an unhappy worker. Rather, satisfaction represents a value judgment about the workplace. One important issue is that the things we *think* of as good do not necessarily make us *feel* happy. For example, we may think of exercise as being good for us and still hate every moment of it. The important elements of job satisfaction are beliefs about the job, and an evaluation of the job in terms of these beliefs. Employees have beliefs about the right amount of compensation for the amount of work they do, the proper level of respect that a supervisor should show them, and the amount of freedom to do

---

*“One important issue is that the things we **think** of as good do not necessarily make us **feel** happy.”*

---

things the way they prefer. Job satisfaction represents the evaluation in terms of these beliefs of the job as satisfactory or not.

---

*“Although we usually think of stress in terms of anxiety, sadness, and anger, it can also be experienced as a positive emotion by those who perceive the stressor as a challenge.”*

---

For stress, the situation is somewhat different. A good case for stress as emotional can be made. In fact, the eminent stress researcher Richard Lazarus suggests doing just that.<sup>8</sup> The problem is rather that stress is not just one emotion. Although we usually think of stress in terms of anxiety, sadness, and anger, it can also be experienced as a positive emotion by those who perceive the stressor as a challenge.<sup>9</sup> These emotions have all very different consequences. The stressed employee who feels anxious is likely to react with avoidance and show increased absenteeism.<sup>10</sup> The employee who feels angry is more likely to react with counterproductive work behaviours as a form of vengeance.<sup>11</sup> The employee who feels invigorated by stress shows yet another reaction. And these reactions all have very different implications for the enterprise. Interestingly, there is a tendency for people in general to distinguish between stress and emotion. The term stress is used with an orientation towards the future and an expectation of effort. Emotions are used to describe situations in a more reactive way, and with a focus on past events. In this context, women tend to opt more often to describe an event as emotional, whereas men prefer to describe an event as stressful.<sup>12</sup>

---

*“Emotions are contagious. Just watching the emotions of someone else is often enough to share these emotions to some degree.”*

---

The question of whether satisfaction and stress are good measures of emotion at work is important because, as we will see below, the actual emotions that managers and employees feel have an important impact. Thus, it makes a difference whether someone is dissatisfied versus angry or satisfied versus enthusiastic. And it makes equally a difference whether someone feels anxious, sad or angry in response to work stress.

Further, an employee's emotion does not necessarily stay restricted to that employee. Emotions are contagious. Just watching the emotions of someone else is often enough to share these emotions to some degree.<sup>13</sup> For example, Peter Totterdell has studied groups of nurses, accountants and

cricket players and systematically found the team members' moods to be linked, especially for those who were more committed to the team.<sup>14</sup> And whether what is shared is enthusiasm, anger or fear is certainly of interest – yet all can be products of stress or (dis)satisfaction.

In sum, the workplace is an emotional place and it is of interest to managers and researchers alike to better understand these emotions, their antecedents and their consequences. In the next section, I will present a short overview over the various consequences of emotions at work.

### **Feeling emotions at the workplace**

#### *Emotions, when are they good and when are they bad?*

“In decades past, workers were, in effect, told to leave their emotions at home and most complied.”<sup>15</sup> This remark by Pamela Johnson and Julie Indvik, well describes a common stance towards emotions in the workplace. This stance is based on a belief in Western philosophy, which goes back to Plato (c. 429-347BC), that the rational mind is distinct from the emotions, which in turn present an impediment to rational thinking. In Plato's Republic, the ideal of the philosopher-king represented the rational mind, whereas emotions were the domain of soldiers and “men of action.” The notion that emotions are opposed or even harmful to rational thought was further cemented by René Descartes (1596-1650), who associated the passions with the animal in us. From this tradition stems the notion that only the cool, unemotional mind is able to form rational thought and to think logically. Just as Mr. Spock and Data in the Star Trek universe. In this tradition, Max Weber describes the ideal of administrative bureaucracy as one that has succeeded in *“eliminating ... love hatred and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements, which escape calculation.”*<sup>16</sup>

In fact, there is no doubt that certain emotions that emerge at work are clearly disruptive to the work at hand and have to be contained. Thus, a surgeon cannot be squeamish when seeing blood and a fireman cannot afford

---

*“This stance is based on a belief in Western philosophy, which goes back to Plato (c. 429-347BC), that the rational mind is distinct from the emotions, which in turn present an impediment to rational thinking.”*

---

---

*“Yet a job that does not arouse emotions may become boring and boredom also leads to job dissatisfaction, turnover, accidents, and performance decrements.”*

---

panic at the sight of fire. Anger leads to counterproductive behaviours such as theft, vandalism, and aggression towards co-workers,<sup>17</sup> sadness makes employees want to quit their job,<sup>18</sup> and envy and jealousy are a source of stress and also lead to a propensity to quit.<sup>19</sup> Employee-client relationships are especially fraught with the potential for conflict and the resulting negative emotions, which generally need to be contained as well. Yet, a job that does not arouse emotions may become boring and boredom also leads to job dissatisfaction, turnover, accidents, and performance decrements.<sup>20</sup> And office romances, despite the positive emotions they may engender for the principal actors, can have very disruptive effects on work group effectiveness.<sup>21</sup>

Organizations dispose of a variety of mechanisms to neutralize emotions at the work place. These mechanisms aim to either prevent emotions from arising in the first place or to “safely” control those emotions that arise. Thus, medical students learn how to consider a cadaver an object rather than a person, doctors and lawyers are protected from upset clients by receptionists, and humour and jokes are used to dispel fear and disgust in the face of danger and tragedy.<sup>22</sup>

However, there is also a realization that emotions can have positive effects. Positive emotions increase creativity,<sup>23</sup> encourage helping behaviour and cooperation<sup>24</sup> and reduce aggression both against the organization and against people.<sup>25</sup> For example, pride motivates people to organizational citizenship behaviours<sup>26</sup> and a feeling of happiness is part of the experience of flow, which occurs when a person is optimally challenged and works at optimal levels of productivity.<sup>27</sup> And the concept of intrinsic motivation is characterized by the fact that those thus motivated *love* their work.

And negative affect does not have only negative effects. In the emotion literature, it has been noted that negative mood leads to a more thorough treatment of information and hence to better judgments in situations where difficult and complex problems need to be solved. People who are sad seek

---

*“In the emotion literature, it has been noted that negative mood leads to a more thorough treatment of information and hence to better judgments in situations where difficult and complex problems need to be solved.”*

---



and consider more information and process persuasive messages more thoroughly.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, positive affect leads to a reduction of deliberative or systematic processing of information. People who are in a positive mood tend to prefer the use of simple heuristics and decisional shortcuts, or to base their judgments on stereotypes.<sup>29</sup> Showing negative emotions also is not always bad. Some negative emotion expressions lead to positive consequences. This is especially the case for anger. Although anger can lead to counterproductive work behaviours as shown above, and often has a disruptive effect, anger is also a sign of power.<sup>30</sup> In a series of studies, Larissa Tiedens has shown that people confer more power to a leader who shows anger than to one who shows sadness.<sup>31</sup> Also male leaders are perceived as more efficient when they show anger than when they show sadness or react with a neutral expression.<sup>32</sup>

### *Emotion norms*

One of the areas where emotions are not only accepted, but are demanded, is in contact with clients. The goal of service encounters is to attract new customers and to keep the loyalty of existing customers. In turn, customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is largely dependent on the emotional climate of the service interaction. Simply, positive emotions such as positive surprise, pleasure and contentment make satisfied customers, and negative emotions such as disappointment and especially irritation, make dissatisfied customers.<sup>33</sup> Hence, customer service interactions tend to require high emotional control on the part of the employee to maintain positive relations with the customer.

For other jobs, emotion management is considered a central part of work. At the forefront of these are the “caring” professions such as health care, social service work and teaching, who all require emotions as integral part of the job.

All of these jobs require direct interactions with other people, which are frequently “emotional” and the “appropriate” means to express emotions is controlled by organizational norms and rules rather than the individual em-

---

*“Some negative emotion expressions lead to positive consequences. This is especially the case for anger.”*

---

---

*“In turn, customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is largely dependent on the emotional climate of the service interaction.”*

---

ployee. The reasons why jobs require specific emotions from employees also vary. Apart from the reasons just mentioned, these include ensuring smooth interactions within an enterprise and with people outside the enterprise or even obtaining confessions from criminals and motivating people to pay their bills. Also, some jobs simply cannot be done, if emotions are not dealt with first. For example, Karen Locke describes how paediatricians need to first reduce the fear of their youthful clients to be even able to perform any diagnosis or intervention.<sup>34</sup>

### *Emotion work*

What happens when the employees' job description contains an obligation towards specific emotions? What happens to the receptionist and the call centre employee who are required to keep smiling and the bill collector and policemen who are demanded to remain stern and forbidding? Arlie Hochschild, whose groundbreaking book, "**The managed heart**", was the first to draw attention to this question. She concluded that emotional labour is demanding and leads to dissatisfaction and in the long run to burnout.<sup>35</sup> Emotional labour or emotion work is the "*effort, planning and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions.*"<sup>36</sup> The type of emotion work required in different jobs differs with regard to the frequency of customer contact, the intensity and sincerity with which the emotion is to be expressed or felt, the duration of the interaction, and the variety of expressions that are demanded. On one hand of this continuum, we can imagine a cashier who briefly interacts with each customer in a stereotypic way that demands only a mildly positive emotion expression such as a brief smile when handing back change. On the other hand, we can imagine a teacher, whose job requires frequent, often lengthy interactions with students. Further, the teacher is expected to show a whole range of emotions such as stern disapproval with the goal to maintain discipline and cheerful playfulness with the goal to motivate students to an activity.

---

*"...some jobs simply cannot be done, if emotions are not dealt with first."*

---

Client service encounters usually fall somewhere in between these extremes. Also, as in the case of the teacher, not all emotion work consists of showing positive emotions. Some professions, police officers, prison guards, and bill collectors for example, require the expression of negative emotions as part of the job. However, most jobs require some level of emotion work – if only to assure smooth interactions with internal clients, one’s superior and other members of a work group. It has been estimated that emotion work is performed in almost two-thirds of workplace communications, including those not directly involving clients.<sup>37</sup>

### *The good side of emotion work*

The requirement to show organizationally demanded emotions was originally thought to be a source of stress leading to burnout.<sup>38</sup> However, it turned out that frequency, duration and intensity of client service contact were not systematically related to burnout.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Andrew Morris and Daniel Feldman in a frequently cited article on emotional labour argue “... that emotional labour need not be uniformly damaging or equally damaging to all employees.”<sup>40</sup> They point out that not only are there cases where employees simply go on automatic pilot -- the cashier who smiles when handing back change, but, more importantly, that there are situations where emotional labour reduces uncertainty or helps avoid embarrassing interpersonal situations and hence may actually lead to increased job satisfaction.

Research has supported the notion that emotional labour is not uniformly damaging. Some individuals in jobs with high levels of emotional labour may actually report higher levels of satisfaction and of personal accomplishment, and suffer less from burnout.<sup>41</sup> This may be due to the characteristic of the job or the person. Simply showing positive emotions or amplifying positive emotions is positively related to job satisfaction.<sup>42</sup> Some personal characteristics also may modulate how emotional labour is perceived. Thus, individuals who are more aware of their emotions and more

---

*“It has been estimated that emotion work is performed in almost two-thirds of workplace communications, including those not directly involving clients.”*

---

---

*“Simply showing positive emotions or amplifying positive emotions is positively related to job satisfaction.”*

---

emotionally adaptable show no relationship between the level of emotion work they do and the negative health symptoms they experience.<sup>43</sup> And finally, emotion work can simply be very rewarding for those that do it.<sup>44</sup>

---

*“Yet, on average employees in jobs that require ‘people work’ and are high in emotional labour tend to suffer more frequently from burnout.”*

---

In sum, emotion work in itself does not have to be a bad thing. Yet, on average employees in jobs that require ‘*people work*’ and are high in emotional labour tend to suffer more frequently from burnout. This leads to the question, what is it about emotion work that causes burnout?

### *The bad side of emotion work - emotional dissonance*

Emotions can be regulated in different ways. The employee’s goal in a service encounter is to maintain a positive relationship with the customer. For this, a person who may feel vaguely positive towards others may amplify this feeling to appear enthusiastic in front of a client. In other situations, no real emotion is demanded. A sales clerk’s smile when giving back change can be completely automatic to the point that the person hardly notices the act. In contrast, a customer service employee who feels insulted and irritated by a client and who needs to maintain a friendly and helpful façade is faced with a very different form of emotion regulation. Here, emotion regulation requires both the suppression of negative affect and at the same time the expression of positive affect. Again, this may be easier for some employees than for others. An employee who firmly believes in the importance of maintaining good relations with others, or who attributes the client’s irritation to irritation with the product and does not take the insult personally, might find it easier to express positive emotions and suppress negative emotions than someone who feels personally hurt and who believes in “not taking shit from anyone.” In contrast, women are generally expected to smile more in a variety of situations.<sup>45</sup> Although this may make them better at smiling and suppressing negative affect, it also puts them up to a higher standard giving them less leeway to not smile.<sup>46</sup>

In short, what can make good emotions poisonous in the long run is the conflict between the two components that influence the emotions shown at the job. The first component are the organizational rules and norms that require specific emotions in specific contexts and the second are the personality and the feelings of the employee.<sup>47</sup> When these two are in conflict and the employee feels compelled to “fake” emotions, the result is what has been called *emotional dissonance*. In this sense, employees who engage in “deep acting,” that is, who use emotion regulation strategies that let them re-evaluate the client’s behaviour or their own reactions to the client’s behaviour in ways that allows them to actually feel the required positive emotions, are less likely to experience emotional dissonance.<sup>48</sup> However, when emotional dissonance occurs, the result is unequivocal, emotional dissonance has negative consequences for employee satisfaction and well-being and is strongly associated with burnout.<sup>49</sup> Those employees who express their true feelings while interacting with clients are healthier, feel a stronger sense of personal accomplishment, and feel more attachment to their work. Hence, Susan Kruml and Diana Geddes call on employers to allow employees to express their own emotions in situations where client encounters are typically positive. For situations in which client encounters are typically negative, they call for more training to help employees to learn how to change their emotions, by helping them to better understand the customer.<sup>50</sup>

### *Bad emotions ?*

The previous section dealt with good emotions at work. That is emotions that the organization wants employees to feel – even though these emotions may not in the long run be good for the employee. I now turn to the bad emotions – those that organizations don’t want employees to have.

Anger is one negative emotion that has most consistently been studied at the workplace. Anger is disruptive. Angry employees attack their computers, insult and sometimes even attack their colleagues, sabotage equipment and steal from their employer. Yet, from the perspective of emotion theory, anger is a fascinating emotion because it is not necessarily a

---

*“Those employees who express their true feelings while interacting with clients are healthier, feel a stronger sense of personal accomplishment, and feel more attachment to their work.”*

---

---

*“Yet, from the perspective of emotion theory anger is a fascinating emotion because it is not necessarily a negative destructive emotion, but can be a positive emotion.”*

---

---

*“The most pervasive cause of anger is injustice and lack of moral behaviour in general. Thus, angry employees are like beacons that illuminate organizational problems. “*

---

negative destructive emotion, but can be a positive emotion. Anger is a positive emotion when it motivates people to address injustice and to demonstrate against slavery, apartheid, war and social injustices. Anger is also a positive emotion when it motivates to find solutions and to confront obstacles. Anger can empower an individual and angry individuals are perceived as powerful. Anger is also informative. Employees are not angry at nothing. The most pervasive cause of anger is injustice and lack of moral behaviour in general. Thus, angry employees are like beacons that illuminate organizational problems.

---




---

*What makes people angry?*

Anger is usually perceived as destructive. Anger hinders effective decision making, may lead people to reject advantageous offers out of revenge, disrupts work groups and keeps people from working together in the future.<sup>51</sup> Anger is also common. A 2002 survey found that 41% of US workers felt in general at least a bit angry at the workplace.<sup>52</sup>

However, anger should not be confused with conflict. Although many conflicts lead to anger and anger leads to conflict, conflicts per se are not necessarily bad. In fact, conflict can lead to such productive outcomes as more vigilant problem solving, more effective task completion, and improved relationships.<sup>53</sup>

---

*“A 2002 survey found that 41% of US workers felt in general at least a bit angry at the workplace.”*

---

Not everyone gets angry at the same things. Within an organization, status is one of the factors that distinguish who gets angry at what. For example, superiors are angered by morally reprehensible behaviours and job incompetence, co-workers are angered by morally reprehensible behaviours and public humiliation, and subordinates are angered by unjust treatment.<sup>54</sup> One of the most potent elicitors of anger is injustice. Employees tend to respond to perceptions of unfair treatment with negative emotions, such as anger, outrage, and resentment, which in turn lead to a desire for retribution and such behaviours as theft, vandalism, sabotage, but also reduction of organizational citizenship behaviours, withdrawal, and resistance. Who reacts with theft and vandalism and who reacts with withdrawal depends among other things on personality factors such as negative affectivity and agreeableness.<sup>55</sup> Aggression against supervisors also can be linked to perceptions of injustice, whereas personality is an important factor when it comes to aggression against co-workers.<sup>56</sup>

### *Counterproductive work behaviours*

Susan Fox and her colleagues asked the question of what makes people destructive. They studied counterproductive work behaviours. These are behaviours that are harmful to the organization by directly affecting its functioning or property, or by hurting employees. They found that organizational stressors such as constraints and injustice were associated with anger and anxiety, which in turn were associated with organizational types of CWB. In contrast, interpersonal conflict also led to anger and anxiety, but was more closely associated with personal CWB. In short, injustice and conflict make people angry and anxious and lead them to engage in destructive behaviour. But as mentioned above, anger is not always bad. Also, expressing anger may have beneficial effects for leaders.

---

*“In short, injustice and conflict make people angry and anxious and lead them to engage in destructive behaviour.”*

---

## Are a leaders' emotions special?

### *Leaders' emotions – transformational leadership*

In fact, leader's emotions have strong effects on others'. Thus "Leaders who feel excited, enthusiastic, and energetic themselves are likely to similarly energize their followers, as are leaders who feel distressed and hostile likely to negatively activate their followers."<sup>57</sup> For example, a leader's sad emotional expressions make them appear less efficient<sup>58</sup> and followers who observe a sad leader feel less enthusiasm and more fatigue.

*"In fact, leader's emotions have strong effects on others'."*

The power of a leader's emotions as a leadership tool is appreciated for leadership styles that prone the "charismatic" aspect of a leader. Thus, charismatic leaders<sup>59</sup>, resonant leaders<sup>60</sup>, and, to the degree that a charismatic style is part of the transformational leadership style<sup>61</sup>, transformational leaders all use emotion to motivate employees, to communicate a vision, and to excite followers to work towards long-term ideals and strategic objectives.<sup>62</sup> Transformational leaders are not only meant to be responsive to subordinates' needs and to give, or at least give the appearance of giving, individual attention to them – tasks that require emotional involvement, but also to feel and show optimism.<sup>63</sup> That these leadership styles can be extremely successful is without doubt.

*"That is, emotional behaviours that are simply used as tools may not work, they may even have perverse side effects."*

However, there is a danger to promoting emotions as tools. First, a leader who strategically uses his or her emotions risks to have to "create" the right emotions for the right purpose on a regular level. But those who on a daily basis feel obliged to 'fake' emotions and to play act an emotional role will experience emotional dissonance and hence be at risk for burnout in the long run.

A second problem stems from the fact that the success of transformational or charismatic leadership is intrinsically based on the perception of the genuineness of a leader's emotions. That is, emotional behaviours that are simply used as tools may not work, they may even have perverse side effects.



Just as the stereotypical obnoxious used car salesman who greets everyone by their first name – without regard to the preferences of those so greeted, and whose fake friendliness creates just the opposite impression of the one intended. Thus, followers react negatively to a leader whose verbal message does not match their emotional expressions in emotional tone -- an incongruence typical for faked interest or faked liking.<sup>64</sup> Also, leaders who unsuccessfully try to mask negative affect are likely to be perceived as manipulative and as having self-serving intentions.<sup>65</sup> Hence, transformational or charismatic leaders must be especially adept in regulating their emotions perfectly at all times – a tall order indeed.

A third problem and one that is increasingly important in a more diverse business environment, is that emotional expressions are not the same for everyone. The same emotions shown by a man or a woman or by a member of a different ethnic group are not perceived in the same manner. This effect has been demonstrated with regard to female leaders.

#### *And when the leader is a woman?*

Women's emotional expressions are not perceived in the same manner as are men's. This is true for leaders as well. I have already mentioned that anger expressions when shown by a male leader are perceived as a sign of higher job efficacy than when sadness expressions are shown. The same is not the case for female leaders. For female leaders, no difference between showing anger or sadness was found, only by showing a non-emotional, neutral, expression could female leaders gain increases in perceptions of job efficacy.<sup>67</sup> Gender and job status can also influence how intense a specific emotion expression is perceived to be.<sup>68</sup> In addition, high status individuals' emotional expressions are often perceived differently. For example, anger is perceived as more legitimate when shown by a high status individual. To the degree that women are frequently perceived as having lower status or that the status they have is more often perceived as less legitimate, female leaders ex-

---

*“Gender and job status can also influence how intense a specific emotion expression is perceived to be.”*

---

---

*“Also, it may be difficult to predict which emotions are in fact the best to be used in a specific situation, especially in a diverse business environment where men and women with different cultural background work together.”*

---

pressions may not have the same effect as male leaders. Finally, women are generally considered to be more nurturing, whereas men are perceived as more agentic. This difference also makes smiling and the expression of positive affect more normative for women, and gives men more leeway in the expression of anger.<sup>69</sup>

In sum, emotions can be used as tools to motivate and to express individualist attention and caring. However, this use of emotions as tools may come at a price for those leaders who are less apt at emotion regulation. Also, it may be difficult to predict which emotions are in fact the best to be used in a specific situation, especially in a diverse business environment where men and women with different cultural background work together.

### Conclusion

Emotions are ubiquitous in the workplace. In recent years, the ideal of the non-emotional workplace has slowly given way to the realization that emotions not only are an indelible part of work life but have an important role to play. The present rapport aimed to show that emotions at the work place are implicitly divided into good emotions – those that are conducive to the goals of the enterprise and bad emotions – those that are perceived as destructive. This distinction is not fully realistic. In fact, the emotional work that is required to produce ‘good’ emotions reliably and in particular the risk of emotional dissonance associated with this endeavour, leads to employee dissatisfaction, lack of well-being, and eventually burnout. In turn, not all bad emotions are always bad. Finally, the risks of good emotions turning bad also apply to charismatic and transformational leaders. This form of leadership makes high demands on a leader's emotion regulation ability and failure at projecting the right emotion at the right time may lead to loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the employees. And this task may not be the same for male and female leaders because of the overarching societal norms that govern men's and women's emotion expression.

---

*“...emotions not only are an indelible part of work life but have an important role to play.”*

---

**In summary**, emotions at work are an exciting reality. Emotions at the workplace are not only ubiquitous but may be employed to foster organizational goals – but this need to be done wisely. Emotions can be faked but this faking comes with a price. The good emotional leader seeks ways to make employees’ natural feelings those that are good for the job. Helping employees to be more empathic in their relations with clients and creating an environment that is perceived as just are two important means to this goal.

---

*“...emotions at work are an exciting reality.”*

---

N. M. Ashkanasy, C. E. J. Hartel & W. J. Zerbe (Eds.), *Emotions in the workplace: Research, theory, and practice* (pp. 3-18). Westport, CT, US: Quorum Books, 2000.

A collection of theoretical texts by foremost researchers in the field of emotion and organizational behaviour. Topics include emotion management, leadership and gender and emotion.

**Journal of Organizational Behaviour , Special Issue March 2000.**

A collection of empirical articles with focus on the emerging role of emotions in work life. Emotional labour, emotional dissonance and anger at the workplace are discussed.

Morris, J. A., & Feldman, D. C. (1996). **The dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of emotional labour.** *Academy of Management Review*, 21, 986-1010.

A classic text on the distinction between emotional labour and emotional dissonance and their respective consequences.

Fox, S., Spector, P. E., & Miles, D. (2001). **Counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) in response to job stressors and organizational justice: Some mediator and moderator tests for autonomy and emotions.** *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 59, 291-309.

Discusses the role of anger with regard to counterproductive work behaviours. They present a theoretical model that of job stress in which counterproductive work behaviours are seen as a strain response to organizational constraints, interpersonal conflict, and perceived injustice are job stressors. In this model, negative emotion mediates the stressor strain relationship.

## Sources

1. D. O. Hebb, *The Organization of Behavior: A Neuropsychological Theory* (New York: Wiley, 1949).
2. Integra Reality Resources, Oct.-Nov. 2000 survey of 1,305 men and women 18 and over. Source: Communications of the ACM, March 2001/Vol. 44, No. 3 p. 9. Mori, 2001, survey of 1250 UK worker, conducted for Abby National.
3. J. R. Averill, "Emotions Are Many Splendored Things," in *The Nature of Emotion*, ed. P. Ekman and R. J. Davidson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
4. C. Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (Originally published, 1872), 1872/1965).
5. S. W. Anderson et al., "Long-Term Sequelae of Prefrontal Cortex Damage Acquired in Early Childhood," *Developmental Neuropsychology* 18 (2001).
6. A. Bechara et al., "Insensitivity to Future Consequences Following Damage to Human Prefrontal Cortex," *Cognition* 50 (1994), A. Bechara, D. Tranel, and H. Damasio, "Characterization of the Decision-Making Deficit of Patients with Ventromedial Prefrontal Cortex Lesions," *Brain* 123 (2000).
7. A. R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Avon Books, 1994).
8. R. S. Lazarus, "Why We Should Think of Stress as a Subset of Emotion," in *Handbook of Stress: Theoretical and Clinical Aspects (2nd Ed.)* (ed. L. Goldberger and S. Breznitz (New York, NY: Free Press, 1993).
9. S. Folkman and J. T. Moskowitz, "Stress, Positive Emotion, and Coping," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 9 (2000).
10. D. J. Abramis, "Relationship of Job Stressors to Job Performance: Linear or an Inverted-U?," *Psychological Reports* 75 (1994).
11. S. Fox, P. E. Spector, and D. Miles, "Counterproductive Work Behavior (Cwb) in Response to Job Stressors and Organizational Justice: Some Mediator and Moderator Tests for Autonomy and Emotions," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 59 (2001).
12. M. D. Robinson and J. T. Johnson, "Is It Emotion or Is It Stress? Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Subjective Experience," *Sex Roles* 36 (1997).

13. E. Hatfield, J.T. Cacioppo, and R.L. Rapson, *Emotional Contagion* (Madison, WI: C.W. Brown, 1993).
14. P. Totterdell, "Catching Moods and Hitting Runs: Mood Linkage and Subjective Performance in Professional Sport Teams," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 85 (2000), P. Totterdell et al., "Evidence of Mood Linkage in Work Groups.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74 (1998).
15. P. R. Johnson and J. Indvik, "Organizational Benefits of Having Emotionally Intelligent Managers and Employees," *Journal of Workplace Learning* 11 (1999).
16. Weber (1968) in A&H
17. Fox, Spector, and Miles, "Counterproductive Work Behavior (Cwb) in Response to Job Stressors and Organizational Justice: Some Mediator and Moderator Tests for Autonomy and Emotions."
18. A. A. Grandey, A. P. Tam, and A. L. Brauburger, "Affective States and Traits in the Workplace: Diary and Survey Data from Young Workers," *Motivation and Emotion* 26 (2002).
19. R. P. Vecchio, "Negative Emotion in the Workplace: Employee Jealousy and Envy," *International Journal of Stress Management* 7 (2000).
20. C. D. Fisher, "Boredom at Work: A Neglected Concept.," *Human Relations* 46 (1993).
21. L. A. Mainiero, "A Review and Analysis of Power Dynamics in Organizational Romances.," *Academy of Management Review* 11 (1986).
22. B. E. Ashforth and R. H. Humphrey, "Emotion in the Workplace: A Reappraisal," *Human Relations* 48 (1995).
23. N. Madjar, G. R. Oldham, and M. G. Pratt, "There's No Place Like Home: The Contributions of Work and Non-Work Creativity Support to Employees' Creative Performance," *Academy of Management Journal* 45 (2002).
24. A. M. Isen and R. A. Baron, "Positive Affect as a Factor in Organizational-Behavior," in *Research in Organizational Behavior*, ed. B. M. Staw and L. L. Cummings (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1991).
25. Fox, Spector, and Miles, "Counterproductive Work Behavior (Cwb) in Response to Job Stressors and Organizational Justice: Some Mediator and Moderator Tests for Autonomy and Emotions."
26. R. Hodson, "Pride in Task Completion and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: Evidence from Ethnographic Studies," *Work and Stress* 4 (1998).

27. M. Csikszentmihalyi and J. LeFevre, "Optimal Experience in Work and Leisure," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56 (1989).
28. H. Bless et al., "Mood and Persuasion: A Cognitive Response Analysis," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 16 (1990).
29. N. Schwarz and H. Bless, "Happy and Mindless, but Sad and Smart? The Impact of Affective States on Analytic Reasoning.," in *Emotion and Social Judgments*, ed. J. P. (Ed). Forgas (Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1991).
30. J. R. Averill, "The Emotions: An Integrative Approach.," in *Handbook of Personality Psychology*, ed. R. Hogan, J. A. Johnson, and S. R. Briggs (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1997).
31. L. Z. Tiedens, "Anger and Advancement Versus Sadness and Subjugation: The Effect of Negative Emotion Expressions on Social Status Conferal.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80 (2001).
32. K. M. Lewis, "When Leaders Display Emotion: How Followers Respond to Negative Emotional Expression of Male and Female Leaders," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 21 (2000).
33. W. van Dolen et al., "Affective Consumer Responses in Service Encounters: The Emotional Content in Narratives of Critical Incidents," *Journal of Economic Psychology* 22 (2001).
34. K. Locke, "A Funny Thing Happened! The Management of Consumer Emotions in Service Encounters," *Organization Science* 7 (1996).
35. A. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
36. J. A. Morris and D. C. Feldman, "Managing Emotions in the Workplace," *Journal of Managerial Issues* 9 (1997).
37. S. Mann, "Emotion at Work: To What Extent Are We Expressing, Suppressing, or Faking It?," *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 8 (1999).
38. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.
39. Morris and Feldman, "Managing Emotions in the Workplace."
40. J. A. Morris and D. C. Feldman, "The Dimensions, Antecedents, and Consequences of Emotional Labor," *Academy of Management Review* 21 (1996).
41. C. M. Brotheridge and A. A. Grandey, "Emotional Labor and Burnout: Comparing Two Perspectives of "People Work"," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 60 (2002).

42. S. Coté and L. M. Morgan, "A Longitudinal Analysis of the Association between Emotion Regulation, Job Satisfaction, and Intentions to Quit," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 23 (2002), W. J. Zerbe, "Emotional Dissonance and Employee Well-Being," in *Emotions in the Workplace: Research, Theory, and Practice*, ed. N. M. Ashkanasy, C. E. J. Hartel, and W. J. Zerbe (Westport, CT, US:: Quorum Books, 2000).
43. J. Schaubroeck and J. R. Jones, "Antecedents of Workplace Emotional Labor Dimensions and Moderators of Their Effects on Physical Symptoms.," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 21 (2000).
44. M. B. Tolich, "Alienating and Liberating Emotions at Work: Supermarket Clerks' Performance of Customer Service," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22 (1993).
45. U. Hess, M.G. Beaupré, and N. Cheung, "Who to Whom and Why – Cultural Differences and Similarities in the Function of Smiles," in *An Empirical Reflection on the Smile*, ed. M. Abel (NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, in press).
46. Morris and Feldman, "Managing Emotions in the Workplace."
47. A. Rafaeli, "When Clerks Meet Customers: A Test of Variables Related to Emotional Expressions on the Job," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 74 (1989).
48. Brotheridge and Grandey, "Emotional Labor and Burnout: Comparing Two Perspectives of "People Work"."
49. D. Zapf, "Emotion Work and Psychological Well-Being: A Review of the Literature and Some Conceptual Considerations," *Human Resource Management Review* 12 (2002).
50. S. M. Kruml and D. Geddes, "Powerful Emotions: The Vicious Cycle of Social Status Positions and Emotions," in *Catching Fire without Burning Out: Is There an Ideal Way to Perform Emotion Labor?*, ed. N. M. Ashkanasy, C. E. J. Hartel, and W. J. Zerbe (Westport, CT, US:: Quorum Books, 2000).
51. A. M. Bodtker and J. K. Jameson, "Emotion in Conflict Formation and Its Transformation: Application to Organizational Conflict Management," *International Journal of Conflict Management*. 12 (2001).
52. The Marlin Company, *Attitudes in the American Workplace* Viii (2002).
53. Bodtker and Jameson, "Emotion in Conflict Formation and Its Transformation: Application to Organizational Conflict Management."
54. J. Fitness, "Anger in the Workplace: An Emotion Script Approach to



- Anger Episodes between Workers and Their Superiors, Co-Workers and Subordinates.," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 21 (2000).
55. D. P. Skarlicki and R. Folger, "Retaliation in the Workplace: The Roles of Distributive, Procedural, and Interactional Justice," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 82 (1997), D. P. Skarlicki, R. Folger, and P. Tesluk, "Personality as a Moderator in the Relationship between Fairness and Retaliation," *Academy of Management Journal* 42 (1999).
56. L. Greenberg and J. Barling, "Predicting Employee Aggression against Coworkers, Subordinates and Supervisors: The Roles of Person Behaviors and Perceived Workplace Factors," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 20 (1999).
57. George, J. M. (1996). Group affective tone. In M. West (Ed.), *Handbook of Work Group Psychology* (642 pp). Sussex, UK: Wiley.
58. Lewis, "When Leaders Display Emotion: How Followers Respond to Negative Emotional Expression of Male and Female Leaders."
59. R. J. House, "A 1976 Theory of Charismatic Leadership," in *Leadership: The Cutting Edge*, ed. J. G. Hunt and L. L. Larson (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977).
60. D. Goleman, A. McKee, and R. E. Boyatzis, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002).
61. B. M. Bass, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations* (New York: Free Press, 1985).
62. Y. Berson et al., "The Relationship between Vision Strength, Leadership Style and Context," *The Leadership Quarterly* 12 (2001).
63. N. M. Ashkanasy and B. Tse, "Transformational Leadership as Management of Emotion: A Conceptual Review," in *Emotions in the Workplace: Research, Theory, and Practice*, ed. N. M. Ashkanasy, C. E. J. Hartel, and W. J. Zerbe (Westport, CT, US:: Quorum Books, 2000).
64. M. J. Newcombe and N. M. Ashkanasy, "The Role of Affect and Affective Congruence in Perceptions of Leaders: An Experimental Study," *Leadership Quarterly* 13 (2002).
65. M. T. Dasborough and N. M. Ashkanasy, "Emotion and Attribution of Intentionality in Leader-Member Relationships," *Leadership Quarterly* 13 (2002).

66. G. Kirouac and U. Hess, "Group Membership and the Decoding of Nonverbal Behavior," in *The Social Context of Nonverbal Behavior*, ed. P. Philippot, R. Feldman, and E. Coats (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

67. Lewis, "When Leaders Display Emotion: How Followers Respond to Negative Emotional Expression of Male and Female Leaders."

68. S. B. Algoe, B. N. Buswell, and J. D. DeLamater, "Gender and Job Status as Contextual Cues for the Interpretation of Facial Expression of Emotion," *Sex Roles* 42 (2000).

69. U. Hess, R. B. Adams, and R. E. Kleck, "Who May Frown and Who Should Smile? Dominance, Affiliation, and the Display of Happiness and Anger," (Manuscript submitted for publication.: 2002).