18 The Structuration of Emotion

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Organizations and organizing processes are typically presented rationally, as focused on maximizing financial gains and efficient production (Fineman, 2010). The reigning Western discourse of rationality privileges reason, which in turn suggests that emotions interfere with goal-directed economical processes (Dougherty & Drumheller, 2006). Most workplaces expect employees to behave *professionally*, which includes practicing self-control and masking non-prescribed emotions on the job (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Together, these expectations create a disease model of emotions that suggests strong feelings and expressed emotions threaten the health of the workplace and require management (Paul & Riforgiate, 2015).

Indeed, getting emotional is linked to being unprofessional, feminine, and/or even mentally unstable (Waldron, 2012), which helps explain why most early organizational research either ignored emotion or subsumed it under bland variables such as job satisfaction, morale, or commitment (Kramer & Hess, 2002). In the popular imagination, emotion is deemed useful when coupled with masculine characteristics like being tough or showing anger to control others (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2012). When employees get upset, stressed, or burned out, discourses of rugged individuality and meritocracy suggest they deal with these issues on their own time, privately, without whining (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008). Indeed, emotional anguish is all but absent in society's grand narratives about work where successful employees gallantly "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" rather than admit feeling burned out due to unmanageable workloads or abusive bosses.

Through the 1990s, management research treated emotion as incompatible with desired behaviors in the workplace because managing emotion was viewed as damaging to productivity (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Meanwhile, communication scholars in the areas of organizations and emotions pretty much ignored one another. Case in point, the index of the *Handbook of Communication and Emotion* (Andersen & Guerrero, 1998) did not include the word *organization*, and the index of the *Handbook of Organizational Communication* (Jablin, Putnam, Roberts, & Porter, 1987) did not include the word *emotion*.

Arguably the first and most influential communication article to question the rationality-emotionality duality was Mumby and Putnam's (1992) research on *bounded emotionality*. They offered bounded emotionality as an alternative to Herbert Simon's (1982) *bounded rationality* (see Chapter 15), suggesting that organizations should encourage employees to experience a range of emotions, including nurturance, care, and supportiveness. From a feminist perspective, Mumby and Putnam (1992) argued that emotion should not be simply used as a rational organizational instrument, but

rather that we should examine *work feelings* as integral to organizing. Around this time, organizational psychologists and management scholars began to explore the concept of *emotional intelligence*. This literature suggested that well-timed emotional displays, empathy, and emotion regulation are important characteristics of good leadership and effective organizing (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Most emotional intelligence research remains siloed in management and organizational psychology, with critical organizational and communication researchers arguing that emotional intelligence research is flavored with instrumental rationality (Murphy, 2014).

Returning to Mumby and Putnam's (1992) plea to revere a range of work feelings, communication scholars have only recently begun to highlight the value of desired emotions like compassion in the workplace (Miller, 2007; Tracy & Huffman, 2017; Way & Tracy, 2012). Most researchers studying emotions like kindness and nurturance have found that care work is undervalued and associated with private, unpaid labor that women have always done—work that is "not credentialed and is considered natural and instinctual rather than due to education or skill" (Tracy, 2008, p. 169). Most organizational communication emotion research has focused on the negative. In this frame, emotion is the problematic result of employee conditions (e.g., emotional exhaustion); something to be harnessed and used by the organization for rational ends (e.g., emotional labor); feminized care work that is naturalized and under-rewarded; and something that when turned into a weapon (e.g., emotional abuse) is considered an individual issue rather than an organizational one.

We begin this chapter by explaining the pragmatic impetus for emotion and organizing research. Second, we review organizing structures and macro-discourses that discipline workplace emotion. Third, we explain the central communicative actions of emotion at work. Fourth, we analyze how employees resist, reify, and sometimes transcend emotion rules and emotional constructions. Along the way, we highlight how organizational communication has extended parallel work from management, organizational psychology, and sociology, and discuss how culture intersects with emotion and organizing. The chapter closes with a structuration model of emotion and organizational communication.

Suffering at Work: The Impetus for Organizational Communication and Emotion Theorizing

"There is nothing so practical as a good theory" (Lewin, 1951, p. 169). For organizational communication and emotion, much related theory is designed to practically explain and ameliorate suffering at work including burnout, compassion fatigue, emotive dissonance, and emotional abuse.

Burnout

Chronologically, burnout was the first problem that motivated organizational communication theorizing related to emotion. Usually considered the general "wearing down" from work pressures, burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, cynicism, and decreased personal accomplishment. As a defense mechanism, emotionally exhausted employees distance themselves from work. But, as a result, they experience increased cynicism, callousness, and alienation, which results in decreased job performance and satisfaction (Tracy, 2017).

The most widely used inventory to measure burnout was developed by social psychologist Christina Maslach (1982). The earliest studies in organizational communication used this inventory to explore communication variables that might cause, mitigate, or ameliorate burnout (Miller, Stiff, & Ellis, 1988). Burnout research peaked in the 1990s, but the concept remains popular, with more than 6,000 related academic essays published through 2009 (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009). Most burnout research has focused on caring professions—such as nursing (Way & Tracy, 2012), corrections (Tracy, 2009), and teaching (Zhang & Zhu, 2008)—that require high levels of client contact and managing the negative emotions of others, something called *toxin management* (Frost, 2004). Such work is typified by conflicting work expectations (e.g., to care for clients yet control or discipline them), work overload, and caring deeply for a job as a calling in the face of its increasing professionalization (Schaufeli et al., 2009).

Compassion Fatigue

Related to burnout is *compassion fatigue*, or the cost of caring. This concept emanated from nursing, sociology, and traumatology, and is similar to vicarious traumatization and secondary traumatic stress as it refers to discomfort resulting from caring for others experiencing traumatic events (Radey & Figley, 2007). Similar to second-hand smoke, certain types of workers regularly bear witness to trauma, and some are quite susceptible to its ill-effects. Past research cautions that when "our hearts go out to our clients through our sustained compassion, our hearts can *give* out from fatigue" (Radey & Figley, 2007, p. 207, emphasis in original). Concern about compassion fatigue has spurred organizational communication research with hospice nurses (Way & Tracy, 2012) and volunteers (McAllum, 2014).

Discomfort of Faking Emotions

A third source of organizational suffering is expressing inauthentic emotion as a requirement of work. Coined by sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983), *emotive dissonance* is the discomfort that emanates when employees' inner feelings clash with inauthentic outward expression. Many jobs ask employees to amplify, suppress, or transform inappropriate emotions, such as when service employees are expected to smile and suppress irritation (Tracy, 2000), and security employees are expected to maintain stoicism and suspicion (Malvini Redden, 2013). Such work can be alienating when people feel as though they are creating false selves. Furthermore, the pain of emotion work is exacerbated when it conflicts with employees' preferred identities. For instance, most correctional officers prefer to perceive themselves as tough and masculine, and often find it difficult to show deference to convicted criminals (Tracy, 2005). Indeed, being kind or compassionate to stigmatized populations can be challenging, such as with border patrol officers whose work includes caring for undocumented immigrants (Rivera, 2015).

Emotional Abuse and Bullying

A fourth problem motivating emotion and organizational communication research involves emotional abuse at work. Workplace bullying refers to "persistent verbal and nonverbal aggression at work that includes personal attacks, social ostracism, and

a multitude of other painful messages and hostile interactions" (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006, p. 406). Up to 35 percent of employees experience bullying during their working lives, and 11 percent witness coworkers being bullied (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2010). Bullying is linked to psychosomatic illnesses, suicidal ideation, increased medical expenses, and reduced productivity (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2012). Targets of workplace bullying describe it as feeling like they are enslaved children and tortured animals forced to suck up noxious substances as they battle demons and "little Hitlers" in an unending nightmare (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006). Moreover, bullying also harms the larger workgroup and bystanders who feel terrified, muted, guilty, and powerless (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006).

In summary, four main areas of organizational suffering have motivated emotion and organizational communication theorizing—burnout, compassion fatigue, emotive dissonance, and workplace bullying. To address and ameliorate suffering, researchers have investigated the organizational and institutional norms that produce and discipline emotional problems, how problems manifest in employee interactions, and how employees resist, reify, or transcend them. Together, these processes make up the communication-organization spiral dynamic that frames this book. Next, we synthesize the organizational and institutional norms and structures that contribute to emotional suffering at work.

Organizational and Institutional Structures That Discipline and Construct Emotion

Organizations are typically considered to be rational and masculine enterprises where employees should be professional and succeed by their own merit. Discourses of rationality, masculinity, individuality, and meritocracy produce and shape organizational norms about emotions and their (im)proper place at work.

Feeling Rules

Many organizations institute blatant or subtle feeling rules that discipline employees' emotions (Hochschild, 1983). Governing most organizational settings is the expectation to suppress and restrict communication about stress and burnout, something called *communicatively restricted organizational stress* (Boren & Veksler, 2015). In such a model, employees simply put up with hard work and, if they feel stressed, deal with it privately or leave the organization. In addition to this blanket expectation that dominates a majority of workplaces, some employee roles have specific feeling rules, as described by Waldron (2012):

- boundary spanners, like receptionists, should show interest and patience;
- emotional believers, such as clergy, should show calm and faith;
- emotional elicitors, like stand-up comics, should create laughs;
- resilience builders, such as soldiers, should be tough and stoic;
- orchestrators, such as sales team leaders, should amplify their own emotion and motivate it in others;
- coolers and soothers, such as 911 call-takers, should suppress personal anxiety and neutralize others;
- moral emoters, such as activists, should show outrage.

These feeling rules show up formally and informally in employee recruitment materials (Rivera, 2015), socialization rituals (Scott & Myers, 2005), training manuals (Tracy & Tracy, 1998), and performance evaluations (Tracy, 2000).

Gendered and Raced Emotion Norms

Since Hochschild's (1983) groundbreaking research with flight attendants, feeling rules remain gendered and classed. Employees (especially women) in feminized occupations, such as teaching, nursing, social work, and service, are expected to express care and concern for their students and patrons. What's more, much care work goes unnoticed and under-rewarded (England & Folbre, 1999). The myth prevails that paying people too much to be a teacher or nurse, for instance, would attract only those who did the job for the money and did not truly care. Meanwhile, when jobs are associated with caring for low-status clients (e.g., children, the elderly, criminals, undocumented immigrants), those employees must manage contagious stigma and emotional taint (Rivera, 2015). Meanwhile, men (especially white men) typically enjoy a "status shield" that protects them from the "displaced feelings of others" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 163). Due to their greater social status, dominant group members (Razzante & Orbe, 2018) are more likely to be shielded from anger, verbal abuse, and complaints than are marginalized group members, such as women, children, or people of color.

Some in masculine professions, such policing, creative arts, and executive leadership, are allowed and even glorified for being angry, tough, and verbally abusive (e.g., an ex-reality television star turned U.S. president who got famous for yelling, "You're fired!") (Razzante, Tracy, & Orbe, 2018). However, even when marginalized group members hold masculinized or high-status positions, they are not afforded the same luxury as dominant group members in terms of expressing a range of emotion. Instead they are often sexualized, ignored, or exemplified as angry (Forbes, 2009). As Collins argues:

> Aggressive Black and Hispanic men are seen as dangerous, not powerful, and are often penalized when they exhibit any of the allegedly "masculine" characteristics. Working class and poor White men fare slightly better and are also denied the allegedly "masculine" symbols of leadership, intellectual competence, and human rationality. Women of color and working class and poor White women are also not represented [by universal gender symbolism], for they have never had the luxury of being "ladies."
>
> (Collins, 1998, pp. 217–218)

In sum, feeling rules along with racial and gendered discourses allow some employees more than others to freely perform a full range of emotions at work.

Empathy, Care, and Emotional Intelligence are Underrated

Empathy, care, and emotional intelligence are largely underrated and under-rewarded in organizational settings. *Emotional intelligence* refers to a set of capabilities that include emotional self-awareness, emotional self-regulation, motivating oneself and others, and empathizing with the emotions of others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). These capabilities have been linked with stronger relationships, trust, and higher organizational productivity (Harvard Business Review, 2015). However, few organizations

directly reward employees for these capabilities. Despite the fact that emotional intelligence and its attendant literature has put one of the few "positive faces" on emotions and organizing (see Goleman, 1995), the concept has come under critique due to its association with using emotions as a means to profit (Dougherty & Krone, 2002).

Emotional Abuse Is Enabled by Workplace Structures

Organizational structures produce and enable emotional abuse at work. Lutgen-Sandvik and McDermott argue that employee abuse emerges from the

> meanings inherent in contemporary workplaces [that] come from an amalgamation of economic theory, religious and secularized ideals of work, the merger of corporate interests and governing bodies, … [belief in] rugged individualism, [the dogma of] meritocracy, and the ideology of entrepreneurialism.
>
> (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008, p. 317)

Such discourses penalize employees perceived as weak or thin-skinned, and link tough treatment to increased productivity and "just the way the world works." When bad behavior is too blatant to ignore, workplaces tend to focus on bad apples rather than organizational structures. However, individual "bad apple" behavior spills into larger work processes and, therefore, can spoil the barrel (Felps, Mitchell, & Byington, 2006).

Most workplace bullies are supervisors, and when targets seek help, human resource professionals are often at a loss because they view workplace abuse as competitive rather than objectively hostile (Cowan, 2012). Therefore, workplace policies (or lack thereof) often condone abusive behavior (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003). In more than 70 percent of cases, bullying targets believe that upper management is complicit in the abuse, whether due to inaction or through managerial intervention that worsens the situation (Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). Indeed, human resource policies are largely ineffective for punishing "equal opportunity" workplace jerks who are abusive without obvious demographic-specific discrimination. And, even when companies institute well-being programs, they tend to focus on individual rather than collective concerns of employee health (Ganesh & McAllum, 2010). In short, numerous organizational and societal structures enable emotional suffering at work.

Employee Communicative Action in Relationship to Emotion and Organizing

Employees respond to organizational structures and larger societal discourses via emotional labor, care work, empathic concern, and workplace bullying.

Emotional Labor

Defined by sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983), *emotional labor* is the commodification of emotion or the process of people managing their emotions in line with organizational expectations and training. In practice, emotional labor involves people shaping their emotional communication, frequently to suppress negative emotions and to amplify emotions that foster organizational goals. For instance, customer service workers are usually trained to conduct "service with a smile"—suppressing anger with rude customers while amplifying cheerfulness. However, in some occupations like law

enforcement, organizationally preferred emotion management may look stoical, where people cultivate composure in difficult situations even when they feel anxious or scared.

Hochschild (1983) differentiated between types of emotional labor by discussing processes of deep and surface acting. Employees engage in *surface acting* when they force emotions they do not actually feel, like when airport security officers perform an intimidating "commanding presence" when they actually feel angry, bored, or compassionate (Scarduzio & Malvini Redden, 2015, p. 7). Discrepancies in felt and expressed emotions results in *emotive dissonance*, which is associated with tension and strain (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). When employees feel compelled to generate inauthentic emotions they do not agree with—what Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) call "faking in bad faith"—they are likely to experience more significant consequences, such as burnout, depression, and cynicism. On the contrary, when employees both feel and demonstrate the required emotional display, they may engage in *deep acting* which is an effortful process of changing internal feelings to match organizational requirements. Over time, however, deep acting can lead to alienation from personal feelings.

Examining power relations is vital to understanding whether employees will feel discomfort with emotional labor. Faking low-status emotions that conflict with preferred identities can be much more difficult than feigning those that line up with dominant, affirmative organizational discourses (Tracy, 2005). Simulating low-status emotions is easier when employees engage in acts of interpersonal resistance, something we return to in a following section about employee agency. Likewise, while most research focuses on employee experiences of emotional labor, some scholarship considers the complex interplay between organizational members and patrons. In compulsory interactions in airport security checkpoints, patrons in low-power positions are required to demonstrate emotional performances in line with organizational expectations, which are negotiated through interactions with security officers in positions of power rather than spelled out in policies (Malvini Redden, 2013). These emotional performances or *emotional taxes* are similar to financial penalties—required for everyone—but can vary depending upon factors such as interpersonal interactions and personal identity.

Compassion

Compassion is another important emotional process in organizations (Miller, 2007) and includes three primary components: (a) Recognizing verbal and nonverbal cues from others, as well as the context and subtext of interactions; (b) relating, which involves "identifying with, feeling for, and communicatively connecting with another to enable sharing of emotions, values, and decisions"; and (c) reacting, which involves communicating compassionately (Way & Tracy, 2012, p. 307). Compassion in organizations can improve relationships, customer service, productivity, and reputation (Men, 2014). However, some compassion work involves burnout-inducing toxin management (Frost, 2004).

Although the emotional labor literature suggests that feminized care work is low status and exhausting, some populations like hospice nurses seem to thrive. Rather than their hearts giving out due to strain, their hearts actually get stronger and more capable through work (Way & Tracy, 2012). This may be due to the hospice context, where the overall goal is to provide comfort (in contrast to hospitals where the goal is to cure). This also suggests that organizational visions and norms influence whether the same behavior (e.g., caring) is experienced as exhausting or enriching.

Workplace Emotional Abuse, Bullying, and Microaggressions

Employee communicative action becomes very difficult when organizational structures enable antisocial behaviors like microaggressions, emotional abuse, and workplace bullying. Defined as "subtle, intentional, or unintentional prejudicial or discriminatory words or behaviors" (Shenoy-Packer, 2015, p. 258), *microaggressions* are small actions that can cause serious emotional consequences as they are often tied to critical identity markers like race/ethnicity, gender, culture, size, and ability. For example, over time, questions and comments like, "What are you?" or "You speak such good English" can *other* racial minorities. Likewise, microaggressions often feature as tools leading to workplace bullying.

Bullying is a communicative process that involves ongoing, escalating, and repeated significant physical or psychological harm between a bully and target with disparate power positions in organizations (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2012). Bullying comes in a variety of communicative forms, including spreading rumors, public humiliation, abusive language, and constant criticism. Furthermore, these behaviors are accomplished with a persistence that intensifies abuse, differentiating it from incivilities or microaggressions. For example, occasionally yelling at a coworker does not equate to bullying. However, screaming, swearing at, and isolating the same coworker day after day, week after week, does.

Targets of abuse usually perceive that bullies are acting on purpose (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2006). Abusive behaviors—whispering, insults, gossip, sneering, eye-rolling—can be traumatizing over time. Bullying victims often have trouble describing the abuse, although narratives show that targets experience significant loss, isolation, and lack of social support from bystanders who are more likely to ignore bullying than intervene (Tye-Williams & Krone, 2015).

Employees Agentically Sediment, Resist, and Transcend Emotion Issues at Work

Despite the grim picture that emerges from much emotion research, organizational communication scholarship has also examined how employees agentically shape their emotional constructions and organizations' emotion rules. Employee action can involve (a) sedimenting and reinforcing, (b) resisting, and (c) transcending.

Sedimenting and Reinforcing

As structuration theory posits (Giddens, 1984), structures are constructed and reinforced by action. Organizational communication research shows that employees can also reinforce and sediment emotion norms and related discourses. For instance, employees tend to reinforce the dichotomy between emotionality and rationality by carefully controlling their emotions in organizations, denying emotions altogether, reframing experiences to depersonalize emotions, discussing emotions in rationalized ways, and relegating emotions to private spaces (Dougherty & Drumheller, 2006). By de-emphasizing emotion and repeating rationalist discourses about professionalism, prevailing norms are reinforced and sedimented.

Employees can also reinforce emotional labor expectations via cynicism and disidentification. For instance, the idea of distancing or making fun of one's work role may

appear to be resistance. However, disidentification can ironically facilitate emotional labor expectations. Consider a disgruntled fast food worker who wears a "McShit" T-shirt under her uniform to show that her "real" self sees through the absurdity of minimum wage work. However, her secret act of rebellion might actually preclude more blatant or consequential resistance (Fleming & Spicer, 2003) and, therefore, may strengthen the organization's feeling rules. Likewise, correctional officers who view work as "just a job" and find confirmation of their identity and success outside of work appear to more successfully engage in emotion labor without undue discomfort (Tracy, 2005). As noted by Fleming and Spicer (2003, p. 160), "when we dis-identify with our prescribed social roles we often still perform them—sometimes better, ironically, than if we did identify with them."

Emotional abuse can also be sedimented through activity at the workgroup level. Consider bystanders to workplace bullying who join in to mock a colleague. Their actions reinforce problematic emotion cycles and make it difficult to change organizational culture. Hareli and Rafaeli (2008) describe emotion cycles as a "double-interact social process" (p. 37) where a person's emotion is communicated, shared, and made sense of by another, who then reciprocates with an emotional process that can continue or change the cycle. Emotion cycles can reinforce emotion norms or give sense about organizational processes to others (Scarduzio & Tracy, 2015). For instance, in municipal courtrooms, bailiffs function as intermediaries in the emotion cycle; for example, by downplaying a judge's anger to help a defendant, or by laughing at a judge's unfunny joke to keep a positive mood.

In the case of complex emotion cycles like workplace bullying, opportunities for agency and control are complicated. Followers are likely to endure abuse when the organizational climate tolerates or ignores negative leader behavior (Thoroughgood, Hunter, & Sawyer, 2011). Sometimes targets of bullying go through official channels to address the problem and find human resource professionals believe that bullying is a direct manager's issue and not an organizational problem (Cowan, 2012). Likewise, well-intentioned peers may offer bad advice by recommending that the bullied employee simply "keep calm" and "stay rational." Such advice discounts the severity of abuse, emphasizes the role of the individual over the organization, and constrains individual agency (Tye-Williams & Krone, 2017).

Resistance

Although employees themselves can sediment and reinforce feeling rules and emotional abuse, they also resist in ingenious ways. In stressful, stigmatized, and rule-bound work, employees can draw on larger discourses to create positive identities, as with restaurant workers who create identities of flexibility, empathy, and composure in the face of stigma (Hanners, 2018). Employees can also refuse to buy into feeling rules by blatantly ignoring them via emotional deviance, which is considered to be "the opposite of emotional dissonance because the organizational member expresses inner feelings and disregards feeling rules" (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987, p. 33). Examples of emotional deviance include a pastor who giggles during a funeral or a food server who rolls her eyes at a customer's ridiculous request. Emotional deviance can serve several agentic purposes, including providing employees with distance, a break from emotion rules, and relief from monotonous tasks.

Some employees are able to deviate from emotion rules without penalty more than others. People in high-power professions associated with masculinity and whiteness, such as law, medicine, and academia, more easily deviate. Such is the case with judges who enact "robe-itis," and let the power of their formal black robe go to their heads. Via what Scarduzio (2011) calls *privileged deviance*, judges regularly break from expectations that they should be solemn and neutral, and instead joke with defendants. People with marginalized identities like women and people of color are more likely to feel compelled to play by the rules (Razzante & Tracy, 2019). Related, employees say they are more likely to resist and blow the whistle on abusive leaders when the leader is female (Thoroughgood et al., 2011).

Employees also find creative ways to resist workplace bullying and emotional abuse. Although ambiguous human resource policies can often discourage intervention (Cowan, 2012), bystanders, witnesses, and supervisors can intercede. In particular, traditionally powerful employees may impede and dismantle abuse (Razzante & Orbe, 2018). Some organizations have also instituted bystander training, where employees learn to increase affirmative communication, speak up when they witness problematic interactions, and re-source problematic behavior (Foss & Foss, 2011). Depending on the context, effective bystander intervention affirms positive behavior, corrects emotionally abusive behavior, and may include immediate intervention (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). Interference could be employees saying, "Hey, stop being such a bully, dude" or redirecting to a new topic, something called *conversational pivoting* (Foss & Foss, 2011). A bystander could also comfort targets. This last type of action may not immediately change the behavior but would help the organization maintain high-quality connections (Dutton, 2003) and help employees cope—a topic we turn to next.

Coping

Employees engage in many coping techniques—another form of enacting agency in response to emotional pressures at work. To practice compassion without fatigue, employees balance involvement with detachment. This is accomplished by feeling *for* clients via empathic concern rather than feeling *with* clients via emotional contagion (Miller, 2007). Indeed, if a client is in deep despair, caregivers should generally avoid joining them. Showing concern without feeling clients' negative emotions is a balancing act, however. Some workers descend into depersonalization or aloofness that, while useful for self-protection, does not usually accomplish organizational goals (Miller et al., 1988).

Compassion is also best accomplished by setting boundaries, making sure the compassion-giver has privacy, and ensuring social support (Miller, 2007). Indeed, having the ability to talk through workplace stressors can help employees make sense of frustrating, identity threatening, or demanding work. When employees feel constricted in talking about workplace frustrations, this results in *communicatively restricted organization stress* (CROS) (Boren & Veksler, 2015). At the same time, excessive negative talk and co-rumination can exacerbate burnout when people focus on problems rather than potential solutions (Boren, 2014).

Similar to bystander intervention, the effectiveness of social support depends on context. As Tracy describes:

> Instrumental support (an exchange of time, resources or labor) helps prevent emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and as such, may enhance the care and treatment of clients. Informational support (related to role definition, general information about job, skills training) is related to increased retention. Emotional support (empathy, caring, acceptance and assurance) is directly related to retention, commitment and all dimensions of burnout.
>
> (Tracy, 2009, p. 88)

Support from like-minded peers can be more effective than help from researchers, family, or friends (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Organizational superiors also can help alleviate emotional exhaustion by decreasing workloads, providing recognition and rewards, fostering fairness, and increasing employee participation in decision-making (Leiter & Maslach, 2011). Indeed, employees who help "creat[e] their work environment feel more powerful and accomplished. Further, having a voice … helps them deal with rules or regulations that would otherwise be framed as debilitating constraints or irritating hassles" (Tracy, 2017, p. 5).

Social support is especially useful for workplace abuse targets because abusive interactions "linger in a hundred conversations as members of the original audience re-encounter one another and negotiate the meaning of the original event" (Waldron, 2000, p. 68). Rehashing can affect workplace productivity, re-victimize targets, and poison organizational climates (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008). However, when bullied employees make sense of their experience with coworkers or other bullying targets, they feel less isolated (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2006). Some employees even construct elaborate collective revenge fantasies (Tye-Williams & Krone, 2015). Although these fantasies may not transform bullying, they help employees to reframe the problem and create preferred identities (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008).

Thriving and Overcoming

Prosocial emotions can also be cultivated at work to help people not only overcome problems but thrive. Flourishing is different than simply surviving. It's an agentic activity that allows employees to transcend emotional suffering. For example, organizational members use humor to manage stress and bond with coworkers, which fosters organizational identification, and reduces job-related stress (Tracy, Myers, & Scott, 2006). Humor and affirmative behaviors like praise and acknowledgment create healthy organizational cultures (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005) and open the door for "high-quality interpersonal connections" characterized by trust and respect (Dutton, 2003). For instance, joking helps public safety employees make light of dangerous work and eases the tension of worrying family members (Bochantin, 2017). These communicative processes, when they involve regular, positive experiences, help people feel important and included, building resilience (Lutgen-Sandvik, Riforgiate, & Fletcher, 2011).

Psychologically speaking, resilience is an important skill involving the ability to bounce back from challenges or recover from crisis (Richardson, 2002). A social process "grounded in messages, d/Discourse, and narrative" (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 2), resilience involves maintaining social ties and creatively reframing difficulties. Cultivating resilience does not ignore related negative emotions but instead focuses on productive actions that help people work through challenges. One way people cultivate

resilience is through mindfulness practices. Individually, this might include setting aside judgment to "practice acceptance, kindness, and openness, even when what is occurring … is contrary to deeply held wishes or expectations" (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006, p. 377). In organizations, an orientation of "nonattachment" encourages people to reframe their subject positions to reduce personal ego and see themselves and their coworkers as interdependent (Brummans & Hwang, 2010). This orientation can enable compassion, flexibility, attention, discipline, and wisdom.

Culture, Gender, and the Constitution of Organizing via Emotion

Chapter 1 defined communication as "a symbolic process of creating and sharing meaning." As illustrated in this chapter, emotion and organizational communication literature conceptualize communication as a method employees use to attend to an organization's feeling rules, a manner in which emotional abuse manifests due to larger structural norms that value rationality and expertise over emotional intelligence, and a way that organizations try to help employees know the meaning of their work through specific types of feeling rules. In this section, we return to issues of culture and gender, and examine emotion and the communicative constitution of organizing and organization.

Culture and Gender

Organizational emotion processes are embedded in and shaped by discourses of culture and gender. Emotional experiences can be spurred by cultural and identity differences such as gender, ethnicity, race, or class (Malvini Redden & Scarduzio, 2017) (see also Chapters 11–14). Meanwhile, organizational processes perpetuate discriminatory or difficult emotion practices such as racialized feeling rules in professional workplaces (Wingfield, 2010) and training that prioritizes cheerful Western emotion norms (Raz & Rafaeli, 2007).

Understanding emotional abuse at work requires consideration of identity, as gender, ethnicity, and race are historically stigmatizing markers that contribute to workplace bullying. Marginalized workforce members are easier targets for bullying and enjoy less flexibility in acceptable emotional displays (Meares, Oetzel, Derkacs, & Ginossar, 2004). Indeed, women and people of color regularly experience a range of negative social phenomena (Allen, 2009). Within the emotion and organizing literature, scholars examine culture and gender as they influence individual employees as well as larger organizational structures. So, how do these communicative practices constitute organizing and organization?

O_1—Organizing

Consider organizing as a verb or, as explained in Chapter 1, the process of coordinating/ordering among members of a social collective. What does this look like in the emotion and organizational communication literature? Emotion research shows how work feelings cycle through collective groups (Hareli & Rafaeli, 2008). For example, judges sometimes express sarcasm to misbehaving defendants, and the defendants' response affects whether bailiffs amplify harsh emotion or compensate for it through comforting behavior (Scarduzio & Tracy, 2015). This cycling of emotion through organizational workgroups is accomplished through verbal and nonverbal messaging. Organizational communication scholarship shows how both negative and positive emotion is contagious, rippling through mentoring

sessions, hushed hallway conversations, and employee training. For instance, teachers communicatively construct resilience in response to burnout via collective sensemaking and storytelling that frames organizational challenges as meaningful growth opportunities (Kamrath, 2018).

O_2—Organized

This chapter also illuminates O_2, *organized* (adj.), which is the "state of a social collective's coordination/order" (see Chapter 1). Emotion research explicates the structuring of workplace coordination showing, for example, that emotion rules are strongest when employees identify with and buy into organizational norms. Furthermore, emotion and organizing research has illuminated concepts like emotional intelligence, and now this term frequently appears in trainings and performance reviews (Harvard Business Review, 2015). Using the term *emotional intelligence*, employees are encouraged and rewarded for expressing emotion appropriately, listening, and empathizing with others.

Workplace bullying was an almost unheard-of term at the turn of the century. Now the term returns 702,000 Google hits in .36 seconds (as of Fall 2018). Increasing numbers of workplaces have policies about bullying, such as University of California, Berkeley's Workplace Bullying Prevention Policy, instituted in 2016 (University of California, Berkeley, 2016). This policy mirrors conceptualizations of workplace bullying that have emerged in a range of scholarship, including organizational communication. Indeed, years earlier, the Berkeley ombudsman office publicly posted a white paper, now book chapter, by communication scholars Tracy, Alberts, and Rivera (2007) called "How to Bust the Office Bully."

Emotional labor, despite its dominance in organizational communication research, is not as clearly powerful as the other research at constituting organizations. Despite calls to do so, emotional labor is curiously missing from most performance reviews (Poly, 2015). This may not be surprising; societal discourses tend to naturalize emotion work (especially feminized care work) so much that *emotional labor* may be an almost invisible concept to most organizational practitioners.

O_3—Organizations

Chapter 1 discusses organizations as nouns, or as coordinated and ordered entities arising from O_1 and O_2. Emotion and organizational communication scholarship tends to implicitly treat organizations as neutral environments. Much research studies interactional behavior at the individual and group level with the organization as a container or backdrop. That said, critical scholars have examined how organizational histories and genealogies affect emotion labor norms (e.g., Tracy, 2000) and organizational climates and policies affect workplace bullying (Cowan, 2012).

The research reviewed herein has also constituted academic organizations such as specialized emotion conferences, institutes, and LISTSERVs including the now 1,400-member Emonet. Likewise, research centers have sprung up such as the Center for Positive Organizing at the University of Michigan and the Greater Good Center at UC Berkeley. Organizational entities associated with workplace bullying have also emerged. Public scholarship has led to documentaries, specialized institutes like the Workplace Bullying Institute, and movement toward anti-bullying laws (Namie, Namie, & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010).

Finally, the continued attention on burnout and stress in organizations has arguably contributed to wellness and employee assistance programs that feature a menu of activities ranging from fitness challenges to chair massages to anger management. Such programs, although popular, tend to focus on individual rather than collective concerns of employee health (Ganesh & McAllum, 2010), as do products like the "fidget cube," essential oils, and adult coloring books.

Conclusion

As demonstrated, the emotion and organizing literature exemplifies the C-O spiral in many ways. The literature shows how larger discourses, organizational policies, and employee talk create organizational feeling rules that enable and constrain emotional expression. Meanwhile, institutional human resource processes enable the destructive communication of "equal opportunity" jerks, and employee resistance can ironically result in even harsher or more stringent treatment in organizations.

Taken together, the complex and varied literature about emotion in organizations contributes to organizational practices and the way employees, supervisors, and the general public interpret such practices. The research hopefully has helped people see that emotion in the workplace is not only something that gets in the way of organizing but also as something that can enhance the workplace experience. Furthermore, a desired result is that when people are better able to name and define various types of emotional suffering (e.g., compassion fatigue, burnout, bullying, emotive dissonance), they know they are not alone and might even have avenues to survive or transcend the suffering.

Supplementary Readings

Bochantin, J. E. (2017). "Ambulance thieves, clowns, and naked grandfathers": How PSEs and their families use humorous communication as a sensemaking device. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *31*(2), 278–296.

An exemplar of humor, sensemaking, and work–life balance among public safety employees.

Dougherty, D. S., & Drumheller, K. (2006). Sensemaking and emotions in organizations: Accounting for emotions in a rational(ized) context. *Communication Studies*, *57*(2), 215–238.

Critiques the priority of rationality over emotionality in organizations.

Hareli, S., & Rafaeli, A. (2008). Emotion cycles: On the social influence of emotion in organizations. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, *28*, 35–59.

The original discussion of emotion cycles in organizations, focusing primarily on negative emotion cycles.

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

The book that coined key terms of emotional labor, surface and deep acting, and emotive dissonance.

Huffman, T. P. (2017). Compassionate communication, embodied aboutness, and homeless young adults. *Western Journal of Communication*, *81*(2), 149–167.

Drawing upon experiences of homeless youth, Huffman depicts the embodied enactment of compassion.

Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & Tracy, S. J. (2012). Answering five key questions about workplace bullying: How communication scholarship provides a thought leadership for transforming abuse at work. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *26*, 3–47.

A synthesis of the workplace bullying literature in organizational communication.

Malvini Redden, S., & Scarduzio, J. A. (2017). A different type of dirty work: Hidden taint, intersectionality, and emotion management in bureaucratic organizations. *Communication Monographs*, 1–21.

This study shows how professional occupations can involve difficult, identity- and emotion-related dirty work.

Miller, K. (2002). The experience of emotion in the workplace: Professing in the midst of tragedy. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *15*(4), 571–600. doi:10.1177/0893318902154003.

Emotional labor is used as a lens to vividly and autoethnographically examine a workplace tragedy.

Rivera, K. D. (2015). Emotional taint: Making sense of emotional dirty work at the US Border Patrol. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *29*(2), 198–228.

Rivera coins the term "emotional taint" to describe work that is "dirty" by virtue of the emotion it requires.

Tracy, S. J., & Huffman, T. P. (2017). Compassion in the face of terror: A case study of recognizing suffering, co-creating hope, and developing trust in a would-be school shooting. *Communication Monographs*, *84*(1), 30–53.

This article provides a vivid picture for communicating compassion when sufferers are angry, threatening, or resisting help.

Tracy, S. J., Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & Alberts, J. K. (2006). Nightmares, demons and slaves: Exploring the painful metaphors of workplace bullying. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *20*, 148–185.

Using drawing and metaphor analysis, this article shows what workplace bullying feels like.

Important Concepts: Define and Discuss

Bounded emotionality
Burnout
Compassion (fatigue)
Communicatively restricted organizational stress (CROS)
Deep acting, surface acting
Discourses of individualism, meritocracy, rationality, and masculinity
(dis)Identification
Emotional deviance
Emotional Intelligence
Emotional labor
Emotive dissonance
Emotional taint and dirty work
Emotional taxes
Feeling rules/emotion norms
Microaggressions
Resilience
Workplace bullying

Discussion Questions

1. Identify organizational and institutional discourses that shape emotional experiences for employees (e.g., rationality, individuality). How do these structures shape emotion at personal, organizational, and societal levels?
2. How have you resisted or participated in emotion management norms?
3. How can workplace policy and/or employee communication improve workplace emotional experiences?

4. What emotional cycles have you experienced? How does considering emotion socially, and in relationship to organizational and discursive structures, shape your understanding of how emotions influence organizing?

Practitioners' Corner

Emotion and Communication Go to the Airport

Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and subsequent creation of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), airport security is steeped with Discourses about terrorism, safety, privacy, and authority. On one hand, macro-level conversations about security are rife with critiques of security policies. However, millions of people submit to TSA procedures daily in order to fly. In doing so, they are complicit in practices that curb personal freedoms.

For Transportation Security Officers (TSOs), emotional experiences are complicated by organizational training and mandates; many require difficult, sustained emotional performances of intimidation and composure. TSOs are trained to prevent terrorist attacks with the mantra "not on my watch" and are bombarded with pseudo-military and patriotic messaging regarding duty to country. However, the material reality of TSO work is physically processing thousands of people and constantly managing emotions. Furthermore, TSOs do not enjoy many affirmative discourses about their occupation outside of organizational training.

Consider a typical trip to the airport. People regularly worry about long lines, security screenings, and missing flights. It's not uncommon for people to be sleep deprived and anxious about getting through quickly. Imagine a tired, uncertain passenger—irritated by long, winding lines and fellow passengers who take forever loading their belongings on the conveyor belt—being confronted by a TSO who says they've done something wrong. They will need a bag search and full body pat-down. The passenger—now angry because they've flown before, know what they're doing, and are very worried about the extra time—starts rudely ranting to the TSO about feeling unfairly singled out. The TSO explains that something in the passenger's bag looked suspicious and protocol dictates extra screening.

The passenger belittles the officer, shouting about how their taxes pay TSO salaries and that TSOs are glorified security guards who couldn't make it into "real" law enforcement anyway. In turn, the officer stays outwardly neutral, sharing that they only enforce and do not create rules. But the TSO moves slower now, performing the pat-down with unnecessary thoroughness. The passenger runs to make the plane, careening through airport crowds while the TSO, still seething but amused that the passenger will probably miss the flight now, turns to face the next person in line. The passenger barely makes it, lucky to gain admittance as they were past the airline's boarding deadline. Instead of acting grateful, however, the passenger scans packed overhead bins and doesn't see a single available space. While trying to cram a duffel bag into an overfull bin, a flight attendant says the bag must be checked. The passenger laments that it is unfair since security caused the delay and tells the flight attendant to stop being such a "bitch" and just help already. The flight attendant keeps a placid grin plastered on and explains how it would be less fair to move the luggage of people who arrived on time. It's the fifth passenger meltdown today, and there are still two more legs before the flight attendant is off work. It's no wonder that a Jet Blue flight attendant lost it

a few years ago and, after a profanity-laced rant over the PA system, grabbed a beer and exited the plane via an inflatable ramp (Newman & Rivera, 2010)!

In this mini case study, inspired by past research about airport security (Malvini Redden, 2013), it's easy to see how emotion influences communication at many levels, and is shaped by organizational and institutional structures. For passengers, emotional management is informed by personal experiences of airport security and air travel, as well as macro-level discourses like news about security. Likewise, the airport context is surrounded by broad social Discourses about terrorism and how airport security is meant to ensure national safety. Furthermore, the reality of flying involves significant anxiety and embodied time pressures. When passengers are primed to be unsettled, it's not surprising that security lines provoke further negative feelings and upsets.

Think about the downstream effects of interactions described in the case. Will the emotion cycle co-created in security promote many positive emotions? How will the passenger treat fellow travelers on the airplane or interact with flight attendants who might issue more directions that seem "unfair"? How will the TSO cope with passenger ranting? Will the officer seek social support from coworkers? If so, will those conversations involve excessive co-rumination that will just make the situation feel worse? Or, perhaps their talk will contribute to negative discourses about passengers who "check their brains with their baggage." What if the passenger complained to the TSO's manager who, unbeknown to the passenger, is an emotionally abusive bully? If the interaction had been racially charged, would the passenger or TSO perhaps feel singled out because of ethnicity? Now think about the organizational structures and processes that shape security interactions—the requisite emotional performances for TSOs and the processes purposefully meant to provoke anxiety in passengers (Malvini Redden, 2013). Certainly, these organizational processes constrain agency for patrons and employees alike.

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