

# 1. Theoretical advances around social functions of emotion and talking about emotion at work

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## INTRODUCTION

Our aim in this book is to consider workplace emotion from a social functional perspective (Keltner and Gross, 1999; Keltner and Haidt, 1999; van Kleef, 2017) in relation to societal “talk about emotion” (see Solomon, 2003). Social functional accounts differentiate discrete emotions and provide a theoretical understanding of their consequences for goal-directed action. They are intended to explain behavior important to social relationships and ongoing interactions (Keltner and Gross, 1999). This framework has the benefit of examining what emotions *do* in social interaction rather than what they *are* (van Kleef, 2017). In contrast, the “talk about emotion” focuses on varying language practices (e.g., word choice, narratives and metaphors) and subsequent interpretations regarding emotions across cultures,<sup>1</sup> and, in turn, how these perceptions influence the causes, expressions, and consequences of emotions (Solomon, 2003). Solomon elaborates on this juxtaposition between the functional emotion, and the talk about it, using anger as an example:

“Both are interpretations, and the same concepts often enter into the structure of each. Being angry [i.e., the emotion] may be one thing, questioning the legitimacy of one’s anger [i.e., the talk about it], something else. But crucial concepts (e.g., of legitimacy, blame or responsibility) are just as much part of the anger as they are part of the questioning.” (p. 87)<sup>2</sup>

He argues further that, in the absence of “righteous” (or useful) anger, it would be vain to discuss anger’s legitimacy and/or value in society.

Contrasting social functional accounts of emotion and how society talks about these emotions can advance theoretical conversations around

how they can be at odds with, as well as reinforce each other in organizations. Given Solomon's perspective, anger provides an excellent illustration of the theoretical and practical ramifications for emotion research if the emotion *per se* and the talk about it are at odds. For example, since a key social function of anger is to redress injustice (Keltner and Gross, 1999; Lindebaum and Geddes, 2016b), promoting "negative" talk about it (e.g., calling it a "negative emotion" in scholarship or "unacceptable" at work) can undermine its beneficial role in promoting necessary social change (for background and examples, see Geddes et al., 2018; Geddes and Callister, 2007; Lindebaum and Geddes, 2016b). Needless to say, although anger is not useful all the time for all people in all situations, a world without moral anger (appropriately expressed), for instance, lacks the corrective energy to restore justice and fairness in all walks of life – including work (Lindebaum and Gabriel, 2016).

The emotion of anger, however, is not an isolated case where the emotion and the talk about it can be at odds, as the following chapters will demonstrate. Another example comes from Cynthia Fisher's (2018) erudite chapter on boredom included in this book. She posits that "the function of the emotion of boredom is to stimulate exploration and the pursuit of new and more rewarding opportunities". Nevertheless, in an era of relentless talk about self-optimization at work and beyond (Spicer and Cederström, 2017), when corporations consider casual remarks at work "time theft" (Anderson, 2017, p. 1), there are potentially real consequences for workers confiding in co-workers that they are "bored". As Fisher (2018) states, "dedicated professionals in enriched jobs would not normally give voice to their feelings of boredom, particularly if these feelings conflicted with organizational or professional discourses about the nature of the work and the passion that should be felt toward it".

This book also opens debate around how social functions of the emotion and our talk about it can be mutually reinforcing. A classic example of this pairing is found with the emotion of happiness. Stearns's (2018) insightful chapter outlines the complicated evolution of happiness at work, the current emphasis on employee wellbeing, and how happiness dominates efforts behind employee engagement and satisfaction. Perhaps less intuitive, and requiring more "boundary conditions", is talk reinforcing emotions traditionally viewed as unwanted. As lucidly exemplified in the chapter on shame by Kiffin-Petersen (2018), in order for the talk about emotion to be able to reinforce its social function, it is necessary to break the taboo of *not talking* about the emotion. She argues that the taboo of talking about shame is so distinct, that we sometimes behave as if this emotion did not exist. But whether we *ought* to talk

about shame so that its social functions are more likely to be fulfilled depends heavily on the shame-eliciting event. For instance, if a moral transgression occurred at work (e.g., lying to colleagues who trusted the transgressor), then appeasing efforts may entail a sincere apology that could – if credible and accepted – restore trust in the relationships. In such cases, talking about experienced shame can heal one’s own rumination about the transgression and repair valued work relationships.

Beyond these examples of the talk about emotion and its social functions in society being either at odds or mutually reinforcing, there are also circumstances when both processes can operate simultaneously. Such is the case with *schadenfreude* as illustrated in the thought-provoking chapter by Harvey and Dasborough (2018). *Schadenfreude* is commonly kept private, and “civil” society generally frowns upon anyone demonstrating pleasure from another’s downfall. The reason for this is partly rooted in *schadenfreude*’s association with the experience of shame and guilt, as well as perceptions that its expression is unkind and cruel. However, expressing the emotion among co-workers can indicate the existence of performance norms and consequences that are likely if the behavior in question violates shared views of acceptable behavior. *Schadenfreude* can also play an important role in socializing workers to be more ethical in their work behaviors. In an anticipatory sense, new employees learn to avoid becoming the target of *schadenfreude* by acting in an ethically appropriate manner and conforming to normative standards of behavior in that workplace. Thus, *schadenfreude*, as Harvey and Dasborough (2018) note, serves social functions such as bonding, socialization and self-image protection, despite “individuals [being] often reluctant to acknowledge [it] – sometimes even to themselves”. Bearing in mind multiple caveats, the talk about *schadenfreude* can both be at odds with as well as reinforce valued social functions. Further to this, there may be cases when particular emotions (e.g., hubristic pride, see Hayward et al., 2018) are less “functional” and more “dysfunctional” and a manifestation of problematic individual dispositions. In such a case, it is not whether or not the function of an emotion can be at odds with or reinforces social functions of emotions. Instead, the talk about the emotion reinforces its social undesirability.

Taken together, our dual focus emphasized in the following chapters help “problematize” portions of current emotion research. While we reiterate the variety of interactions between social function of emotions and how we talk about them, it strikes us as central to ponder if our talk about emotion potentially weakens and overrides the emotion’s social functions?<sup>3</sup> If this is the case, a fundamental re-orientation in current theorizing around social functions of discrete emotion may be required.

This re-orientation would acknowledge that the talk about emotion can potentially inhibit these functions, given that what they produce in ongoing social interactions at work are malleable, not fixed. Since functions can be affected by the talk about emotion (as we discuss later in the section “the talk about emotion”), it may shift the way we appraise emotion. In other words, since the talk about emotion can fluctuate across different periods of time and locales, if appraisals change, so do subsequent cognitive processes and related affective, physiological and behavioral responses (Scherer et al., 2001). Thus, the entire causal chain is altered, and a different course of action is enabled, or a different outcome might be observed, as studies on different elicitors for sadness (Gray et al., 2011) or anger (Lindebaum and Gabriel, 2016; Lindebaum and Geddes, 2016b) have shown.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, what if the social function of an emotion and the way we talk about it can be mutually reinforcing, or be present simultaneously? What finer theoretical nuances and contours might emerge as a result of these scenarios, especially in terms of how boundary conditions may sway theorizing among them? How might this impact an individual’s emotional experience and collective emotion episodes at work? Might this affect how management engages in and views others’ emotional expression at work? These are some guiding questions that inspired this collection of chapters. We believe that a paucity of detailed attention to this line of inquiry in psychological and management studies (and beyond) limits theoretical, empirical, and practical progress, especially in relation to better understanding social interactions in and around work. In the following section, we elaborate on our two intersecting constructs to help address some of these concerns and lay the groundwork for our featured chapters.

## THE EMOTION AND ITS SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Theoretically, we situate our work alongside a significant body of research interested in the social functions of emotion (Dasborough and Harvey, 2016; Keltner and Kring, 1998; van Kleef, 2017). Simply, social functional accounts help circumvent definitional ambiguities that arise vis-à-vis diverging ontological and epistemological assumptions about the question “what is an emotion?” (contrast e.g., Ashkanasy, 2003; Elfenbein, 2007; Frijda, 1986; James, 1884; Parrott and Harré, 1996; Solomon, 2003; Zeelenberg et al., 2008).<sup>5</sup> Broadly, functions are recognized in etiological accounts of the genesis and development of a behavior, trait or system (Wright, 1973). Seen in this way, functions

“refer to the history of a behaviour, trait, or system, as well as its regular consequences that benefit the organism, or ... the system in which the trait, behaviour, or system is contained” (Keltner and Gross, 1999, p. 469). More specifically, functional accounts differentiate discrete emotions in relation to consequences of goal-directed behavior, and assert that they can help solve problems important to social relationships and ongoing interactions (Keltner and Gross, 1999). The social functional perspective suggests that responses linked to “each discrete emotion is theorized to address the adaptive problem that gave rise to that emotion” (Lench et al., 2015, p. 91). Others elaborate on this point by arguing that evolutionary perspectives define emotions in terms of their genesis. As Nesse and Ellsworth (2009) note:

“Emotions are modes of functioning, shaped by natural selection, that coordinate physiological, cognitive, motivational, behavioral, and subjective responses in patterns that increase the ability to meet the adaptive challenges of situations that have recurred over evolutionary time ... they are adaptations that are useful only in certain situations.” (p. 129)

In other words, a discrete emotion evolved to help us (either as individuals or collectives) respond adaptively to social opportunities and challenges in ways that often, though not always, benefit us (see also Connelly and Turner, 2018).

An important clarification on the detail of “goal-directed” behaviors is that these are far more than simply purporting to decide on a goal and then express an emotion to achieve it (such as generating enthusiasm to improve relationships among team members). Goals, crucially, are also involved in our reactions to external events. So while it may seem counter-intuitive to suggest that we experience, for instance, shame or guilt because it has been our goal to do so, a closer look at the socio-functional emotion literature helps resolve this conundrum. Solomon (1993) insists that “emotions are judgments” and constitute “ways of seeing and engaging with the world”, our ways of “being tuned” into the world (pp. viii–ix). He also argues that every emotion is a strategy, “a purposive attempt to structure our world in such a way as to *maximize our sense of personal dignity and self-esteem*” (p. xviii, italics added). The emphasis in the quote indicates the presence of a goal. If we turn to social functional accounts of shame, for instance, we can see that the experience of shame is far more than a “reaction”. Rather, felt shame is related to negative self-evaluations based upon actual or anticipated depreciation by valued others due to a violation of standards (Creed et al., 2014). We may have transgressed important moral principles held

dear by co-workers. As a result, we can experience shame as self-accusation, and perhaps open up and confess to restore a damaged personal relationship with someone close to us (Solomon, 1993). From a social functional perspective, shame motivates behaviors that help preserve “positive” self-views (de Hooge et al., 2010), including approach or reparation behaviors like apologies. Thus, “an unpleasant emotion may be desirable if it promotes goal pursuit, despite the fact that it involves displeasure, which itself is undesirable” (Tamir et al., 2016, p. 68).

## THE TALK ABOUT EMOTION

We build on previous work (Lindebaum, 2017; Lindebaum and Geddes, 2016a) emphasizing that language use (e.g., metaphors) and emotionologies influence how we talk about emotion. Solomon insists on the pervasive nature of metaphors across cultures, for example, with any vocabulary of physiological self-references. In this regard, Solomon invokes several common examples, such as being “struck by jealousy”, “plagued by remorse”, “paralyzed by fear” (2003, p. 3) and anger’s “hydraulic” metaphor of “blowing one’s top” (see Perez and Lench, 2018 for more examples). But why exactly do metaphors matter theoretically and practically in the context of talking about emotion? Lakoff and Johnson (2006, p. 112) offer some light and astutely point out:

“Metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecy.”

Metaphors are so pervasive in society they can dominate our thinking about these feelings even though, as cultural artifacts, they can be invalid representations and systematically mislead attempts to understand our own and others’ emotions.

Inherently influential for societal metaphors and other forms of emotion “talk” are emotionologies, or what Stearns and Stearns (1985) refer to as “the attitudes or standards that a society ... maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression; ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct” (p. 813). Fineman (2008) adds that they influence how we perceive the appropriateness of both experiencing and expressing emotions in the self and others. The Dual Threshold Model (DTM) of emotion (Geddes and Callister, 2007) further illustrates the varied and changeable cultural standards regarding

emotional expression tendencies among organizational members. Favorable outcomes from emotion expression at work, they argue, are most likely with emotion displayed in a manner deemed appropriate for the social context and/or circumstances. Using DTM terminology, the emotion remains in the “space between” the “expression and impropriety thresholds” or what Fineman (1993) calls the “zone of expressive tolerance”. Here displayed emotion may promote dialogue and reactions that can benefit organizations and their members.

Emotionologies as a phenomenon have received only embryonic attention in management and organization studies. Nevertheless, Fineman (1993) argues that emotionologies are generated and reproduced through a variety of discursive and organizational practices, with some enjoying greater resilience and visibility compared to others. Yet, their pervasive influence in shaping everyday emotion and behavior is tangible:

“We inherit emotionologies that soon appear natural and typically go unchallenged. They will inform how we should feel, and express our feelings, about ourselves (‘happy,’ ‘positive,’ ‘fine’) as well as how to feel about others – such as a love of winners, disgust for muggers, cynicism about politicians, and ambivalence towards teenagers. They shape and underpin the deference patterns of particular social encounters – what to feel or reveal at weddings, funerals, dinner parties, places of worship, or before a judge.” (Fineman, 2008, p. 2)<sup>6</sup>

Emotionologies develop both over time and locale to define emotional standards for various categories of people (see Stearns and Stearns, 1985), thus reflecting both a chronological and geographical dimension. In terms of the chronological dimension, Stearns and Stearns (1985) note that emotionologies are liable to change over time for several reasons, including the media, advertising, popular culture, religious organizations, political parties, social movements and activist groups (Fineman, 2008). In terms of the geographical dimension, recent studies (Tamir et al., 2016) examined samples from eight distinct regions<sup>7</sup> to test the hypothesis that, across cultures, individuals desire emotions that are consistent with their core values. Findings suggest that individuals endorsing values of self-transcendence (e.g., benevolence) sought to feel more compassion, whereas individuals who endorsed values of self-enhancement (e.g., power) wanted to feel more pride and anger. Further to this, individuals appreciating openness to change (e.g., self-direction) wanted to feel more excitement and interest, while individuals who endorsed values of conservation (e.g., tradition) wanted to feel more calmness and less fear (Tamir et al., 2016). Therefore, Tamir and her colleagues (2016) argue



that different cultures influence and reflect different individual values regarding the desirability of experiencing particular emotions.

Emotionologies both tell us much about the forces of social change and contribute to (or inhibit) these over time and space. In the context of work, attitudes toward emotion provide the expectations of emotional expression in relation to specific issues, subjects, genders, or occupational groups and hierarchies. Crucially, they also provide varying standards of “appropriate” emotional expressions for various professions such as doctors, social workers or service workers (see e.g., Fineman, 2010; McMurray and Ward, 2014; van Maanen and Kunda, 1989), which is why this is so central in the context of this book. Emotionologies shape, maintain and challenge standards of emotional expressions within organizations and professions. Therefore, emotionologies represent a critical cultural variable (Stearns and Stearns, 1985) that has bearing upon the formation of individual attitudes and values (Tamir et al., 2016) and can help explain why social functions of emotions can be at odds with how we currently talk about them (Lindebaum, 2017).

An important caveat must be emphasized in summary. Although emotionologies along with metaphors and other language use have considerable explanatory power in shaping how individuals perceive the expression of emotion by others, they can also indicate a lack of sophistication from the point-of-view of established theoretical frameworks. That is, while narratives around emotions are real, personal, and meaningful to us, they can nevertheless be misleading. As noted earlier, to label anger as a “negative emotion” may lead scholars and practitioners to pursue efforts meant to eliminate this feeling (and, particularly, its expression) from work, preventing management from learning about upset employees and damaging workplace situations (Geddes et al., 2018). They also can prompt individuals to make inaccurate attributions about the causes and consequences of emotions experienced and expressed by others especially. More precisely, this “talk about emotion” (internal or interpersonal) can potentially introduce attribution errors such as attributing the display of emotion to an expresser’s personality trait, rather than recognizing external, situational factors triggering that emotion. Having clarified this important caveat, we offer an overview of the chapters below.

## OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In this section, we offer a brief overview about the aims and content of each chapter. As we think all discrete emotions contribute to our



understanding of how people behave, respond, and talk in organizations, we arranged chapters in alphabetical order by discrete emotion.

The prevalence of workplace *anger* has prompted significant exploration of this complex emotion which has both positive and negative outcomes at work. Authors Moura, Jordan, and Troth (2018) conducted interviews focusing on anger targets and witnesses to better understand how people make sense of a colleague's anger display (i.e., the "talk" about the perceived cause of another's anger) and how that influenced their own emotion regulation strategies in response (a social functional response). Moura and her colleagues note that the frequency of anger expression and various attributions, including locus of control (internal vs. external), stability and controllability behind another's anger expression helped explain varying responses of study interviewees. Key also was how these anger observers judged the appropriateness of the anger display in light of organizational norms of emotion expression – with findings that those in managerial positions were held to a higher standard of behavior regarding anger expressions. They also note that the emotion management strategies practiced by anger targets included both expressing and suppressing their own emotions (e.g., anger, fear, surprise) to better control the situation – especially if they felt threatened by these expressions. Based on these data, Moura and her colleagues show how the talk about emotion varies depending on who is being talked about, but this talk helps produce a functional outcome.

Perez and Lench (2018) examined an emotion that is not often discussed in the literature in the context of work, *awe*. They define awe as an emotion that occurs when people are in the presence of something extraordinary and beyond their typical experiences. Significantly, they differentiate awe from other "positive" emotions (such as joy) suggesting that awe introduces a "small self" which promotes unique benefits around connection with others. They note that something that does not happen with awe, frankly, is talk about it. Generally, they describe the experience of awe as a private experience that is not often shared. The central reason for this is, they propose, that talking about awe may limit the ability to experience the benefits of the experience. In essence, awe in the chapter is described as an existential activity that is diminished by overthinking the experience. Examining their chapter from a social functional perspective, however, it is clear that awe does have beneficial effects in terms of enabling individuals to shift focus to big picture perspectives and to consider others and, therefore, it is linked to prosocial behaviors, including more creativity.

Once a neglected topic, over the last five years *boredom* has emerged in scholarship with a significant number of articles, particularly in

psychology. Fisher (2018) notes, however, that a lot of this research is not specific to the work context. She explains that boredom has been explored as a trait (boredom susceptibility) and a state (emotion). Interestingly, boredom can manifest with low arousal levels (resignation) to high levels (restlessness and agitation). She argues that as a state, boredom has all the attributes of a unique, discrete emotion. Further, she noted that there is often a lack of talk during the experience of boredom. Quite often it is a very personal experience; thus, the presence of others may indeed relieve boredom. From a social functional perspective, Fisher notes that boredom can become dangerous and isolating, with people who talk about boredom appearing childish or uncreative. As a result, she discusses different types of boredom, such as indifferent, calibrating, searching, reactant, and apathetic boredom, indicating how these may affect others' perceptions of boredom. Finally, Fisher provides excellent examples of how the social functional processes linked to some emotions, including boredom, often discourage talk.

In their chapter on *envy*, Smith, Wingenbach and Smith (2018) describe envy as “a painful recognition of inferiority in reaction to an unflattering social comparison”. As a consequence, feelings of envy can serve as an adaptive response to perceived disadvantage and can inspire individuals to find ways to “close the gap” between themselves and the envied person. Unfortunately for some, this is done by “tearing down” the other in an effort to feel better about themselves. Classical views of envy often focus on this “malicious” form, associated with hostility toward the more successful individual. Although the envying person may be aware their feelings are not completely legitimate, he or she wants to be justified in feeling negatively toward another’s success. In contrast, envy in its “benign” form, although still an unpleasant state, is without hostility toward the other and instead reflects a sense of admiration and longing. As a result, envy can be the impetuous for significant efforts toward self-improvement and performance enhancement as the means to close the social comparison gap. Using the tragic case of Harvard student Sinedu Tadesse, the authors frame their argument beyond university cultures to illustrate how organizational talk about personal deservingness and control of individual achievements can generate envy of either the benign or the malicious variety.

*Fear* is given insightful scrutiny in the chapter by Connelly and Turner (2018). Their basic argument suggests that while fear’s adaptiveness from an evolutionary perspective is well-documented (i.e., escaping threats), individuals are often reluctant to talk about it at work to avoid being perceived as weak or vulnerable. The authors offer an overview on the causes and consequences of fear, noting that “the functional or adaptive

nature of fear has not been examined with respect to the workplace ... [and] ... a need for a more nuanced and balanced narrative regarding fear at work, one that is informed by theory and data". A salient feature of their chapter is that it offers dual perspectives on fear at work, considering organizational research on functional and dysfunctional experiences and outcomes associated with this emotion across levels of analysis. Importantly, both functional and dysfunctional experiences and outcomes are examined vis-à-vis experiencing fear in oneself, observing fear in others, and having a climate of fear at work. The chapter closes by offering both fruitful implications for future research, as well as hands-on practical strategies across levels of analysis regarding how to manage fear at work so as to avoid undesirable consequences.

In his chapter on *happiness*, Stearns (2018) provides a fascinating historical insight into the way our talk about happiness has changed over time. Using the innovative method of Google Ngram, Stearns notes that the talk about happiness has changed significantly over time. By examining the mention of happiness in literature, Stearns argues that a discussion of happiness was missing from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writings about work, where the focus was on work ethic and personal advancement. He argues that by the early twentieth century, the concept of happiness emerged in the literature, but was hidden by a focus on satisfaction. Finally, he reveals that the modern focus on well-being is another way in which the talk about happiness has changed over time. The conclusion one can draw from this is the way in which talk about emotion varies over time and the focus of that talk can change focus to meet social norms. This is in contrast to social function accounts of emotion, which generally see emotional goals as being relatively stable over history. Stearns provides useful insight into the differences between these two ways of considering emotion.

*Pride* is considered one of the most impactful, positive emotions at work. However, Hayward, Ashkanasy and Baron (2018) argue that the emotion emerges in two distinctive forms – authentic and hubristic, both reflecting a direct emotional response to success. Authentic pride is viewed as emerging from concrete performance achievements based on one's own efforts. Consequently, it functions to promote beneficial work behaviours and attitudes, including confidence and self-esteem, as individuals attribute their success to hard work and perseverance. In contrast, hubristic pride emerges when individuals over-attribute personal or organizational achievements to their own stable, internal characteristics such as their personality and charisma. In other words, success came because of "who they are" rather than "what they did". Such feelings tend to promote "arrogance, overconfidence, aggression, and hostility"

and can also be “powerfully socially dysfunctional and self-destructive”. In this view, the emotion of authentic pride and the talk about it mutually reinforce each other, with the emotion seen as a positive condition promoting favourable outcomes to individuals and their organizations. In contrast, hubristic pride appears at odds with what we consider beneficial social functions, which in turn generates talk that warns against that particular form of pride, given it may be unwarranted and, ultimately, destructive.

In her chapter on *sadness*, Tyran (2018) starts with a description of the Pixar film *Inside Out* which specifically exemplifies the difference between talk about emotions and the social functional nature of emotions. Tyran notes that sadness impacts individual and organizational outcomes and affects the social aspects of an organization. She notes that sadness is differentiated from other related emotions (e.g., melancholy, unhappiness, grief, depression and hopelessness) by the sense of irrevocable loss associated with sadness. In terms of how we talk about emotions, the chapter explores issues around others’ responses to sadness at work, noting that the collective experience of sadness in the workplace may lead to more cohesion and solidarity after tragedy. Indeed, this chapter helps demonstrate that talk and social functions of emotion at work can often be linked symbiotically. She notes that in organizations, leaders have a responsibility to address the talk, and particularly with collective sadness, leaders have a responsibility to facilitate healing and renewal. She argues from a social functional perspective that caring is a key component of authentic leadership and being caring assists employees to cope with sadness. Tyran shows that sadness as an emotion has significant social functional elements that are often promoted by talking about it.

Discussing *schadenfreude*, Harvey and Dasborough (2018) identify bonding, socialization and self-image protection as social functions of *schadenfreude*. One argument recognizes that *schadenfreude* is commonly kept private. However, its expression can help socialize workers into particular directions by providing valuable information for observers, reinforcing organizational norms. That is, *schadenfreude* signals the presence of ethical norms for workers so that they grasp colleagues will take pleasure in their downfall if the behavior in question violates shared views of moral behavior or performance standards. Workers thus fear becoming the target of *schadenfreude*, rather than sympathy. However, the authors also argue that the experience and expression of *schadenfreude* can have other effects. They can reflect (and, thus, be thwarted by) observer perceptions of so-called “dark” personality traits in the expresser. If this occurs, observers are more likely to attribute a lack of

empathy on the part of the expresser for those individuals who are the target of *schadenfreude*. Thus, the authors argue that *schadenfreude* is a particularly sinister threat to social relationships, “because the experience of this positive emotion requires the suffering of another”. Overall, talking about *schadenfreude* can have upsides as well as downsides, depending on how it is perceived by others.

*Shame* is the focus of the chapter by Kiffin-Petersen (2018), which aims to better understand its function in interpersonal relationships at work. She argues that shame evolved to increase an individual’s chances of acceptance in social groups by signaling to them when they have violated the group’s moral standards or norms. Appeasement is thus both a function and outcome of shame. In discussing how shame is “talked about”, she acknowledges that emotions have biological roots. Yet, we also internalize societal expectations about how shame should be expressed, which then shapes how we respond to that emotion. Thus, the talk about shame influences workers’ appraisals of shame-inducing events and how they respond. She argues that the talk about shame can reinforce its social function as soon as we drop the taboo of not talking about shame and appreciate that it can be “adaptive if it ultimately increases inclusivity into a social grouping”. By contrast, observers who respond with negative “talk” in the workplace can further stigmatize shame, and this can encourage maladaptive responses. Also, once moral imperatives are substituted by economic ones, the “talk about”, or use of, shame by line managers to signal poor performance enables organizations to manipulate workers into exerting greater effort that benefits the organization economically, but at the expense of workers’ health.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND LOOKING AHEAD

The collective contribution of all chapters in this book resides in the hitherto under-explored argument that the talk about emotion – in the form of metaphors and emotionologies – can shape emotion-eliciting events across time and location. In shaping emotion-eliciting events, the talk about emotion can alter the entire emotion chain; from the experiential to physiological to behavioral of employees. This, in turn, can imply that the social function of emotion and the talk about emotion can sometimes mutually reinforce each other, while at other times, remain at odds. When the talk is at odds with the social function of emotions, the foundation for this contention is often organizational control (Connelly and Turner, 2018; Harvey and Dasborough, 2018; Lindebaum and

Courpasson, 2017; Scheff, 1988). In other circumstances, as the chapters in this volume demonstrate, they can be present simultaneously. This in itself raises intriguing questions about deeper causes as to if two opposing (some would say paradoxical) tendencies can share a common cause? Alternatively, are there multiple causalities at play? Exploring answers to these questions will help us characterize, examine, and perhaps resolve these different combinations, as well as influence future emotion research and how we view and respond to emotion at work.

In terms of future research, we already suggested that emotionologies are liable to change over time due to, for instance, the influence of the media, advertising, popular culture, religious ideologies, political ideologies, social movements, as well as practices in the workplace. Given these vested interest groups, it is likely that emotionologies are sometimes orchestrated or manipulated to serve political purposes. For instance, Rogers (1977) argues that politics are the manipulation of power and control which emerges as strategies and tactics designed to control the thoughts, emotions and behavior of oneself or other people. This definition clearly reflects a social functional view of emotions. As the chapters in this edited volume show, several emotions (either explicitly or implicitly) can be used in the context of work to impose emotional and behavioral control – often in the sense of anticipatory emotion (Harvey and Dasborough, 2018).

To render the argument around the control and politics of emotionologies more visible for the purpose of our book, turning to studies on organizational climate may prove insightful. Organizational climate indicates shared perceptions of the existence and meaning of organizational practices, policies, and procedures in addition to what behavior is expected and rewarded (Schneider et al., 2013). Again, many emotions examined in this book qualify for closer theoretical and empirical scrutiny in the context of organizational climate. For instance, one apparent contender here is fear. Prior work suggests that within organizations, a climate of fear can emerge as a result of managerial practice, such that manager “talk” can lead to fear of repercussion or punishments for mistakes, and a feeling that it may not be advisable to err or speak up concerning those errors or other issues at work, including issues of a sensitive nature. Seen in this light, a climate of fear at work is based on shared perceptions of what to do and what not to do given a range of possible (punitive) consequences (see also chapters by Connelly and Turner, 2018; and Harvey and Dasborough, 2018). Thus, a climate of fear is one mechanism through which organizational control can be exercised, at least in the short-term. Future research could examine the longevity of

organizations, together with a range of key indicators (e.g., staff well-being, turnover, performance, profits etc.) vis-à-vis any imposition of fear climates at work, and fluctuations thereof over time. Again, it would be erroneous to presume that a better understanding of the causes and consequences of organizational climate can only be further illuminated through the emotion of fear. Emotions, like *schadenfreude*, happiness, anger, or shame to name a few, have all been shown in prior studies to be part and parcel of how employees will be socialized into their work roles (Dasborough and Harvey, 2016; Lindebaum, 2017; Sutton, 1991).

Finally, it should be noted there is a superordinate phenomenon located above organizational climate and associated socialization practices. Since this book advances emotion theory in the context of work, we see considerable merit in casting the net a little wider to better understand how socio-economic conditions of the present day influence the talk about emotion at work. Since social-economic conditions have long been recognized to influence what kinds of emotions to display at work (Fromm, 1941/2011; Illouz, 2007), it will be intriguing to ask who has the power to construct, modify or suppress metaphors and emotionologies, for what purpose, and to whose benefit, to revert back to Rogers's quote. Consistent with our book's main theme, the question remains – whether, to what extent, and/or how socio-economic conditions can serve as an enabler or inhibitor for the social function of emotion and the talk about it to be at odds, reinforce each other, or perhaps occur simultaneously. But to explore this question, and the questions we raised above, will be the task of future research. To conclude, then, it is our humble hope that this book ignites imagination for creative, if perhaps unorthodox, future theorizing and empirical efforts on this important yet under-explored topic.

## NOTES

1. Even within one culture, the talk about emotion can vary over time, suggesting that there also is a chronological element to be considered (see Lindebaum, 2017).
2. We argue that some of this “talk” can be an internal dialogue (i.e., “how dare you, we don't act that way!”), and may or may not be expressed. While Solomon's example may indicate an intra-individual phenomenon (i.e., an “internal conversation”), our position is that this practice may be the product of social programming. In other words, this kind of programming shapes emotion triggers, and how emotion is expressed or suppressed vis-à-vis social norms governing the appropriateness of experiencing and expressing emotion in particular situations. Further, we recognise that psychologists might discern conceptual similarities between the arguments we present here and the central tenets of attribution theory. While we offer occasional references to “attributions”, given our focus on how we “talk about” emotion, it is germane to remain faithful to a predominantly sociological perspective.



3. We consider this an intriguing avenue for future research to rigorously design and conduct empirical studies that put these ideas to the test.
4. Studies involving four laboratory sessions of guided practice also confirm this effect. It was found, *inter alia*, that changing initial appraisals through cognitive re-appraisal (i.e., distancing and reinterpretation) lead to a reduction over time in negative affect (for both distancing and reinterpretation) and perceived stress (for distancing only) (Denny and Ochsner, 2014). Hence, changing the initial appraisal led to outcomes that constituted an improvement compared to the original state.
5. Note that we position our work consistent with research by Damasio (2000). He maintains that, while learning and culture can modify the expression of emotions and give them new meanings, emotions themselves are determined by biological processes over a long evolutionary history. Making Damasio's balanced position explicit is highly germane, since, as a topic, the "emotion" and the "talk about the emotion" neither resides exclusively with social constructionism, nor with more biologically-informed perspectives on emotions.
6. Meursault, the protagonist in Camus's masterpiece *The Outsider* (1982) is a powerful example of how "society" retaliates against individuals who do not comply with behavioural expectations in specific situations, such as lack of grief and mourning when a parent has died.
7. These have been identified as West European, Anglo, East-Central European, Orthodox Eastern Europe, South and South-East Asian, Middle East and Sub-Saharan African, Confucian, and Latin American (see Tamir et al., 2016, for more details).

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