

Introduction

Editors: Ruth Simpson and Steve Smith

Brunel Business School, Brunel University,
Uxbridge, UB8 3PH, UK
E-mail: ruth.simpson@brunel.ac.uk
E-mail: stephen.smith@brunel.ac.uk

Biographical notes: Ruth Simpson is a Reader in management at Brunel Business School. Her research interests include gender and emotions at work, gender and careers and gender and management education.

Steve Smith is a senior lecturer at Brunel Business School. His interests include emotional labour and practice development for emotional labourers among nurses and police officers. He also has an interest in the pedagogy of teaching methodology to students.

1 Introduction

It is with great pleasure that we welcome the first issue of the *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*. Seminal work in the area of emotion work, such as Hochschild's study of airline attendants and Fineman's exploration of the place of emotion in organisations (both contributors in this issue), has highlighted the need to explore this facet of organisational life and has helped to place emotion firmly on the agenda in organisation studies. The entrance of emotion into considerations of work and organisations has occurred along side other significant developments concerning the growth in the service economy, growing competition among service providers and the 'feminisation' of local labour markets. This has led to a greater need to focus on the eliciting of desired emotions in the service and other encounters and has placed emotion work and emotional labour at the forefront of analysis. The growing interest in this area has therefore created a welcome space for a new journal, which seeks to draw together different perspectives on emotion work and emotional labour and so help shape and define emerging debates around emotions within management and organisational research.

These debates have raised complex issues concerning the identity of emotional labourers, the ways in which emotional labour and emotion work is performed and how it is bought and sold in the market. In other words, themes pursued in this issue of the journal as well as in other forums relate in different ways to the *identity of emotional labourers as well as to the performance and commodification* of emotion work. Whilst not exclusive constructs, in that valuable research and theorising may well lie outside these domains, we suggest that they are useful integrative and organising principles for driving research. Emotional labour can be a powerful integrative concept that brings together these, as well as other, fruitful areas of study. One aim of the journal therefore is to further conceptual development through these broad but not exclusive themes.



2 R. Simpson and S. Smith

2 Identity

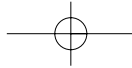
It is widely accepted that work plays a central role in the construction of individual identity. This is premised on the idea that individual identity can be viewed as a social product that is produced through narrative and performance. Following such assumptions, questions are raised concerning the congruence between the roles played inside and outside work or between different facets of identity. In this respect, work identity is an important arena for the constructions of masculinity and femininity. Emotional labour has often been constructed as either 'feminine' or 'masculine': caring work (teaching, nursing) has been associated with women while custodial and disciplinary work (prison work, policing) has been associated with men. The gendering of emotion work therefore has implications for the identity of emotional labourers. An understanding of the 'identity issues' around different types of emotional labour and emotion work in organisations as well as of the strategies that workers adopt to align such roles with their own experience can help to frame different accounts of these processes in contrasting employment contexts.

3 Performance

In management terms performance is usually taken to refer to the output and efficiency of a system. Of course systems of emotional labour can be thought of in this way too, measured by the 'throughput' of patients in a hospital waiting room or the time taken dealing with customers at a call centre. But these kinds of measurements may depend on another meaning of performance, which is more closely tied to social interaction, as *the adequate, above average or exceptional capacity for acting*. Unlike mental and manual labour, 'deep-acted' emotional labour can be especially resistant to centralisation, de-skilling and direct control. Rules for expressing sympathy or giving comfort are difficult to write and impose while scripted encounters may be easy to 'see through', especially in the context of non-standard encounters or enquiries. Attempts to bureaucratically control emotional labour for example by imposing limits on the length of specific encounters, can lead to contradictory pressures as workers manage the conflict between the demands of the organisation and of their 'clientele'. A fuller understanding of the function and enactment of 'feeling rules', of the different types of acting required for authentic emotion work production in terms of managing the emotions of self and of others, and the ways in which emotional labourers manage the potential conflict referred to above is necessary to appreciate the processes underlying emotional labour and emotion work performance.

4 Commodification

One critical aspect of research into emotional labour has focused on issues around alienation and subjugation. Theorising in this area has tended to rely on images of an authentic self, that capital subverts and then moulds in its own image. However, the frequent 'sanctification' of emotional labour and assumed preciousness of such work may not fully reflect the meanings ascribed to it by emotional labourers themselves or by recipients of such work – both of whom may prioritise a more instrumental approach. Similarly, the terms and assumptions on which emotional labour is bought and sold as well as the expectations and experiences of employees may variously support or refute the notion of emotional labour as an example of exploitation and control. The implications of commodification for the interface between employee, 'end user' and organisation is



Introduction

3

a further area of inquiry which can throw light on some of the moral and ethical considerations around such work.

5 Issue 1

These issues go to the heart of normative debates around the concept of emotion work and emotional labour and are reflected in various ways in this first issue of the *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*. The first three papers offer us valuable reflections on the development of research in the area including the interface between the public and private domain. Steve Fineman's paper: 'Appreciating emotion at work: paradigm tensions', gives a welcome overview of many of the key debates in the field as he explores core tensions within different traditions of emotion research. Arlie Hochschild, in her paper "'Rent a mom" and other services: markets, meanings and emotions', explores the impact of commercialisation on emotional life and how the terminology of the marketplace is translating into the household domain. Rob Briner's question: 'What can research into emotion at work tell us about researching well-being at work?', takes us to an examination of the interconnections between research into emotions and into well-being and a discussion of how they differ from and inform each other. Four further papers in this issue explore aspects of emotional labour in different work and employment settings and offer insights into the performance and some of the consequences of such work. Ann Ross-Smith, Colleen Chesterman and Margaret Peters ('"Watch out, here comes feeling!" Women executives and emotion work') explore the impact of the performance of emotional work by senior women for perceptions of leadership and for the reproduction of a stereotypical gender-based system of relations at executive levels in organisations. Helen Allan and Pam Smith ('The introduction of modern matrons and the relevance of emotional labour to understanding their roles: developing personal authority in clinical leadership') discuss the emotion management strategies modern matrons adopt in responding to the demands made upon them. Kathryn Waddington ('Behind closed doors – the role of gossip in the emotional labour of nursing work') presents the argument that gossip is a central feature of nurses' emotional labour and allows the expression of 'authentic' feelings about patients and colleagues. Finally, Alan Harrison, Ruth Simpson and Priya Kaler explore the significance of emotions such as feelings of justice, obligations and trust in the 'relational' component of the psychological contract of hotel and catering workers.

6 Final remarks

We would like to thank all our contributors for helping us to launch our first issue of the journal as well as the members of our editorial board. In partnership with Inderscience, a leading international publisher, the *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion* has been launched as a new outlet for the best research in emotions and organisations. While introducing a new journal into an already crowded academic community is not easy, we believe it has arrived at the right time. It will be contributing to the emergence of a distinct field within organisation and management research and one that well deserves a special outlet. Its success as a high-quality journal depends on your contributions! We welcome papers that are innovative, creative, adventurous and thought provoking. Through our reviewers we will provide fast and constructive feedback. With your help, we will make the *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion* an exciting new venture and a high-quality journal the area needs.