

### Further Readings

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## EMOTIONAL PATTERNS IN ORGANIZATIONS

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The suggestion that organizations have emotions may be considered as excessive anthropomorphizing. Emotional *patterns*, however, can exist in organizations. These patterns refer to groups of organization members who can feel or display similar emotional states.

### Conceptual Overview

Emotional patterns—felt or displayed—can arise in organizations, thanks to various social-psychological mechanisms.

#### *Felt Emotional Patterns*

A number of mechanisms can create patterns of felt (experienced) emotional states. Faced with an important organizational event, a large number of employees across various work roles can feel shared emotions if they have similar beliefs, which lead to similar appraisals and ways of feeling. Culture represents a subtle yet powerful form of control that acts to inform, guide, and control the emotions of organization members.

Moreover, members who strongly identify themselves with their organization are likely to experience similar emotions when faced with events that enhance

or threaten the identity of their organization. Perceived threats (e.g., a hostile takeover or competitive price wars) can particularly increase the need for solidarity among people who believe they are confronting the same situation.

However, in large organizations inhabited by different groups with different roles, values, and interests, dramatic organizational events may not trigger such a coming together. An organization's members may not experience the same emotions when faced with the same organizational event. For example, Quy Huy has documented how different groups of middle managers with different goals and political agendas felt very different kinds of emotions when faced with the same organizational event, in this case radical change. Certain groups felt enthusiastic because they actively played the role of change agents. Other groups felt angry and fearful because they felt they were the targets of their change-agent colleagues.

Members belonging to the same group can feel the same emotions when they identify strongly with one another. Moreover, a group's emotional charge, when amplified through mutual interaction, can promote further group cohesion. Because emotions can spread through various processes, unconscious and conscious, emotional contagion can also convert individual emotions into group ones.

Unconscious emotional contagion occurs through a very fast process of automatic and synchronous non-verbal mimicry and feedback, posited to come from an innate human tendency toward mimicking the behavior of others. By contrast, conscious processes involve cognitive social comparison in which people compare their feelings with those of relevant others in their social environment and then respond according to what seems appropriate for the situation. The recipient uses emotion as a type of social information to understand how he or she should be feeling. Once a group experiences shared emotions toward certain organizational events, these emotions influence the group's cognitive processes and motivate collective action. Emotions that are shared by many members of a group can influence their cognition and behavior even more than emotions felt by single members.

### Displayed Emotional Patterns

These patterns arise in organizations to the extent that an organization's members feel they must display some emotions and suppress others. The former are those perceived to be needed to sustain the image of the organization or those deemed necessary for effective collective action. Thus, emotion can be used as a tool of social influence in a variety of organizational roles, especially in front-line service functions. For instance, bankers have to display calm to inspire trust and confidence. Different emotional displays are required for Disneyland entertainers or for funeral parlor workers. Organizations select and retain their members based on certain specific emotional habits they want displayed. These organizational emotions relate to the performance of particular roles and should not be confused with individual private emotions.

Thus, members do not necessarily experience privately the same emotion they display. They may be required to display or act out a "legitimate" emotion in response to various organizational events, such as the death of the company's founder. Moreover, being part of a group—rather than an individual acting alone—makes it easier to display such an emotion because group membership boosts people's feelings of power by making them bolder through anonymity. Displaying or acting out emotions—in other words, emotion-related behaviors—can in the long run become organizational routines that govern what emotions members *should* display or feel in their interactions with other stakeholders.

### Critical Commentary and Future Directions

In a large organization, many members belonging to a group may feel similar emotions, although different groups may feel different emotions. Thus, different patterns of emotions can be present at the same time. Future research can explore how these patterns influence various organizational processes such as resistance to change, organizational learning, collective mobilization, and organizational creativity. In addition, although Huy has suggested that those organizations that can develop their emotional capability through

emotion-related routines that acknowledge, recognize, monitor, discriminate, and attend to their members' emotions are likely to be able to realize major strategic change, if and when needed, more quickly and with less cost, very little empirical research has been conducted in this area. Valid measurement scales remain to be developed to enable testing of the theory. Finally, developing emotional capability and embedding it in organizational routines holds the promise of not requiring a large number of emotionally intelligent individuals in influential positions, who risk using their emotional intelligence to maximize their personal interests instead of collective interests. Future research can explore the interdependence and interaction between individual-level emotional intelligence and organizational-level emotional capability.

—*Quy Nguyen Huy*

*See also* Cross-Cultural Management; Identity; Organizational Change; Organizational Culture

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## EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

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A broad definition of employment relations (ER) includes all aspects of the employment relationship, including industrial relations (IR) and human resource management (HRM). IR may be regarded as dealing more with the macro and institutional aspects of the employment relationship, while HRM can be seen as focusing rather on the micro- and enterprise-level