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# Review of *Emotions and Identity: Research on Emotion in Organizations*, Vol. 13 (2017), UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, by Wilfred J. Zerbe, Charmine E. J. Härtel, Neal M. Ashkanasy, & Laura Petitta

Tackling the question of who we are in the organization is not an easy task. Even though the answers may be changeable and dependent on the

myriad of situations encountered in the professional environment, the quest for them is definitely indispensable in the era of globalization and multiculturalism. It is, thus, never exhaustive to study and deepen the understanding of employees' identities and emotions, for they are in flux as individuals interact with each other in work-oriented settings. Studies into such interactions are offered in Volume 13 of *Research on Emotion in Organizations* entitled *Emotions and Identity.* The volume was published in 2017 under the editorship of four internationally recognized experts, namely Wilfred J. Zerbe, Charmine E. J. Härtel, Neal M. Ashkanasy and Laura Petitta, specializing in management, organizational studies, emotions, organizational psychology and organizational behaviour.

It is worth noting that the publishing series *Research on Emotion in Organizations* dates back to 2005. Over the span of 15 years, the authors have explored a wide spectrum of diverse theoretical paradigms, methodologies and topics revealing the pervasive and fundamental role of emotions in varied aspects of organizational life. In this context, Volume 13 dedicated to *Emotions and Identity* impresses with its unity of thematic scope as well as with the introduction of a leading theoretical concept of identity in its multifarious appearances.

The authors present mutual influences between identities and emotions, which are evoked against the backdrop of organizational changes, political incidents, plurality of corporate logistics, caring professions and people-oriented work environments, private sector, entrepreneurship, male-dominated global companies, workplace friendships and engagement, leadership development, and non-preferred work tasks. In this way, the publication offers multicultural insights of an interdisciplinary nature into organizational life and individuals enacting multi-level roles while being exposed to varied emotional stimuli in their professional environment.

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The texts in this volume form a balanced compilation as they come, on the one hand, from the 2016 *International Conference on Emotions and Organizational Life (EMONET X)* and, on the other hand, from invited authors. The contributions are divided into four main sections, i.e. 1: Identity, Anger, Diversity; 2: Public Sector Settings; 3: Gender, Emotions and Identity; 4: Emotions and Identification with Work.

**The first section** 'Identity, Anger and Diversity' comprises three chapters. It opens up with a text that will already motivate the reader through a very inspiring topic. The theoretical underpinnings of the study draw upon positive organizational identity, emotional identification and emotions. The authors focused on a rather challenging environment, i.e. an acquisition/ integration process between two companies and carried out a qualitative single case study comprising 32 semi-structured interviews. The new profile of the merged/ /integrated organization offered more extensive possibilities, such as "bigger budget and potential continuum and increase of success" which in turn functioned as triggers of positive emotions in the interviewees (Raitis et al., 2017, p. 11). The character of this particular acquisition/ /merger was described by the authors as "a friendly deal" and "the main motives were to ensure growth and internationalization," and "looking for complementary assets" (Raitis et al., 2017, p. 8), all of which certainly played a role in the type of emotions evoked. The value of the text is that it concentrates on identifying the triggers of positivity during major changes. This may help and guide managers to construct and develop stronger organizational identities and lead to employees' identification with the organization.

The second chapter, in turn, touches upon the issue of leadership effectiveness and the importance drawn to relations formed between leaders and their subordinates. The study involved 112 Malaysian citizens who responded to an online questionnaire concerning organizational

justice and were expected to react to a publicly-frowned-upon incident involving a high political figure and a government-owned company in Malaysia. It appeared that the perceptions of injustice exhibited among those surveyed were significantly related to anger they felt towards the leader. The anger, however, was found to be significantly related to their readiness to take up collective action. The authors have confirmed that emotions, especially anger and its identification may predict intentions to react collectively against perceived injustice. Very correctly, however, they also draw our attention to the fact that what was taken into consideration here was the intentions to partake in a collective action rather than real steps taken in an actual collective undertaking. What is more, we need to remember that injustice is perceived, and there are different mechanisms that steer it. Leaders' authenticity and transparency in communication, not only in this particular sociopolitical context but in any workplace, have definitely an important role to play.

In Chapter 3, what emerged was the significance of exploring how researchers or academics face institutional logics. In their qualitative study carried out at a Finnish university, the authors applied the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis for the purposes of portraying and investigating experiences of workers in the pluralistic context of a higher education institution. In this way, they also expanded the ongoing research on organizational institutionalism. The study was based on semi-structured interviews with individuals from diverse organizational levels. It is an interesting exploration into how such aspects as social position, disposition, emotions, and even apprehension concerning plurality influence one's reaction to changes in the institutional logics of the university.

**Section two** of the book consists of only two texts. Anger is the central focus of the fourth chapter. The author applies the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, the methodology which we already

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encountered in Chapter 3 to analyze the 'moral anger' of British nurses. The study offers an excellent review of a complex role of anger expression within organizations, typical triggers of workplace-related anger, and factors involved in suppression or expression of workplace anger. What is discussed here is the pro-social aspect of anger expression and, in particular, the case of the so-called 'moral anger' triggered while witnessing another employee's incompetence, invasion of client's autonomy or organizational malpractice. We can find a detailed description of beneficial consequences of this type of anger as well as the promotion of positive outcomes at individual and organizational levels leading to conflict resolution and problem solving. The chapter also offers a presentation of a qualitative study consisting of 6 interviews with nurses from different organizations and from diverse specialties. The text provides rich and in-depth insights into subjective emotional experiences disclosing the core aspect of being a nurse: care and compassion. Interestingly, this chapter may be re-read in the context of the next section, dealing with the role of gender in organizations, as nursing is still predominantly a female profession in the UK.

Chapter 5, however, underscores the problem of maintaining balance between emotional concern and detachment as professionals interact with their clients/patients. The 'Detached Concern' concept consists of two distinct components: concern – defined as empathetic compassion for the feelings of the client or sympathy, and detachment – defined as boundary management, striving to maintain an emotional distance from the client or patient and enabling professional service. The data was obtained from self-reports collected through a survey. The huge sample of 1,411 professionals interacting daily with their patients//clients included various human service professionals: teachers, nurses (including hospice nurses), physicians, social and kindergarten employees, psychologists, psycho- and physiotherapists. Moreover,

43 physicians agreed to distribute questionnaires among their patients, taking account of patients' perception of the degree of satisfaction concerning the physicians' care. As it has been established, the balanced workers, i.e. those with high scores on concern and detachment, reach lower burnout levels. It is worth noting that these human professionals also display "the most positive feelings of competence and successful achievement in their work with people" (Lampert, & Unterrainer, 2017, p. 127). Moreover, patients appeared to be more satisfied with the medical treatment offered by the physicians representing the balanced type. It is definitely a very valuable study which serves as a great example of how identification and work-related engagement may contribute to one's professional identity construction.

**The third section** deals with 'Gender, Emotions and Identity'. It consists of three chapters providing reports of empirical culturally-diverse quantitative studies dealing with identity aspects related to gender-roles and their relation to prudently chosen variables important in professional environments.

In chapter 6, the author scrutinizes the level of emotional intelligence of senior Indian managers in light of biological sex and gender-roles, measured by the classical Bem Sex-Role Inventory. Even though the data shows that emotional intelligence does not differ between men and women, interesting differences are found between people characterized by diverse types of gender-roles, with especially intriguing results of androgynous managers (people scoring high on both masculinity and femininity scales of stereotypical gender-roles). This chapter is an important paper addressing the issue of sex stereotypes which still play a role in decision-making processes in organizations.

The next chapter also addresses the issue of sex-roles, and it offers an exploration into the sense of success in business amongst Greek entrepreneurs. The data shows that the higher the results on

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femininity and/or masculinity scales were, the higher the sense of success in business of the respondents was. The same results concerned both men and women. It is a pity, however, that no statistical analyses were carried out for the androgynous type of sex-roles, as the results suggest that the high sense of success might be specifically related to this category. On the other hand, surprisingly, the authors include not only stereotypically masculine perspective but also feminine values while defining the concept of 'subjective entrepreneurial success'. They characterize success not exclusively in terms of objective factors (e.g. financial indicators), but they also stress the role of personal subjective factors (fulfilment, community impact, anticipated feeling while imagining the final success in business).

What we consider as being of particular value are the insights found in the final chapter of the 'Gender Section'. The authors of the chapter 8 offer a very different methodology and address the sensitive issue of prejudice and discrimination in a male-dominated workforce. Interestingly, this study is not focused on a particular culture but probes data from a global male-dominated industry (consulting, engineering, technologies, information systems etc.). The strong point of this research consists in the use of an 'implicit measurement test', which is a more laborious method to tackle prejudice than self-report inventories; this is due to the fact that direct questions concerning prejudice do not provide reliable data as the respondents tend to manipulate the results by providing more socially appropriate answers. The selected tool requires participants to judge pairs of stimuli: pictures (e.g. man, woman) and words (e.g. good, bad). The indirect indicator of prejudice is the reaction time to such pairs. People who attribute negative values to women will have shorter reaction times for pairs comprising female-negative associations as compared to the female-positive ones. The results suggest that in male-dominated professions women, and more precisely

individuals self-categorizing as females, have prejudice toward their own gender much more frequently than men or individuals with male self-categorization toward their gender. Here, however, the authors left us with an unsatisfied need to have a more precise description of the operationalization of the self-categorization variable. This particular text seems to be noteworthy as it not only answers theoretical questions but – through a profound analysis of interrelations between emotions (anger and contempt), self-concepts and attitudes – might also shed some light on the way to prevent or better manage discrimination in the workplace.

**The fourth section** of the volume entitled 'Emotions and Identification with Work', encompassing three chapters, is perhaps the most diverse one. The ninth chapter exemplifies the prominence of friendship in the professional setting and its function in the formation of self-identity. It is mainly a theoretical analysis, illustrated by a short description of a case study of friendship in the workplace as experienced by a female bank personal director in the UK. The value of this study lies in the fact that, similarly to one of the chapters of the Gender Section, it focuses on stereotypically feminine values and brings into light a broader range of sources of subjective sense of professional success and fulfilment. The paper offers a perspective of viewing employees as humans and not only in terms of their productivity.

The tenth chapter is an applied study of educational practices promoting leadership skills in higher education. Rooted in the 'Intentional Change Theory' and offering a good review of literature, it is directed toward practical aims. An academic center in Italy developed a program to promote and support emotional, social and cognitive skills relevant for leadership in students. On the way to building their self-awareness and identity, the students are trained in basic skills of emotional intelligence: to recognize, express and regulate their emotions, as well as to discern

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and understand the emotions of other people. The study provides quantitative data concerning two groups envisaging entrepreneurial or managerial career paths. Here, a deeper evaluation of the efficacy of the educational program in question would have helped the clarity of the paper. Nevertheless, the study deserves recognition as it undertakes the issue of leadership formation relatively early in life.

The last chapter of the book, the eleventh one, is the only one which is purely theoretical. It provides a deep study of the phenomena called 'non-preferred work tasks' and their relationship with emotions and strategies aimed to preserve resources while dealing with work stresses. It is an excellent preliminary analysis and a first step to develop, as mentioned in the conclusions, an instrument to measure subjective perceptions of non-preferred work tasks and their impact on employees' well-being and performance. The authors offer a definition of non-preferred work task in terms of individually perceived lack of enjoyment derived from discrete tasks among those pertaining to one's job role. In order to look at the problem from diverse perspectives, they analyze examples from various professions and roles, including academics. The description is grounded in 'Conservation of Resources Theory', and a good review of empirical evidence is provided. The authors, quite convincingly, expect that employees who frequently deal with non-preferred work tasks are less willing to identify with their work and to demonstrate 'extra-role engagement', i.e. volunteering to carry out activities that are not formally required.

Fundamentally, the collection of papers published in the Volume 13 of *Research on Emotion in Organizations* opens up fresh perspectives on the interplay of a range of emotions and diverse aspects of identities in heterogeneous organizational and cultural settings. Emotions and Identity consists of a collection of works of various authors applying diverse methodologies, grounding their analysis in distinct theoretical

backgrounds. Naturally, this constitutes a challenge for readers who are required to adapt to different styles of narration from paper to paper. However, we believe that the strong point of the collection lies in such diversity. We are sure that reflections evoked after reading the volume will offer inspiration for researchers and interesting insights for practitioners aiming to induce positive changes in their organizations.

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