

2-1991

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Waldron, Vincent R. and Krone, Kathleen J., "The Experience and Expression of Emotion in the Workplace: A Study of a Corrections Organization" (1991). *Papers in Communication Studies*. 145.

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Published in *Management Communication Quarterly* 4:3 (February 1991), pp. 287–309;
doi: 10.1177/0893318991004003002
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The Experience and Expression of Emotion in the Workplace: A Study of a Corrections Organization

Vincent R. Waldron and Kathleen J. Krone

Abstract

This study evaluated Rafaeli and Sutton's (1989) model of emotional expression in the workplace by examining descriptions of emotional interactions occurring among members of a state government agency. The results indicated that qualities of felt emotions influenced emotional expression, which in turn yielded changed relational perceptions and changed communication behavior subsequent to the emotional event. Content analysis of the event descriptions resulted in preliminary generalizations about the types of emotions experienced by members, the nature of repressed emotional messages, and the dimensions of relationship changes stemming from the emotional events. The results are interpreted as evidence of the importance of emotional communication in relationship reformulation and are consistent with Van Maanen and Kunda's (1989) recent depiction of emotional control as part of organizational culture.

Emotion has been much studied in the social sciences, but only recently has it been suggested in the organizational literature (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987, 1989; Sandelands & Buckner, 1989; Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988; Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989) that emotional experience and expression may have important individual and organizational implications. It has been argued convincingly that control of "real," "inner," or "felt" feelings constitutes a large part of the work performed by those in some service professions (Hochschild, 1979, 1983). Similarly, "emotion work" is dramatically illustrated in a recent description of the carefully controlled public behavior of employees at Disneyland (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). These authors suggest "control of the heart" is a primary objective of organizational socialization and managerial attempts to manipulate organizational culture.

A recent descriptive model suggests that emotional expression is shaped by at least three factors: (a) organizational norms or "display rules," (b) the discretion associated with organization roles, and (c) individual characteristics of role occupants (e.g., self-monitoring;

Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). In this model, the consequences of emotional expression are conceptualized in terms of individual and organizational financial outcomes (e.g., a waiter's or waitress's tip or an organization's sales might be improved if positive emotions are displayed to customers).

The current study evaluates and extends the Rafaeli and Sutton (1989) model by presenting both quantitative and qualitative descriptions of emotional interactions among members of a state government organization. In contrast to authors concerned solely with expressed emotions (Czepiel, Solomon, & Surprenant, 1985; Hochschild, 1979; Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988), our initial objective was to describe felt emotions and the work events that caused them. As Rafaeli and Sutton (1989) acknowledge, the qualities of felt emotions (e.g., emotional intensity) may determine whether individuals choose, or are able, to express them.

Moreover, the mismatch between felt and expressed emotions is potentially important. For example, self-estrangement has been identified as one negative consequence of containing felt emotion (Hochschild, 1983). In discussing the "dark side" of organizational culture, Van Maanen and Kunda (1989) suggest that burnout and emotional numbness are the products of cultures that discourage expression of felt emotions.

A second objective of this study is to specify more clearly the factors that shape emotional expression. The valence (positiveness, negativeness) and intensity of felt emotions are suggested as contributing factors. An additional consideration not explicitly addressed in the model (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989) is the status relationship between the individuals involved in the emotional incident. Although most existing work examines expression of emotion by service personnel to customers (e.g., Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988), ethnographic descriptions of emotional communication behavior suggest that emotional expressions toward customers, supervisors, and co-worker peers are subject to different organizational controls (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989).

The third objective of this study is to provide an alternative perspective on the types of consequences associated with both displayed and felt emotion in the work setting. Admittedly, failures in emotion at work may have financial consequences for an organization (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). However, emotional expression may have interpersonal consequences as well. For example, a subordinate's inappropriate expression of a negative emotion to a supervisor may irreparably damage the supervisory relationship and limit opportunities for advancement. Even if the sentiment is not expressed immediately, just *feeling* intensely angry, embarrassed, or pleased with a peer, superior, or subordinate may result in altered relational perceptions and associated changes in communication patterns (e.g., increased avoidance). Given recent calls for an improved understanding of how work relationships are reformulated (Jablin & Krone, 1987), documentation of relational consequences of emotional work experiences was considered useful.

The Nature of Felt Emotions in Organizations

As defined here, felt emotions are "intrapyschic states" caused by some aspect of the work setting (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988). Consistent with recent theorizing about the social aspects of emotion (Armon-Jones, 1986; Averhill, 1986; Harre, 1986), the focus of this investigation

is on understanding individuals' interpretations of emotional states. From this perspective, an employee's reported experience of anger, fear, or elation is taken at face value and assumed to be subject to the influences of the individual's past experience and of internalization of societal and organizational norms. Although substantial previous work has been conducted on employees' self-reported felt emotions, this literature focuses mostly on the relatively mild affective reaction associated with job satisfaction (e.g., Locke, 1976). In contrast, the current investigation used an open-ended approach to document the potentially extensive variety of naturally occurring work emotions.

Emotional variety

Recent descriptions of the emotional experiences of convenience store clerks suggest these employees feel a variety of emotions toward customers (e.g., impatience, frustration, amusement), despite organizational attempts to create a constant environment of polite cheerfulness (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988). However, the variety of emotions felt among individuals within an organization has not been well documented. Several authors have made rough conceptual distinctions on the basis of valence—the extent to which emotions are positive or negative (Hochschild, 1983; Louis, 1980; Waldron, 1990). However, the usefulness of the simple positive/negative distinction remains to be fully tested in the organizational setting (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). In addition, finer distinctions would be useful, because two emotions with the same valence (e.g., anger, fear) may have quite different organizational implications. Moreover, social research on emotional episodes (e.g., Aylwin, 1985) indicates that emotional social encounters are often characterized by multiple emotions or emotion sequences (e.g., surprise, then fear, then anger) rather than a single positive or negative emotion. Research Question 1 was posed to guide investigation of the types of positive and negative emotions experienced by employees.

Research Question 1 What specific felt emotions are associated with positive and negative organizational interactions?

Emotional intensity

The Rafaeli and Sutton (1989) model suggests that the intensity of expressed emotion may affect organizational and individual financial outcomes. However, it is likely that intensity of the *felt* emotion partially determines whether, and how, emotion is expressed. Descriptions of organizational life suggest that organization members experience emotions ranging from intense “shock” (Hughes, 1958) to “surprise” (Louis, 1980) to the relatively mild “job satisfaction” (e.g., Locke, 1976). However, the organizational events that give rise to positive and negative emotions varying in intensity have not been much studied. One can speculate, however, that the effort expended by organizations to eliminate “negative” and promote positive emotion within their cultures (Hochschild, 1983; Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989) affects the intensity of felt emotions. Positive emotion might be experienced less intensely because it is routine, expected, or prescribed by the organization, rather than naturally experienced. Research Question 2 examines these possibilities.

Research Question 2: How do the types (e.g., positive/negative) of emotions experienced in organizations vary in intensity?

Factors Influencing Emotional Expression

Quality of felt emotions and various social and organizational norms are factors influencing whether emotion is expressed in a given work situation (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). Above we identified two candidate qualities of felt emotion (valence, intensity). Research Question 3 was posed to guide investigation of the presumed relationship between felt and expressed emotion.

Research Question 3: Do certain qualities (valence, intensity) of felt emotions influence emotional expression?

Norms governing the status relationship between the individuals involved in an emotional event may also influence emotional expression. Descriptions of the emotional behavior of service professionals (Hochschild, 1979, 1983; Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988), Disneyland employees, and members of a high-technology organization (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989) suggest that the extent to which some types of felt emotions are displayed depends on the status of the target and the perceived relational consequences of the display. For example, in many organizations an employee's angry outburst at a subordinate, peer, or client might be more tolerable than a similar display directed toward a supervisor. A research question was posed to investigate how status relationships influence the expression of felt emotions.

Research Question 4: How is the expression of emotion influenced by the member's status relationship with the target of the emotions?

Relational Consequences

The final task of this study was to extend previous work by investigating the relational consequences of felt and expressed emotion. Such consequences likely depend on three factors. First, the qualities (valence, intensity) of the felt emotion may have a direct impact on the relationship regardless of whether the emotion is expressed. For example, a subordinate who has the intensely negative experience of being humiliated by a supervisor may seek to end the relationship by transferring to another department. In contrast, a subordinate's feeling of mild satisfaction after being complimented by a supervisor may have little relational impact. Second, the effect of the felt emotion may be mediated by the nature of the status relationship with the target of the emotion. Subordinates may accept that intimidation or fear occasionally results from interactions with supervisors and higher-status organization members. However, feelings of intimidation caused by a same-status peer may not be acceptable and may prompt an employee to terminate or change the relationship. Third, the decision to express or repress the felt emotion may ultimately have relational consequences. If a subordinate inappropriately expresses anger with a supervisor,

negative relational consequences might follow. In such instances, suppression of negative emotion may function to maintain relational stability.

As operationalized here, relational consequences are perceptual or behavioral changes lasting beyond the emotion-producing event. A changed relational perception involves redefinition of the relationship along some dimension (e.g., trust, liking, respect). In contrast, a behavior change involves explicit altering of communication activity. For example, after being humiliated by a supervisor, a subordinate might subsequently avoid communication with the supervisor when possible. The discretion associated with an individual's role may influence the nature of the relational change. Subordinates are often *required* to communicate with supervisors, so changes in communication may not be possible, even though the relationship is perceived to be of poorer or better quality. A fifth research question was developed to guide investigation of relational consequences.

Research Question 5: How (if at all) do organizational relationships change subsequent to the experience or expression of emotion?

Method

Subjects

Subjects in this study were 117 employees of a state department of corrections and rehabilitation. Of these, 12 participated in a pilot study used to refine the questionnaire. Thus 105 parole officers, senior parole officers, supervisors, and support staff participated in the final phase of the study. All participated prior to an annual in-service training. A majority of the sample (66%) was male; 53% were parole officers, 20% were senior parole officers (with limited supervisory responsibilities), 20% were unit supervisors, and the remainder (7%) were support staff. Mean tenure in the organization was 121 months. Mean job tenure was 89 months.

Data Collection

Sudman and Bradburn (1974) suggest that participants are more likely to reveal sensitive information on questionnaires than they are in interviews. In addition, Epstein (1979) suggests that self-reports about emotional experiences are more ecologically valid than data collected in the laboratory. Therefore, a detailed questionnaire was considered the appropriate data-collection instrument for this study. The questionnaire asked participants to recall a communication event that had an "emotional impact" on them. To qualify as a "communication event," the felt emotion had to occur in the presence of at least one other individual who was the "cause" of the emotion. If several events came to mind, respondents were to choose the one remembered most clearly. Respondents were guaranteed anonymity.

Open-ended questions asked respondents to describe an emotional encounter in terms of its antecedents, the event itself, the emotion experienced, what was said by the parties, messages withheld during the event (if any), relational changes (if any) subsequent to the event, and communication changes (if any) subsequent to the event. Additional questions pertained to tenure, relationship type, intensity and typicality of the event, and demographics.

Subjects described either a positive or a negative encounter. Otherwise, all questionnaires were identical. The pilot study indicated that recalling an emotional encounter was not difficult for participants, but that some respondents could more clearly recall a negative than a positive encounter (or vice versa). Accordingly, if participants who initially received a "positive" questionnaire were unable to recall clearly a positive emotional event, they were allowed to describe a negative encounter. This preserved the subject pool but also resulted in the collection of more negative (62) than positive (43) event descriptions.

Coding Procedures

To analyze responses to open-ended questions, researchers first reviewed a subset of responses (less than 40% of the total sample) for recurrent themes and characteristics. An initial coding scheme was developed to account for most of the responses. The researchers then coded the subsample independently, discussed ambiguities, and refined the coding system. The revised coding system was then used to recode the subsample and to obtain an independent measure of interrater reliability for the uncoded responses. Reliabilities were assessed using Scott's (1955) pi procedure for correcting chance agreements, with all exceeding .86.

A different procedure was used for the question pertaining to the nature of felt emotions. The diversity of emotion names and the variety of meanings attributed to emotional states necessitated the use of an existing classification system (Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987) that categorizes emotion-describing words into one of six basic emotion clusters (fear, anger, sadness, surprise, joy, love). Of the words used by respondents, 96% matched with those included in the Shaver et al. (1987) taxonomy. For the remainder, the researchers jointly determined which category was appropriate. Because respondents sometimes described multiple emotions ($M = 1.4$, range = 1–3), dichotomous coding was used to indicate whether each of the six emotion clusters was present or missing from the description.

Results

Results are of three types. First, basic descriptive statistics are presented to form a preliminary picture of the nature of the emotional events and the variety of emotions reported. Second, log linear analyses were used to construct and evaluate associative models representing the relationships between antecedent variables (qualities of the felt emotion, relational status of target); an intermediary variable (expression/withholding of emotional messages during the emotional event); and outcome variables (changed relational perceptions, long-term changes in communication behavior). Log-linear procedures were used for this procedure because all of the variables were categorical in nature (Kennedy, 1983). Third, qualitative descriptions of the nature of suppressed emotional messages and relational changes are presented.

Preliminary Analyses

Before evaluating specific research questions or statistical models, we developed a qualitative description of the emotional communication events reported by participants, including target's role, event type, and typicality of the event.

Target's role

Analysis of these responses indicated the target person was a supervisor (30.5%), subordinate (9.5%), co-worker peer (18.1%), or client (14.3%). In addition, a substantial number (27.6%) of the emotional encounters involved persons outside the immediate work group, including apparent boundary spanners (judges, lawyers).

Type of event

Responses to the questionnaire items asking respondents to describe the circumstances surrounding the event were of three general types (see Table 1 for examples).

Category	% of Total (N = 105)	Content Themes
Task-related	33.3	Criticisms of work habits; parolee expresses thanks; co-worker offers help with difficult task; interview distraught victim
General cultural	29.5	Success in convincing organization to reevaluate job; learn management is sexist or racist; learn administrative procedures
Relational	37.1	Discover betrayal; supervisor abuses authority; subordinate refuses to comply; develop romantic relationship; discover co-worker is taking advantage of you
Authority relationships	21.9	
Lateral relationships	12.3	
Personal relationships	2.8	

Approximately 33% of the events were designated *task related*. In these events, the interaction with the target was emotional because it revealed something about the negative or positive "reality" of corrections work or was perceived as a punishment or reward for one's work. A second class (29.5%) of emotional interactions was labeled *cultural* because the emotion stemmed primarily from some organization wide procedure, practice, or attitude. In these event descriptions, the target of the emotion was often portrayed as the embodiment or representative of some good or evil organizational quality such as sexism, racism, or benevolence. A final class (37.2%) of events involved some strictly *relational* issue. The emotion was attributed to affirmations or violations of the rights, status, or expectations associated with the relationship. These events involved vertical status relationships (e.g., a supervisor abuses his or her subordinate), lateral relationships (e.g., a coworker admits betraying a work-related confidence), and in a few cases, what appeared to be strictly personal relationships (e.g., discovering that a co-worker has romantic intentions).

Typicality

Respondents rated on 5-point Likert scales (1 = *very untypical*, 5 = *very typical*) the typicality of emotional events in general ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.20$) and the typicality of the event they were describing ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.18$). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that negative events were more typical (in general) than positive events ($F[1, 100] = 15.18$, $p < .001$). Regarding the typicality of the *specific* event being described, negative events ($M = 2.48$) were rated as more typical than positive events ($M = 2.07$; $F[1, 99] = 8.96$, $p < .003$).

Variety of Felt Emotions

Research Question 1 concerned the variety of negative and positive emotions reported by respondents. A rich assortment of emotion words were found in the descriptions provided by respondents. However, these were easily classified according to the broader emotion clusters described by Shaver et al. (1987). The seven clusters, the percentage of the sample using words in each cluster, and sample emotion words used by respondents are reported in Table 2. Words describing anger or one of its variants were most common (47% of the total sample, 80% of the those describing negative events). In general, these words (bitterness, disgust, hate, vengeance) described an energized, active, emotional response to circumstances perceived to be unjust, threatening, or limiting.

Table 2. Types of Emotions Experienced during Communication Event

Emotion	Related Terms	% of Encounters with Same Valence ^a	% of Total Encounters ^a
Negative emotions ($N = 62$)			
Anger	Frustration, hate	80.6	47.6
Sadness	Despair, hurt	38.7	22.8
Fear	Anxiety, panic	37.0	21.9
Surprise	Shock, disbelief	11.2	6.6
Positive emotions ($N = 43$)			
Joy	Happiness, pride	83.3	33.3
Surprise	Amazement, astonishment	2.8	.095
Affection	Liking, caring	6.9	2.8

a. Numbers in this column refer to percentage of respondents reporting that they experienced the emotion. More than one emotion could have been experienced, so numbers do not sum to 100%.

Emotion words related to the fear (22%) and sadness (23%) clusters were reported with similar frequency. Words describing fear suggested vulnerability and the desire to escape from, or control, current or anticipated threats. Words associated with the sadness cluster described passive or hopeless responses to organizational practices or events. A smaller percentage of negative events (11.2%) was associated with feelings of negative surprise.

The large majority (81%) of positive event descriptions were associated with the joy cluster. Words associated with this cluster (e.g., pride, enthusiasm, satisfaction, relief) were typically associated with the attainment of desired outcomes and a feeling of personal well-being. Words expressing positive surprise and affection for co-workers were also present but only in small numbers (2.8% and 6.9% of positive event descriptions).

Intensity of Felt Emotions

Respondents rated the intensity of the emotional events on a 5-point scale (1 = *very unintense*, 5 = *very intense*). Pertinent to Research Question 2, the negative events ($M = 4.31$) were experienced as more intense than positive events ($M = 3.79$; $F[1, 103] = 8.42, p < .005$). Despite this significant statistical result, the means indicate that all emotional events were intense.

Associative Models

Research Questions 3 and 4 concern the association between two situational variables (quality of felt emotions, status relationship with target) and emotional expression. Research Question 5 concerns the association between these variables and relational consequences. Several log-linear models were constructed to facilitate the construction of a path diagram documenting the relationship among these variables. As described by Kennedy (1983), log-linear procedures involve an ANOVA-like analysis of the effects of one or more classification variables on a categorical outcome variable. The objective is to determine the extent to which the difference between observed and expected frequencies associated with the outcome variable are explained by the classification variables. In the current study, valence of the felt emotion (positive or negative) and relational status of the target were considered classification variables, whereas relational consequences were treated as outcome variables. As depicted in Figure 1, emotional expression was considered a potential intermediary variable.

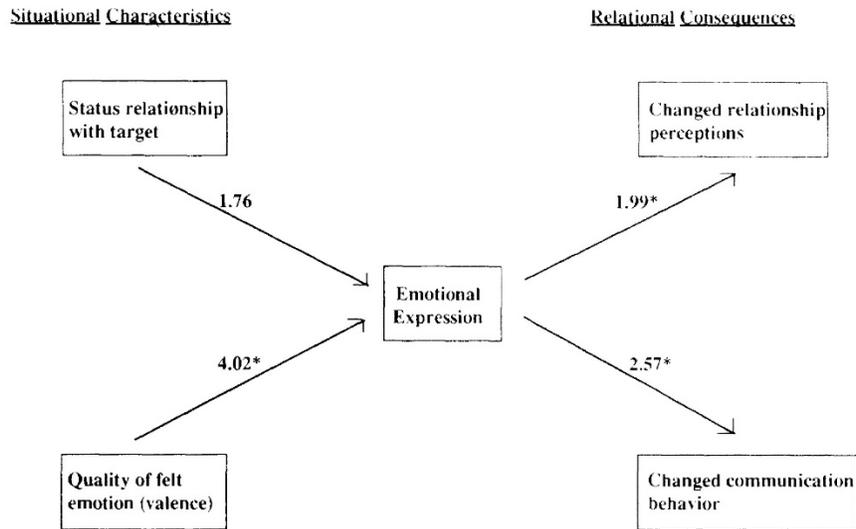


Figure 1. Associations among Categorical Variables

Note: The asterisk (*) signifies that the lambda effect parameter is significant at $p < .05$.

The situational factors (e.g., valence of emotion, relationship with the target) were expected to influence the express or repress decision, which might in turn yield relational consequences. However, it is possible that the simple experience of certain kinds of emo-

tion (e.g., extreme anger) has an unmediated influence on relational outcomes without regard to expression. Thus several alternative log-linear models were tested, each consisting of differing combinations of the three potential classification variables and two different relational-outcome measures. As detailed discussion of model selection is provided by Kennedy (1983, pp. 123–148), only a summary of the process is provided here.

Variables influencing emotional expression

Inclusion of the valence variable in the log-linear model resulted in a highly significant improvement in model fit. In other words, knowing whether the event is positive or negative improves one's ability to predict whether or not emotional messages were expressed or withheld. Kennedy (1983) suggests that the lambda effect parameters are indicative of the strength and direction of a variable's contribution to a model. Moreover, the ratio of a lambda to its standard error is analogous to a Z score. Z scores are used as path coefficients in Figure 1. Following statistical convention, Z scores exceeding 1.96 are significant at .05.¹ Thus negative emotional messages were more likely to be withheld ($Z = 4.02$).

Inclusion of the relational status variable improved model fit only marginally. Closer examination of the levels of this variable indicates that withholding of emotional messages was likely when the target was a subordinate and unlikely when the target was a co-worker peer. However, as indicated in Figure 1, the highest Z score associated with this variable was 1.76, still short of significance. Accordingly, it is most parsimonious to accept a model that includes only valence of felt emotions as a predictor of expressed emotion.

Variables influencing relational consequences

Respondents were asked if their relationship with the target of the emotion had changed because of the emotional event. The percentage indicating a change had occurred (65.7%) was greater than would be expected on the basis of chance ($\chi^2 [1, N = 102] = 10.03, p < .002$). Thus the simple occurrence of an emotional event appeared to result in changed relational perceptions. Log-linear modeling indicated that neither valence of the felt emotion nor relational status had a significant *direct* effect on this outcome variable. However, the intermediary emotional-expression variable made a significant contribution to the model. Changed relational perceptions were likely after an emotional event in which respondents repressed emotional messages ($Z = 1.99$).

The number of respondents reporting changes in communication *behavior* subsequent to the emotional event (53) was approximately similar to the number reporting no such change (46). As above, log-linear analysis indicated that the valence and relational status had no direct bearing on this relational measure. However, the emotional-expression variable again made a significant contribution to the model. Those who expressed emotional messages to the target *during* the event were less likely (than those who repressed such messages) to make adjustments in communication subsequent to the event ($Z = -2.57$).

Content Analyses

Additional content analyses yielded taxonomies of repressed messages, relational changes, and changed communication behaviors.

Repressed messages

Descriptions of messages withheld during the emotional encounter ($N = 46$) fit one of the five categories presented in Table 3. Each category was conceptualized as a dimension with opposite positive or negative poles, though in reality only three of the withheld messages were positive.

Table 3. Messages Withheld during the Encounter

Message Category	% of Total	Examples
Insults	39.1	"You only got promoted because of the seniority rule." "I wanted to tell her that she's been a pain in the butt." "You are subhuman!"
Protests	32.6	"I wanted to refuse to go [on an errand for supervisor]." "Should have . . . filed a grievance." "Wanted to confront her about racial allegations she had made."
Justifications	15.6	"Wanted to point out how poorly some of the other officers were doing." ". . . that I and the agency have treated her well and don't owe her anything." "I wanted to tell them everything isn't as simple as it seems."
Venting	6.5	"I wanted to swear." "Wanted to relate my feeling toward the offense."

Note: Three responses were uncodable using this category scheme.

Insults or compliments were defined as messages that belittled or praised the other participant and accounted for 39.1 % of the responses. Protests or defenses were challenges to, or defenses of, the organizational or relational status quo. These accounted for 32.6% of responses. Justifications or admissions accounted for 15.2% of the total and either bolstered or denigrated one's self or behavior. Venting or suppressing messages were unregulated expressions of intense felt emotion or regrets or apologies concerning such expressions. These accounted for only 6.5% of the messages.

Changed relational perceptions

Respondents' descriptions of relationship changes subsequent to the emotional event were analyzed to determine the dimensions of such changes (see Table 4). Change in the degree of the liking or closeness felt toward the target was the most frequently reported consequence of the emotional event (27.8% of respondents). In most of these cases, the relationship deintensified from friendship to co-worker. A considerable number (24.5%) of the changes involved increases or decreases in trust. The emotion felt toward the target in these cases appeared to prompt a rethinking of the target's dependability. Particularly when the target was a superior, the emotional events resulted in reduced respect for the target's professionalism and managerial prowess. These changes accounted for 19.6% of the total. Changes in openness (16.3%) occurred when the emotional event caused the target to be perceived as more or less approachable or open-minded. Finally, some of the respondents (11.6%) reported "structural" changes that in effect ended the formal relationship between the parties. In such instances, one of the participants was fired, transferred, or placed in a different chain of command because of the incident.

Table 4. Dimensions of Relationship Change

Change Dimension	% of Total (N = 62)	Examples
Liking or closeness	27.8	"We hate each other." "We no longer socialize together (just co-workers)."
Trust	24.5	"No longer trust that he will back me." "I am on guard now."
Respect	19.6	"Total disrespect for him which was not externalized." "[Now] I admire him for his work knowledge . . ."
Openness	16.3	"He became more receptive to advice." "Now I tell that person what I feel about him."
Structural	11.4	"She received disciplinary action and was removed from my typing duties." "[My] work assignment was changed."

Note: One response was uncodable with this category scheme.

Changed communication behavior

Respondents were asked to describe the changes (if any) in their communication with the target subsequent to the emotional event. Forty-four descriptions of such changes were obtained. A large percentage of these described changes in the *quantity* of communication. Thirty-one percent of the respondents reported an attempt to reduce or completely to avoid interaction with the target ("I am so angry at him that I do everything I can to avoid talking to him"). An additional 13% of the respondents reported increased communication quantity ("I found out he was more open-minded than I thought, so now I talk to him more than before").

Some respondents reported change in the *quality* of communication. Often (22% of total reported changes) these involved editing subsequent conversation so that it was more superficial, careful, or less intimate than before the incident. Conversely and typically after positive emotional events, some respondents (13%) were less guarded in their communication ("Now we talk like friends about personal information, not just work"). In addition, three (6.8%) of the responses described more "legalistic" communication in which each interaction with the target was carefully documented in writing or by witnesses. Finally, one individual suggested that the original negative emotional incident convinced him to be more confrontive during subsequent encounters.

Discussion

By clarifying the role of felt emotions, specifying more clearly the factors influencing expressed emotion, and exploring relational consequences, our study extends Rafaeli and Sutton's (1989) model of expressed emotion. The data both support and clarify the model by showing that the qualities of felt emotions, in addition to expressed feelings, should be considered if the role of emotion at work is to be understood. Valence of the felt emotion had a strong effect on whether the emotion was expressed. This factor apparently was more important than norms governing the employee's status relationship with the target,

although the underrepresentation of some target types (e.g., subordinates) qualifies this conclusion.

This preliminary finding is important because it suggests that the nature of the felt emotion, at least in this organization, might be weighted most heavily when employees decide whether to express emotion during work interactions. Of course, nearly all of the emotions were described as highly intense by respondents. Less intensely experienced emotions (e.g., everyday feelings of job satisfaction) may have been expressed differently.

Regarding more specific aspects of the study, the findings pertaining to the variety of felt emotions are particularly interesting given recent concerns about the relationship between organizational culture and emotion. Beyond the simple positive or negative distinction, a number of emotion types were identified. The relative prominence of such emotions as anger, fear, and sadness within members' reports of their organizational interactions may reflect the organization's formal or informal "control of the heart" (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). In this organization, negative emotions were rated as more typical and intense than positive emotions. Emotion words relating to anger (an other-oriented aggressive emotion) and joy (a self-satisfied inner-directed state) were most prominent. The descriptions provided by organization members suggest that "getting angry" is a typical and sometimes effective alternative to the complex social negotiations required to overcome bureaucratic obstacles and difficult personalities. These long-term government employees apparently accept that negative emotions are associated with social aspects of work, whereas positive emotions, if experienced at all, are derived from individual achievements. Whether this perspective is intrinsic only to this organization's culture remains an empirical question.

Organizational norms of various types have been prominently described as important constraints on employees' expressions of emotion (Rafaeji & Sutton, 1987, 1989; Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). From the messages that employees chose to suppress, one can infer some of the communication rules (Harris & Cronen, 1979) that regulate emotional display. For example, some members appeared to be influenced by rules prohibiting insults and emotional "venting." Such emotional controls probably facilitate the survival of workplace relationships. The fairly prevalent suppression of protests and justifications suggests additional normative constraints on emotionally charged messages. One can speculate that such emotional constraints may ultimately serve to eliminate employees' "voice" (Hirschman, 1970) and may discourage negotiation of organizational and relational procedures or injustices. Again, the extent to which these norms apply across organizations remains uncertain.

The significant association between emotional expression and the two relational-outcome variables was suggestive. The results indicate that when employees *suppressed* emotional messages during an interaction with a co-worker, they subsequently adopted changed relational perceptions and changed communication behavior toward the co-worker. The qualitative analyses of these changes revealed that they were more often negative than positive, suggesting, perhaps, that short-term suppression of emotion leads to long-term negative consequences, perhaps because of festering bad feelings or unresolved grudges. However, it is not at all clear that expression of the emotions would have avoided such negative consequences. Given that the unexpressed feelings were likely to be negative (and

highly intense), expression of such emotions might have resulted in more severe relational damage.

Rafaelli and Sutton (1989) commented on the financial consequences of emotional displays directed at customers, but our results suggest that such displays influence relationships internal to the organization. The relational changes described by organization members seem particularly useful given recent calls for an improved understanding of how work relationships are redefined and changed (Jablin, 1987). The qualitative data indicate that the dimensions of changed relational perceptions (e.g., liking, trust) and changed communication behavior (openness) are somewhat similar to those distinguishing "leadership" from "supervisory" superior subordinate exchanges (Graen & Cashmen, 1975; Graen & Ginsburg, 1977; Graen, Orris, & Johnson, 1973). Future studies focusing on a single relationship type might identify with more precision the role of emotional control in maintaining and changing specific kinds of work relationships.

In sum, the results of this exploratory study point to the importance of both felt and expressed emotion in organizational life. The results are limited to one relatively unique organization. The self-report method used cannot ensure that emotions described were truly those that were felt at the time of the organizational event. Even so, the results do justify further study of emotion in organizational contexts. Particularly needed are studies of the specific communicative tactics that organization members use to express emotion-charged messages successfully, while at the same time minimizing relational damage and other negative consequences. Such research has highly practical implications. It seems reasonable to suggest that employees who continually withhold emotional messages are likely to experience negative individual consequences (e.g., emotional burnout), whereas employees who express such emotions without regard for organizational convention are likely to experience negative relational consequences. Finally, organizational controls on emotion may have the negative side effect of stifling information important to an organization's functioning. If the information withheld by respondents in this study is representative, messages serving to protest and justify organizational and individual actions are among those most likely to be lost when organizations promote a culture of emotional suppression.

Note

1. As discussed in detail by Kennedy (1983), a significant Z score indicates that the adjusted observed frequencies are different from those expected by chance. As with χ^2 methods, the expected value (unless specified otherwise) is simply N divided by the number of categories associated with the variable. In the case of the relationship-change variable, two categories exist (change and no change), and the expected value for each category is 50% of the total responses.

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