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PERSONNEL MANAGERS AND CRISIS SITUATIONS

EMOTION-HANDLING STRATEGIES

Personnel Managers and Crisis Situations. Emotion-handling Strategies

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origins of the study

Between 1989 and 1993 Finland experienced the severest recession since the Second World War. A young business graduate at that time, I was working in the personnel department of a large international Finnish company. I had been hired just before ominous signs began to appear on the Finnish economic horizon. My major responsibility was supposed to be recruitment of new employees for the company. Very soon, however, it became clear that recruitment was not going to be the focus of my job at all: challenges of a very different nature were emerging. It was indicative of the 1993 economic climate in Finland that one in every two firms was downsizing their number of employees (Ylöstalo and Kauppinen, 1994). Fortunately, the specific business unit where I was working was not among those hit worst by the recession. But this was a large company and I had the opportunity to follow the work of the personnel specialists of the other units. I had a vantage point for viewing the dilemmas faced by the personnel function under such a crisis. I saw how demanding it was to try to go on developing the company's human resources while at the same time witnessing the severe downsizing processes which other units were undergoing. Personnel work at that time was far from the positive-minded developmental work that it had seemed during the exceptional economic growth that preceded the recession.

I began to be intrigued by the period of time leading from the economic boom to the recession. When I started my doctoral studies I decided to focus on something related to personnel work, and specifically to personnel work in a period of crisis. Also, inspired by my own observations during the recession, I wanted to look at the ambivalent role of personnel managers as representatives of management on one hand, and of employees on the other hand (cf. Watson, 1977). To gain new insights into my preliminary research idea, I took to the field and conducted pilot interviews with a couple of personnel managers, asking them about crisis situations and their work more

generally. An interesting theme emerged from these interviews. The crises that personnel managers described as 'extreme', 'difficult' or 'dead-end' situations were laden with emotion. That shifted my interest towards the question of emotions in organisational life and, specifically, how emotions are dealt with by personnel managers.

1.2   Location of the study

The study focuses on the work of personnel managers[1] in crisis situations. It will describe aspects of personnel management in times of crisis. The primary location of the study is in the field of *personnel management* (PM) and *human resource management* (HRM)[2]. My pilot interviews with the personnel managers indicated that emotions were a feature which they found central and challenging in a crisis situation. Consequently, the focus of research was directed towards strategies to handle emotions. The secondary research field of this study, *emotions in organisations*, provides concepts that will be applied in the analysis and interpretation of the data. In conclusion, the major contribution of the study is positioned in the area of PM/HRM, specifically from the perspective of emotion-handling strategies.

1.3   Rationale of the study

By far the greater part of the extant literature on PM/HRM deals with personnel policies and practices to be applied and used under 'normal', unexceptional circumstances. Where a crisis situation is examined, PM presents tools for handling a crisis in practice – for instance, how to execute personnel reduction programmes. However, the literature on PM generally does not address the relationship between the personnel manager and the employee in a crisis situation, which is the focus of this study.

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[1] Although the job titles vary, *personnel manager* will hereafter refer to managers and directors who work with personnel management or human resource management/development.
[2] The fields of *personnel management* and *human resource management* will be presented and discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

A close reading of textbooks on personnel and human resource management proves that emotions have not been considered as an essential element in this literature[3]. Some literature contains implicit comments on emotions, but the actual topic of emotions is not seen as an inherent part of personnel work. This seems to follow the general trend in organisational studies up till the end of the 1990s: emotions did not form a legitimate part of their research tradition until recently. As Fineman (1996:545) has put it, good organisations appear to be thought of as places where feelings are 'managed, designed out or removed'.

If we look at personnel work in practice, we find that the current trend is towards *strategic human resource management* (SHRM). The main rationale for SHRM thinking is companies' desire to gain competitive advantage by integrating human resource management into their business strategy and thereby managing people more effectively (Vanhala, 1995:44). This has led to an abundance of SHRM practices. SHRM incorporates the idea that there is a resource that can be utilised and refined: namely, the human resource. Maximising its utilisation calls for certain practices or tools, and SHRM purports to fulfil this need. In this respect, SHRM constitutes an instrumental approach to personnel work. And because SHRM can be considered a management tool, the implementation of SHRM is a managerial choice.

Nevertheless, the concept of SHRM fails to capture the picture of employees as acting and especially as feeling individuals. The exclusion of emotions from organisational rhetoric at a time when attention is increasingly being paid to such phenomena as empowerment and employee involvement is in itself contradictory. As the more traditional forms of competitiveness – such as cost, technology, distribution, manufacturing and product features – can be copied to a growing extent (Ulrich, 1998:127), it seems that the organisation itself, the individuals within it and their energy and positive work feelings remain the ultimate competitive edges in today's business

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[3] This has also been commented on by Fineman (1996) in his review article on emotions in organisational life.

life. Despite this, many companies still continue to function as if their employees were rational robots, with the emotionally inert ideas of Taylorism lurking in the background. The idea of representing a production resource and a target for SHRM practices does not fit today's picture of employees. There is a distinct clash between SHRM and the idea of an empowered employee.

In Western occupational environments people work in organisations that are increasingly knowledge-intensive (cf. Blom et al., 2001, who describe the Finnish situation). There is a common understanding that knowledge intensity increases the demands for on-the-job creativity. Creativity, on the other hand, is stimulated by emotions and emotional lives (e.g. Mainemelis, 2001). In a study on knowledge creation in professional teams, Styhre et al. (2002) found that the *ability to nurture care* is important for the long-term competitiveness of knowledge-intensive organisations. Styhre et al. claim that the notion of care brings together sense-making concepts such as culture and emotions, and underlines the relational qualities inherent in teamwork. 'Care makes sense at the same time as it reproduces the mechanisms for exchanging experience and know-how.' (ibid:504) Åkerberg (1998:5) suggests that the growing number of knowledge workers are looking for opportunities to construct and negotiate *meaningful relationships* also in the work context. Bergström (1998) argues that the efficiency of recruitment methods in knowledge-intensive companies depends on how they take into account the feelings, reactions, interests and goals of the applicants. In sum, today's employees cannot be thought of simply as resources to be utilised, nor can the dysfunctions of knowledge workers be repaired with mechanistic tools, but by a better understanding of each individual as a 'whole person'.[4]

The discussion on the so-called *whole person* in the context of work life has led to a new way of addressing emotions. The notion of a whole person refers to the idea that the individual in the workplace is not only a rational actor but also brings his or her private life into the realm of work life. Consequently, since private life is associated with emotions, it is considered natural among today's employees that their private,

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[4] Berglund (2002) notes in his study on Swedish personnel managers that there has been a tendency to declare the knowledge society as a territory belonging to the competency area of personnel managers.

emotional side also affects work life and the organisation.

The idea of the whole person is reflected in the notion of a 'logic of appropriateness' (Cyert and March, 1963). In order to judge what is appropriate action in a given context the actor seeks an identification of oneself. The rationality called the *logic of appropriateness* includes a judgement of what is appropriate action in a given situation. The judgement is based on three questions: *Who am I?* (identification of oneself and others); *What situation is this?* (analogical reasoning); and *What is the appropriate action for me in this situation?* (institutionalised action). (March, 1981; Sevón, 1996).

In other words, in order to apply an emotion-handling strategy, the actor has to build a conception of his or her identity and the situation at hand. The actor – in this case the personnel manager – uses a logic of appropriateness to build such conceptions. Thus, logics of appropriateness provide guidelines for action as well as judgements and reflections on the situation at hand and on the identity of the actor. Cyert and March (1963:230-31) define the logic of appropriateness in the following way:

> ... an alternative decision logic – the logic of appropriateness, obligation, identity, duty, and rules. Much of the decision-making behaviour we observe reflects the routine way in which people do what they believe they are supposed to do. Standard operating procedures, professional standards, cultural norms, and institutional structures specify much of the behaviour in an organisation. Decisions in organisations, as in individuals, seem often to involve finding 'appropriate' rules to follow. The terminology is one of duties, scripts, identities, and roles rather than anticipatory, consequential choice.

Thus, the type of rationality represented by the logic of appropriateness is not that of consequentiality but that of appropriateness.

Focus on emotion-handling strategies. The pilot interviews with personnel managers indicated that emotions were very likely to emerge in negotiation-like situations where a personnel manager meets with an employee or a manager to discuss a crisis. Besides finding an acceptable solution to the problems in question, one responsibility of the personnel manager was to handle the emotions the crisis had prompted. It is these

strategies enacted by personnel managers to handle emotions in crisis situations which are the focus of this study.

Strategy[5] is one of the classical and most studied notions within organisation research, where it traditionally refers to the ability to define where the organisation stands now, where it would like to go and how it could get there. The core idea of the classics on strategy is that an organisation should set its goals and make a strategic choice on how to reach them. It is up to the top management to develop a 'strategic intent', which, it is hoped, creates a winning culture (cf. Watson, 1994). However, modern strategy research implicates that in today's rapidly changing business environment it is increasingly difficult to define clear goals and choose pre-defined paths to success. This parallels the argument that corporate strategies are, in fact, realised strategies: strategy is a pattern – specifically, a pattern in a stream of actions (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). Strategy, thus, becomes defined while the process of reaching the goals is 'under way' and, paradoxically, only afterwards it is possible to determine what the strategy was ultimately about. So, what strategy has come to denote is the actual attainment of goals which, in turn, tend to be of a changing rather than a stable nature. An organisation's strategy can be conceptualised as 'the pattern to be seen emerging over time as actions are taken to enable the organisation to continue into the future' (Watson, 1994:87). The modern understanding of strategy as a developing process to achieve goals that are constantly renegotiated is used in this study as a sensitising device (cf. Giddens, 1984:326) for describing how the interviewed personnel managers handled emotions.

When discussing professionals as managers of 'people work'[6], which would include personnel managers, Hearn (1987) claims that in one sense the professionals act as *emotional managers*. Namely, they are characteristically engaged in the selective control of the emotions of themselves and of others, both workers and 'clients'. In relation to the construction of professional masculinities, these managers – men in 'established positions' in his analysis – apply emotional control. Hearn makes a

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[5] The term strategy has its roots in military terminology (see Garratt, 1994).
[6] Goffman (1961:73) defined *people work* as not quite like personnel work or the work of those involved in service relationships; the staff that work with people-work have objects and products to work upon, not services, but these objects and products are *people*.

distinction between 'self-control', control of subordinates, control of/by peers, control of 'clients', and control by superordinates. Although my study does not deal with emotional control or managing of emotions, it does emphasise the importance of making a distinction between *whose* emotions are handled. The focus here is on how personnel managers handle others' and their own emotions in crisis situations. It proved relevant for the analysis to divide these 'others' further into two categories: that is, managers and other employees. Consequently, personnel managers enact their emotion-handling strategies in relation to the employees, the managers and themselves, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Personnel managers handling employees', managers' and their own emotions.*
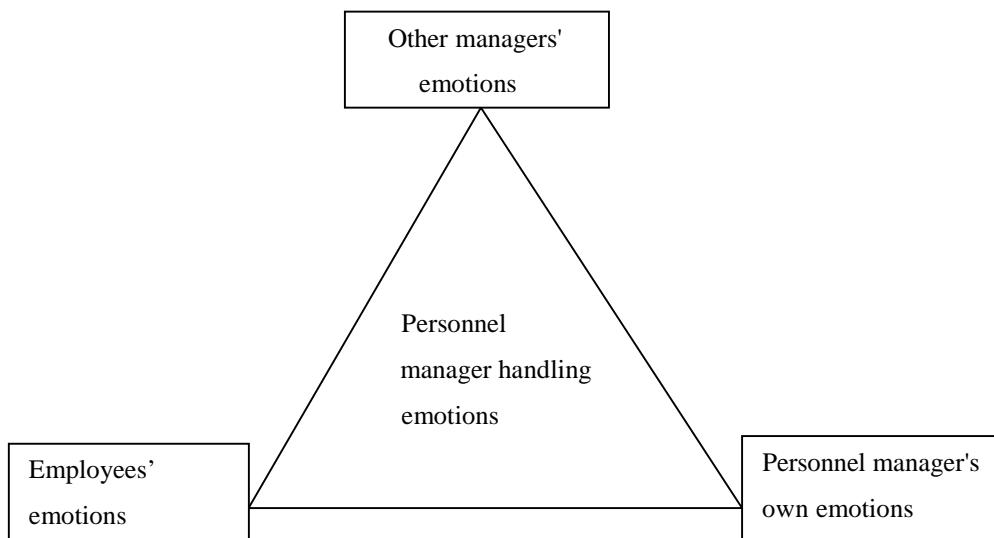
Emotion handling related to crisis situations. It is a cliché that organisational life is characterised by constant change. This is paradoxical in the sense that constant change is actually the status quo. Organisational 'MADness' – referring to Mergers, Acquisitions and Downsizing – is a common phenomenon in all Western countries. It has been pointed out, however, that research on the negative side of business life is far less common than research on growth and other positive phenomena. Koskinen

(1996:64), for instance, writes that this is partly because of the traditional understanding of growth as being necessary for a high standard of living, and partly because of our admiration for success. Furthermore, it is much more difficult to conduct an empirical study of decline than of expansion, because managers of declining organisations usually have little time for, or no interest in, co-operating with researchers (Weitzel-Johnsson, 1989).

However, in this study the term 'crisis' is not solely reserved for describing such major crises as organisational MADness refers to. The data collected for this study show that personnel managers are confronted with very different kinds of crisis situations. The crises addressed here are of the type that affect employees and demand the attention of a personnel specialist. The term *crisis* was chosen to describe varying critical and challenging situations in personnel managers' work, ranging from minor crisis situations involving only one employee to major restructurings involving numerous people. The aim was to capture descriptions of diverse negotiation episodes in which emotions are likely to arise.

1.4   Personnel management and human resource management

In a broad sense, my thesis is about the work of personnel managers. This section deals with personnel management and personnel managers. The terms *personnel management* and *human resource management* are often used interchangeably. Although their conceptual difference is of lesser interest here, there are some differences that need to be discussed. The following discussion should be taken partly as a description of personnel management and partly of HRM: that is, as a description of the various aspects of personnel work. On one hand, the aim is to argue for the use of the term PM and personnel manager and, on the other hand, to pinpoint the absence of emotions in the existing descriptions of PM and HRM. Also, I hope that a presentation of the argued differences between the two terms will underline the ambiguities of the work of personnel managers, stemming from their role in-between employees and management, discussed later in this chapter.

1.4.1 Conceptualisation of personnel management and HRM

Compared to human resource management, personnel management may sound somewhat old-fashioned as a concept. We may think that personnel management brings to mind bureaucratic-type personnel administration, while the abbreviation HRM stands for a more modern and dynamic view of the tasks of personnel managers. In general, HRM seems to be the more commonly used concept today when referring to people management in organisations. The term *personnel management*, on the other hand, sounds more down-to-earth and practical than *human resource management*. Another difference is that personnel management often seems to be thought of as a part of the managers' everyday work, whereas HRM is seen rather as part of strategic management. HRM concentrates on strategy and planning, not so much on everyday problem solving with employees (cf. Hendry and Pettigrew, 1986). In the 1980s there was a general shift in the literature on personnel work from personnel administration to HRM and human resource development. Still, as Guest (1987) noted, changing the name of personnel departments to HRM departments did not necessarily mean any visible change in their roles. Some researchers claimed that the phenomenon resembled 'the Emperor's new clothes' (e.g. Armstrong, 1987).

Perhaps one of the main differences between the concepts is that personnel management is more frequently described in terms of what it means *in practice* – for instance, selecting, recruiting, developing, rewarding and leading the personnel – whereas HRM is often depicted as part of the *strategy* process and *strategic* actions of the organisation. Legge (1995) has extensively discussed the differences between the normative models of HRM and personnel management. She argues that the apparent difference between the two is mainly about the emphasis in the discussion: the latter is often treated at a *descriptive* level while the former is treated at a *normative* level. Legge further points out that neither personnel management nor HRM is a singular model (ibid:71). Storey (1995) offers the following frequently cited definition of HRM:

> Human resource management is a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce, using an integrated array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques. (Storey, 1995:5)

The mainstream perspectives on HRM have some key tenets in common. Firstly, they emphasise developmental humanism and the value of human capital. Secondly, they share a strong assumption that the management and the workforce have common interests in the success of the business. Conflicts are de-emphasised and employee relations are based on individualism rather than collectivism. Thirdly, they see HR decisions as being of strategic importance; hence, HR policies should be integrated into business strategy. In other words, there is a strong strategic linkage between HRM strategy and business strategy. Fourth, they assume an involvement of senior managers and line managers in HR work. And fifth, they suggest that employee commitment should be elicited through cultural management. (Lecture and hand-out by Fournier, 2000)

Additionally, distinctions between 'soft' and 'hard' HRM are sometimes noted. The 'hard' approach emphasises the resource nature of HRM[7], that people are organisational resources and should be managed *like any other resource*. The 'soft' approach focuses on the human side and argues that people are *a resource unlike any other*. Only people can create value from other resources; the employees' creativity, commitment and skill can generate a real competitive advantage (Brewster and Bournois, 1991).

However, questions such as what constitutes HRM and what it should be, are sources of constant confusion in the literature. It is argued that HRM lacks coherence both empirically and theoretically and that it is fragmented, whilst at the same time it paradoxically becomes more and more significant in management parlance (cf. Noon, 1992; Legge, 1995; Keenoy, 1999). Some researchers have theorised HRM as a cultural phenomenon, referring to the Foucauldian 'power-knowledge' regime (Foucault, 1980; Townley, 1993, 1994). For Foucault, *power* and *knowledge* are

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[7] HRM is argued to be heavily based on the so-called 'resource-based view' (cf. Barney, 1991; Storey, 1995).

inextricably related, as ways of knowing are also ways of intervening, controlling, and making visible and governable. Making things visible is a political act with power effects, because 'power is exercised by virtue of things being known and people being seen' (Foucault, 1980:154). In consequence, HRM is seen as a power-knowledge regime in the sense that it provides a vocabulary (categories and dimensions) for knowing and governing employees at work. Townley (1994), in fact, remarked that we can see HRM as actively producing a desired kind of organisational actor whom the organisation can then correct and control. Foucauldian and critical HRM researchers claim that HRM is ultimately about getting employees as subjects to control themselves according to the wishes of the management and to act in a direction decided by the management.

Apart from showing that the distinction between personnel management and HRM is problematic, Legge (1995) has also identified three major dissimilarities between these concepts. First, the focus of the object of their practices is different. HRM emphasises the management of *managers*, whereas personnel management is more concerned with the management of *non-managers*. Secondly, HRM stresses the role of *line managers* as proactively focusing on the proper use and treatment of employees. Thirdly, HRM is more concerned with the role of the *top management* in managing the organisational culture through HRM practices and policies (ibid: 74-75). Ehrnrooth (2002:88) argues for a fourth difference between HRM and personnel management, claiming that the emphasis on *system-level integration* is arguably more explicit in the HRM literature than in personnel management.

Torrington and Hall (1995) define personnel management – or, in their words, 'a philosophy of personnel management' – as follows:

> Personnel management is a series of activities which: first enable
> working people and the business which uses their skills to agree about
> the objectives and nature of their working relationship and, secondly,
> ensure that the agreement is fulfilled. (Torrington and Hall, 1995:21)

Since this thesis aims to investigate how personnel managers handle emotions in crisis situations – in other words, how they practise their job – it seems that the term

'personnel management' perhaps describes the empirical phenomenon that I have studied better than the term 'HRM'. Torrington and Hall's definition of personnel management refers to *activities*, a word not commonly used in definitions of HRM. The title of the authors' text is *Personnel Management*, descriptively subtitled *HRM in action*. However, as personnel departments and HR departments are often involved in the same activities in practice, the difference between which of these two I focus on is of lesser importance. Thus, the foregoing discussion is to be considered more like a clarification of concepts than a choice between personnel management and HRM as the focus of this thesis.

1.4.2   Personnel managers

The role of the personnel manager is often conceived of as 'being the man in the middle' (Watson, 1977) or working in-between the management and the employees. It is not uncommon for the employees of an organisation to regard the personnel manager as representing their interests, while at the same time the personnel manager is inevitably part of the management. The role of the personnel manager, thus, is ambivalent by nature. Based on Ulrich's (1997) model on the many roles of the personnel manager, one might ask whether it is possible for personnel managers to combine the divergent roles of a change agent and an employee champion particularly in a time of crisis. Later in this thesis we will see that the ambivalence of their position may, in fact, partly account for the specific tasks that personnel managers seem to acquire and assume in crisis situations.

The earlier comparison of personnel management and HRM also reflects the ambivalence of the personnel manager's role. It is claimed that the traditional tasks of personnel management are based more on humanistic premises, whereas the HRM model places greater emphasis on business and monetary values. In HRM, the originally humanitarian and social values of personnel work have largely been replaced by a management perspective in which the economic knowledge base is all the more central.

Peltonen (2001:55) writes that the discourse on strategic human resource management suggests that the role of the personnel function and of personnel specialists in organisations has changed or is changing. Personnel management is becoming more business-minded as HR managers are transforming into strategically-oriented actors located closer to the top management than before. But, Peltonen continues, research has shown that this promise has not been fully realised and that although some HR managers have gained status in the corporate hierarchy, their overall image remains operational and fragmented, rather than strategic and coherent. The personnel function is still commonly regarded as inferior to other management functions. This assumption is supported by Berglund's (2002) study on Swedish personnel managers. Berglund examined how personnel managers positioned themselves discursively as a professional group. Although it is generally recognised nowadays that employees and their competencies are the primary competitive advantage of any organisation, yet personnel specialists seldom occupy top positions in organisations. Even though people management is expected to become increasingly important in the future, today's personnel managers have limited influence and their status is by no means high. This is a paradox for them as a professional group which not even a strong belief in the knowledge society and HRM has reversed. The status problem is also connected to the personnel managers' position in the employment market, where the personnel function is often considered as a female job. Women are stereotypically seen as representing 'soft' and humanitarian competencies, which traditionally run the risk of being underestimated in a business context. Conradson and Rundqvist (1997, in Berglund, 2002) have noted that, from a career perspective, the personnel function is regarded as a dead-end position.

According to Berglund's study, the professional identity of personnel managers is characterised by a sense of inadequacy or a feeling of 'not being good enough'. This feeling is expressed in multiple ways. On one hand, personnel managers have too little time to engage in long-term development projects; on the other hand, they feel a need to develop their own professional competence. For instance, many personnel managers in Berglunds's study considered their knowledge of economics as insufficient, which made it difficult for them to communicate with the other managers in the organisation.

Berglund's results imply that the attempt to balance between the roles of an 'Expert' and a 'Man of Action' seems to be realised in a recurrent sense of inadequacy.

> The personnel managers tried to position themselves as professional *Experts* with knowledge important for the survival of the organisation. At the same time, the critics reinforced the personnel managers' argumentative position as *Experts* when they argued that the important knowledge and experiences needed to work strategically within the top management team with personnel issues were of a different kind. Economic knowledge and, most importantly, practical line experience were deemed far more important. As a contrast to the *Expert*, the critics upheld *the Man of Action* as an ideal. (Berglund, 2002:323)

The study by Peltonen (2001), also discursive by nature, suggests that HR managers are currently in the middle of a repositioning process after their recent entry into general management. He analysed, on one hand, discussion themes in which personnel directors succeeded in presenting themselves and the HR function in a favourable light and, on the other hand, themes in which they failed to do so. The results indicate that when HR experts talked about the external world of organisations, they were capable of turning the discursive situation fully in their favour. In contrast, themes related to their own membership in the managerial elite generated various problems and resulted in a loss of their micropowers.

Ulrich (1997) argued that the only way to secure a higher profile for human resource management is by measuring the results of the work of HR professionals. His main point is that, if HR workers are to create value and deliver results, they must begin not by focusing on the activities or work of HRM, but by defining the *deliverables* of that work. Ulrich's multiple-role model of HRM aims at translating its content into measurable deliverables or outcomes. His *Human Resource Champions* is a book for managers; it differs in style from Peltonen's and Berglund's studies, for example, but offers an interesting perspective into how he sees HRM being translated into practice. Ulrich defines the roles of HR managers using four metaphors. Firstly, the role of a *strategic partner* is to translate the business strategy into HR priorities; the deliverable is strategy execution. Secondly, the *administrative expert* needs to undertake activities that lead to a continual re-engineering of work processes; the deliverable is administrative efficiency. Thirdly, the *employee champion* listens, responds and finds

ways to provide employees with resources that meet their changing demands; increased employee commitment and competence are the expected deliverables of this role. And fourthly, the *change agent* identifies and frames problems, builds relationships of trust, solves problems, and creates and fulfils action plans; the deliverable is a capacity for change. In short, Ulrich's conviction is that the credibility problems of the personnel function can be solved by measuring the results of the HR department. Ulrich's belief in the importance of the deliverables is interesting from the point of view of the present study. In *Chapter 2* I will present the idea that personnel managers might search for emotional value when handling emotions. In Ulrich's terms, emotional value can be thought of as a deliverable of the HR/PM department.

An issue frequently raised in the popular literature on personnel management is the 'raison-d'être' of the personnel function in general. This question may have influenced the feelings of inadequacy among those working in the profession: in other words, among personnel managers. Another topical question is whether the personnel function should be outsourced or integrated into the line. The discussion on this question has been ongoing in international professional journals. It is argued that human resource professionals should 'remove' their company, their department, and their job from the traditional bureaucratic HR function. Wilkerson, for example, wrote already in 1996 that the changing business climate is dramatically altering the face of HR departments in the United States. An article in *Fortune* in the same year reported that HR department employees spend 80% of their time on routine administrative tasks, suggesting that nearly every function of the HR department could be performed more expertly for less by others (Stewart, 1996). Articles with headings like 'Proving the personnel department earns its salt' (*Personnel Management*, 1983), 'Is anybody listening to the corporate personnel department?' (Purcell, 1985), 'Putting the corporate personnel department in its place' (*Personnel Management*, 1985), 'Is there a crisis in the personnel department's identity' (Andrews, 1986), 'A new mandate for Human Resources' (Ulrich, 1998) and 'Leadership development: Perk or priority?' (Kesner, 2003) are some examples of the presented criticism. Thus, the raison-d'être of the personnel department continues to be questioned.

It is noteworthy that personnel managers hold a special position in an organisational context. Namely, the post of a personnel manager/director is the sole management position in which women are in the majority; in Finland, for example, nearly 60% of personnel managers are female (Korhonen, 1998). The trend is the same in other Western industrialised countries. To put it sarcastically, if there is a woman in corporate management, she is bound to be the personnel director. It is justified to say, therefore, that the personnel function has a feminine label. Ulrich (1997) claims that there is an old myth which says that HR is staffed by 'nice people'. Although Ulrich argues for a change of this conviction, the notion of *nice people* seems to be commonly associated with the stereotypically caring and 'nice' women. [8]

1.4.3   Development of the personnel function in Finland

We can say that the development of the personnel function has followed the same general lines in all Western capitalist economies. This section describes the case of Finland over the past 60 years. I will also touch on the use of the terms 'personnel management' and 'HRM' and their historical background. Additionally, my secondary aim is to investigate whether the topic of emotions has been dealt with in connection with the descriptions of the Finnish personnel function.

How did personnel management become professionalised and institutionalised in the Finnish private sector? This question has been addressed by Lilja (1987) and Vanhala (1995) in two articles. Lilja points out that it is impossible to trace back the developmental history of the personnel function based on any survey data, because by the end of the 1980s there was only one representative study available on the subject, namely the study by Hellborg et al. (1975). The issue must, therefore, be approached from a broader professional perspective covering the educational system, labour market, professional collective and knowledge base of the personnel profession in Finland. The

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8 An interesting question is whether women have explicitly sought to become personnel managers/directors or whether the post of personnel manager has been the only management position available to them.

following presentation of historical development phases is based on the articles by Lilja and Vanhala.

Organisational functions specialised in personnel issues did not become common in Finland until the postwar period in the late 1940s. A large number of former officers of the wartime army were employed as so-called *social managers* in private companies. In-company training began to increase in the 1950s, leading to the creation of a number of *training manager* posts. If professionalised personnel management is understood in a specialised sense, meaning that all actions related to personnel issues are organised under the same function, then this was generally not the case in Finland until the 1960s. The sales offices of certain multinational enterprises were the sole exception.

The activities of the social managers can be considered to represent a preliminary phase of professionalised personnel management in Finland. In most cases the metamorphosis from this type of activity to modern personnel management was not a dramatic one but a gradual transition without distinct 'rupture points'. In some companies, however, there was a kind of a turning point when a former army officer retired from his post as a social manager, giving way to a behavioural scientist: a new type of personnel manager. The development of the Finnish personnel function can be divided into five phases, which are described below.

Initiation, pioneering, and self-criticism phases
From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, the formal rationality of professionalised personnel management became generally known and accepted. This marked the first stage – *the initiation phase* – in the development of the personnel function in Finland. The breakthrough of new organisational and management doctrines, mainly those developed in the United States, was first seen in management training and in professional journals. It reflected the opening up of Finnish society in the late 1950s, when postwar reconstruction was already over.

Two important articles describing these developments in Finnish companies are Ahlstedt's 'A Research Project on Personnel Management in Finnish Industry' (1959) and Mielonen's series of articles on modern personnel administration in *Teollisuuslehti*

('Industrial journal') (1960a, 1960b,1960c). Ahlstedt (1959:158) defined the three main duties of personnel administration as 'the recruitment, the maintenance and the development of personnel'. Mielonen's practical advice on how to implement a personnel policy programme was to communicate it to the line managers and co-ordinate the programme together with them. The last article in Mielonen's series deals with the organisation and tasks of the personnel department. Overall, there were very few specialists in the area of personnel management at the end of the 1950s, and their job descriptions and professional titles were widely varied (Ahlstedt, 1959: 163-166). New thoughts were slow to break through and did so without notable discussion.

The second development stage – *the pioneering phase* – is characterised by action plans for the reorganisation of corporate personnel management, created by personnel management specialists themselves. From this point on, the function developed exceptionally fast. The Finnish Employers' Management Development Institute, for example, came up with a comprehensive training programme for personnel management specialists. The career opportunities for these specialists were good, and a new employer could benefit from the lessons they had learned with previous employers. Thus, know-how spread from one company to another. This phase was marked by strong optimism and a belief in the growing importance of the personnel function; the 1970s are, in fact, often called 'the decade of personnel management'. At this time the personnel department consolidated its position among other corporate management functions.

The first university-level course book on personnel administration in Finland was published in 1970. This textbook by Palm and Voutilainen concentrates on administrative issues but also argues that personnel should be seen as a group of individuals, not as a kind of machinery. The authors regard the employees of the 1970s as more self-assertive than those of earlier decades, with a striving to be independent. They expect the trend in the personnel function to move from personnel administration towards self-management. The book advocates a change in the overall view on personnel.

The third stage – *the phase of self-criticism* – began in the mid 1970s. Corporate personnel planning systems and routines were now established, but specialised personnel activities were arousing criticism inside companies. There was pressure on the personnel function from the other organisational functions, and entire personnel departments were laid off. The term 'personnel administration' acquired negative connotations and a new term, 'human resources management' (HRM*)*, was introduced. The professional community of personnel specialists suffered from a fatal lack of external support, and career opportunities began to dwindle.

Strategic HRM phase

In the mid 1980s, the situation again began to change. New doctrines with an emphasis on the relationship between human resources and strategic corporate success reached practising managers and HRM researchers. The status of the function now called HRM rose higher than ever before. Along with the economic boom of the late 1980s, labour shortage emerged as the primary threat to companies.

Decentralisation and survival phase

Then, at the turn of the 1990s, the situation was reversed. Instead of a labour shortage, unemployment figures started breaking prior records. The Finnish economy encountered its deepest and longest recession since the Second World War. The unemployment rate hiked from 3.4 to 19 percent in only three years – from 1990 to mid-1993, when it ranked second highest among the OECD countries. At the same time, the status and position of the HRM function also began to change. The management of human resources was now even more strategic than in the late 1980s, but its challenges were different. This phase could be characterised by features like cost-effectiveness, increasing line responsibility, flexible use of labour, dualisation of the labour force – and the survival of the HRM function.

My informal interviews with a few senior personnel specialists indicated that they could well recognise the above developmental phases in their past work experiences. When I told them about my specific interest in emotions, some of them reminded me of the so-

called *sensitivity training period* in the 1970s[9]. The theme had not been mentioned in the descriptions of the developmental phases nor in the more popular articles I reviewed in constructing a history of Finnish personnel management. This led me to interview two former personnel managers who were known to have engaged in sensitivity training. They pointed out that this kind of training had been practised in Finland mainly in large-scale organisations. In both of the companies represented by the interviewees, sensitivity training had ended in a disaster. In the other organisation, one or two of the participants had committed suicide supposedly as a consequence of the training period. After the drama, sensitivity training was strictly banned by the company's CEO. In the other organisation, the wife of one of the participants in the training publicly accused the trainers of breaking marriages with the emotional upheavals caused by the training. As a result, sensitivity training obtained negative connotations in public and lost its popularity.[10] It would seem that there was indeed a distinct need for personnel training in the area of emotions. Either the trainers were not skilled enough to handle the emergent feelings correctly or the time was not yet ripe for this kind of training. The attempt to introduce emotions into the organisational sphere by means of sensitivity training ended in a dismal failure.

Current situation

The themes that have emerged in the course of the developmental history of the Finnish personnel function sound familiar even to today's personnel managers. A review of professional and academic articles on personnel management in Finland during 1987–97 shows that the discussion follows to a surprising extent the same lines as did the publications some 30 years ago. Old ideas are replicated under new labels: *lifelong learning*, *multiskilled workforce*, *visions*, *quality management*, *strategic role of the personnel*, *tutoring* and *teamwork* are mentioned in numerous articles (e.g. Mäkipeska, 1989; Jakku-Sihvonen, 1990; *Fakta*, 1995; *Osuuspankkilehti*, 1997). These same topics occur already in the publications of Ahlstedt (1959), Mielonen (1960a,1960b, 1960c) and Palm and Voutilainen (1970). Theories have grown more sophisticated and

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[9] *Sensitivity training* is an organisational development technique that consists of intense counselling in which group members, aided by a facilitator, learn how others perceive them and may learn how to deal more sensitively with others (George and Jones, 1996).
[10] A similar process took place in Sweden, and led to at least one suicide (Bendrik, 1986).

numerous new concepts have been developed, but the general discourse on personnel administration/personnel management/human resource management remains practically the same. However, it seems that the foremost HRM concept of the 1990s was *core competence*. Even though 'competence' is close to the notion of 'skill', the competence discussion seemed to acquire dimensions not comparable to earlier discussions concerning a competent and skilled labour force.

According to GDP measures, the recession in Finland came to an end in 1994. It was followed by a period of growth, although unemployment remained high. The situation in the labour market was peculiar in the sense that while there still was considerable unemployment, certain areas suffered from a labour shortage. The employment market for skilled workers was particularly buoyant. Personnel specialists were badly needed especially for resolving labour shortage problems, and they were among the main targets of headhunters. The salaries offered to HR professionals also rose substantially at this point. The role of HRM was increasingly within the area of business strategy, and the tasks were focused on looking after corporate brainpower – which was, and continues to be, the ultimate competitive edge of Finnish companies.

In 1999, growth was proceeding at a rapid pace. By 2000, the economic situation in the country could be described as overheated. The next cycle started in spring 2000 with a crash of stock market prices. This phenomenon resembles the current economic situation: Finns today share widespread insecurity about the future of the national economy. Unemployment has dropped somewhat, but not nearly as much as set down in the plans of the Finnish government.

In short, the 1990s recession was followed by a boom and a new, although much milder recession than ten years before. The employment situation of personnel managers tends to follow economic fluctuations. There appears to have been a steady flow of job opportunities for personnel specialists after the recession. Today the employment situation for personnel specialists is good, even though the personnel specialists' workload and challenges have increased along with the introduction of the so-called *new economy*. The new economy and the skilled 'self-asserted' employees are setting new demands on personnel managers. When things go well it is difficult to maintain and

adequately reward the workforce, and when things go badly companies are quick to resort to personnel reduction programmes. This causes problems for the personnel function and its credibility. Although the concept of the 'new economy' lost most of its glamour and part of its credibility in 2000, it continues to characterise the atmosphere in the employment market. Top expertise in high technology has been declared as one of the goals of the Finnish economy even at the governmental level.

What is especially striking throughout the evolution of Finnish personnel management is that issues related to feelings or emotions at work have hardly been raised at all (with the notable exception of sensitivity training). Today more than ever it seems that the various theories and fragmented concepts of HRM fail to capture the total picture of employees as acting and, especially, as *feeling* individuals.

To conclude, I will use the concepts of *personnel management* and *personnel manager* instead of HRM and HR manager in the current study. It is the personnel manager's task to take care of human resources. As a concept, personnel management seems to be more descriptive of the type of personnel work I focus on in this study. Handling of emotions is part of the practice of personnel management - not so much of the practice of strategic HRM. Emotions appear much more immediate to the concept of PM than to SHRM, which can be considered as far more distanced from handling emotions.[11] Lastly, it is important to emphasise that the *practices* of PM and HRM may actually be closer to each other that the *theories* of PM and HRM.

1.5   Purpose of the study

The general aim of the study is to analyse aspects of personnel work that have so far been neglected or have remained invisible. In order to grasp this side of personnel work the study focuses on episodes of negotiating emotions between personnel managers and

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[11]SHRM can even be conceived of as a way of evading the handling of emotions. There is an example of this in the empirical part of the study (*Section 4.2.5.*). A personnel director who very frequently used the concepts inherent in SHRM in his talk was a person who engaged in a *withdrawal strategy* – in other words, he did not believe that emotions belong in organisations and did not handle emotions.

employees in situations of crisis. By analysing such episodes the study contributes to the knowledge of how personnel managers handle employees' and their own emotions in a crisis.

A more specific objective is to construct and analyse various emotion-handling strategies enacted by personnel managers in crisis situations. I aim to achieve this by analysing the negotiation-like emotional episodes between personnel managers and employees described by the interviewees of this study.

The study also has the objective of providing descriptive information on emotion handling, a current and relevant feature of the practice of personnel management. It seeks to offer a frame for developing practical principles that can be helpful in handling emotions in a crisis. It further offers the opportunity to consider a variety of difficult situations that personnel managers may confront in their work tasks. I trust that personnel professionals will find it useful to weigh their own experiences of crisis situations against the results of this study.

The analysis in this study is interpretative and the chosen perspective is that of social constructionism, and so a point of central interest is how the different emotion-handling strategies are *constructed*. The concept of a 'logic of appropriateness' (March, 1981), referring to a judgement of what is *appropriate* action in a given situation, is applied in the analysis.

The design of the study is *abductive*[12] by nature. I particularly want to report the continuous dialogue between the empirical research material, the analysis and theory which was ongoing throughout the research process. A key factor in this type of study design is the researcher's ability to interpret data. The major difference between abductive and purely deductive or inductive studies is in the role of the research framework. In an abductive approach, the research process is successively modified, partly as a result of unanticipated empirical findings but partly also due to theoretical insights gained during the process. In much of qualitative research, researchers seek to

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[12] *Abduction* is more thoroughly discussed in *Chapter 3*.

induce and then to test hypotheses during data analysis (Silverman, 1993:14). In practice this means that the research questions originally set for the study are subject to modification during the entire research process. Being true to abductive reasoning I cannot claim to have had a fixed set of questions to which I would have found the right answers. Quite the contrary: the research questions were modified several times as a result of the interplay between the research framework, data collection and data analysis. After these modifications I formulated the research questions as follows:

1. *What are the strategies of personnel managers in handling employees' and their own emotions?*
2. *How can these strategies be classified according to logics of appropriateness, in this context especially with respect to personnel managers' values?*

1.6   Outline of the study

This introductory chapter has dealt with the primary knowledge domain of the thesis: personnel management. The secondary knowledge domain, emotions in organisations, will be presented and discussed in *Chapter* 2, which also presents the idea of conceiving of emotion handling as negotiating emotional value. The nature of the empirical material and the collection of the data are described in *Chapter 3*. *Chapter 4* contains the analysis of the data material and the results of the thesis. Finally, I present a summary and discuss the results of the thesis in *Chapter 5*.

Figure 2 illustrates the thesis outline and the research process.

Figure 2. *Thesis outline and the research process.*

Introduction Personnel management	Handling emotions in organisations P-ms negotiating emotional value	Collecting episodes of negotiating emotions	Constructing emotion-handling strategies	Conclusions

Researcher's experiences of 1990s recession at a personnel department Reading literature on development and practice of personnel management and HRM Pilot interviews: emotions emerge in relation to crisis situations New configurations of ideas emerge: strategies for emotion handling?	More interviews Looking for emotion-handling strategies Going back to previous interviews. Earlier strategy patterns evolve, new patterns emerge.	Emotional episodes resemble negotiation situations	Analysing interviews and constructing strategies for handling employees' and managers' emotions Mothering and guide-following conceived of as logics of appropriateness and strategies for handling p-m's own emotions P-ms negotiating emotional value	Summarising thesis and discussing its results

P-m = personnel manager

2. HANDLING EMOTIONS IN ORGANISATIONS

The pilot interviews already indicated that the work of personnel managers involves tasks that are of an emotional nature. Personnel managers seem to engage in emotion work specifically in times of crisis. This chapter offers a view into how the empirical phenomenon of handling emotions in the organisation is conceived. The chapter also introduces the basic frame of reference for the interpretation and presentation of the empirical accounts obtained in the interviews.

The first section provides a background for the topic of emotion in organisations. I will start by briefly discussing the relationship between emotions and rationality and presenting some approaches to this relationship. I then focus on some general trends that have increased an interest in emotions in work life. The next section deals with research on emotions in organisation and presents the concepts of 'emotion work' and 'emotional labour' and the idea of emotions as judgements of value, which are central notions in relation to emotion handling. I go on to highlight the story-like character of emotional episodes, and present social constructionism as the perspective chosen for the analysis of the data of this study. Then the relationship between gender and emotions is discussed, and the chapter ends with a section introducing the idea of emotion-handling conceived of as negotiating emotional value

2.1 Background

Emotions and rationality

Organisations have traditionally focused on the rational side of behaviour, thereby eliminating emotions from the organisational arena (Fineman, 1993a, 1996, 1999,

2000a; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Domagalski, 1999; Ashkanasy et al., 2002). There seems to be a fear that organisations as we know them will collapse if we do not 'de-emotionalise' emotions, make them seem rational in terms of the organisational goals and the management purpose (Fineman, 1993b:1). Max Weber's ideal bureaucracy was a machine-like organisation from which 'love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements' (Weber, 1946:216) were to be kept out. The organisational actor, thus, is rational by definition and adopts the optimum means to achieve his goals only after careful search and assessment of information, with the aim of maximising the gains in relation to specific goals. In his classical work on bounded rationality, Simon (1957) depicted holistic forms of reasoning, such as intuition and judgement, as *non-rational* and decisions based on emotions as *irrational*. Sjöstrand (1997) argued that managerial action simultaneously comprises rational as well as irrational qualities. Since rational managerial actions are sometimes classified as irrational and irrational actions as rational, Sjöstrand claimed that the borderline between these two (ir)rationales is both ambiguous and haphazard.

Although people experience emotions constantly, yet the exploration of the subject of emotions has often been de-emphasised, marginalised or ignored in organisational theory, as in organisational life (Martin et al., 1998:429). Fineman (1993c, 1996) noted that in organisational settings people are presented as emotionally anorexic, like the splintered characters in a computer game. Further, organisational scholars and practitioners seem to assume that emotionality is the antithesis of rationality, and thus frequently hold a pejorative view of emotions as such (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995:97). If organisational control is the goal, emotions posit a problem, being 'an inherently difficult beast to control' (Rafaeli and Worline, 2001:98).

From the 1990s onwards, however, the frame of organisational research has been widening to include the concept of emotion. Fineman (1996) makes the claim that the challenge of emotions in relation to rationality takes three fairly distinct forms. First, emotions *interfere with rationality*. Psychoanalytic writers offer a picture of an objective, rational organisational world that is 'obfuscated by the unwitting defensive reactions of anxious, emotional actors' (ibid:550). Second, emotional processes can *serve rationality*. In a decision-making situation, for instance, the rational organisational

actor simply has too many possible alternatives to evaluate, and so rationality will necessarily be 'subjective' and 'bounded' (Simon 1957) – in other words, emotional.

> We thus move to a model of sufficing rationality. The actor has to make do and, in making do, emotions will show the way. The actor is not the victim of his or her feelings. On the contrary, without emotions even an approximation to rationality could not be achieved. [...] Cognitions will follow their own paths, but emotions stop them getting lost. (Fineman, 1996:550)

Third, emotions and cognitions are inextricably entwined: *rationality is a myth*. This is manifested by rational self-interest, which is thoroughly imbued with emotion – the two cannot be separated. The weighing of means and ends is overwhelmingly emotional. Fineman concludes that the combined assault on rationality from these three perspectives leaves us with the compelling case that emotions matter a great deal in organisational behaviour, and that rationality therefore is a problematic concept at the least.

To summarise, if we believe in the scientific understanding that the head and the heart, emotions and rationality, are antithetical, we will act on the basis of this definition and organise our lives so as to confirm this belief. The duality will go on, and on if we feel that our experience provides further evidence for the correctness of this definition. Thus, it is important that the image of an actor as *both* conscious *and* feeling is incorporated into organisation studies. (cf. Waerness, 1992: 219)

Growing interest in emotions

Apart from the discussion on emotion *vs.* rationality, some trends in our Western societies have promoted a growing interest in emotions. The focus on emotions has been furthered by new ways of viewing leadership and management. *Visionary leadership*, for instance, evokes an emotional connection with one's subordinates by means of imagery, symbolism and shared vision. 'Symbolic management is effective because it draws on the qualities of the heart and of the head – and, at times, it entirely bypasses the latter for the former.' (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995:111) Also, increasing attention to employee participation in organisations and the quality of work

life seems to have set the stage for a more direct examination of the subjectivity of human beings, including their emotions (Fineman, 1996:545).

Forseth (2001:227) noted that as work transforms, many employees have to set their own boundaries in a situation where there are no standards for what is 'good enough'; only human endurance sets the limit. The nature of work in our modern Western societies is characterised by a high tempo and an everlasting search for more effective ways to operate in organisations. 'Boundless' work, as Forseth terms it, means that there is no limit to new things to learn, new relations and new emotional responsibilities at work. Work – including mental work – extends to the home and family-time, which in turn raises a discussion on emotional exhaustion and burnout. These topics have recently been debated by occupational health specialists in Finnish work life, for example. Emotional exhaustion may incur invisible costs to a company at a time when emotions are becoming increasingly important as a competitive edge in the private sector and for client satisfaction in the public sector (Forseth, 2001:xi). Although stress and burnout are not called emotions *per se*, research on these issues has brought the subject of emotion into mainstream organisational research (Jackson and Maslach, 1982; Kahill, 1988; Cordes and Dougherty, 1993, in Rafaeli and Worline, 2001:104). In general, the nature of paid work is shifting towards symbolic forms of production, where emotions can act as important tools of labour (Forseth, 2001:ix).

2.2   Research on emotions in organisations

Already the philosophers of antiquity queried, *'What are emotions?'*. To Aristotle (1984, 1991), for instance, emotions were a means of rhetorical persuasion. Medieval philosophers often connected emotions to ethics (Solomon, 1993). The same question continues to present a challenge to today's research, intriguing scholars in various disciplines. The layman tends to think that research on emotions is the special domain of psychologists, but biologists, physiologists, anthropologists, philosophers and sociologists – as well as organisation researchers – have addressed emotions for various reasons and from varying standpoints. Yet, all this research on emotions with its multiple perspectives has failed to formulate any commonly agreed definition of emotion. The 'definitions' provided by artists may seem more moving and easier to

understand at the personal level than scientific ones. Artists have always attempted to capture, define and depict emotions for their audience. On the other hand, from a social constructionist viewpoint, the primary focus is not on the essence of emotion itself, but, rather, on how people *interpret* emotions and what emotions mean to them.

Emotions began to attract greater interest as a subject of research among organisation researchers only in the 1990s[13]. A potential reason for the late awakening of interest is that before then it had not seemed possible to measure emotions in a way adequate for managerial purposes. The introduction of the concept of *emotional intelligence* (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995) removed this limitation. One of the personnel managers interviewed for my study noted that the current research on emotions in organisations seems to have taken two different directions: one dealing with emotional intelligence and the other covering 'everything else about emotions'. An important aim of the advocates of the first direction is to develop instruments for measuring emotions, emotional intelligence in particular. The promise of a valid test for measuring emotional intelligence is a major driving force in this type of research. It goes without saying that the commercial benefits to the developer of a valid test would be significant[14]. The consulting business has also shown a lively interest in emotional intelligence. Numerous training packages for management consultants have been compiled on how to gain and train emotional intelligence. This kind of emotional intelligence training has a strong foothold particularly in the United States. Naturally, the commercial aspect of emotional intelligence was also familiar to my above-mentioned interviewee. However, the discussion about emotional intelligence and measuring emotions is beyond the scope of this study, whereas the second direction – 'everything else about emotions'- is more relevant to the contents of this chapter. The stream of literature that is central to my thesis could be called 'emotion in organisations', following two books edited by Stephen Fineman (1993a, 2000a) bearing the same title.

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[13] Although some work had been done on emotions in organisations before the 1990s – for instance, by Berg (1979) in a Scandinavian context – the recognition of emotions as a legitimate topic of research within organisation studies did not arise until the 1990s.

[14] Ashkanasy et al. (2002:13) make it clear that, as things stand today, *emotional intelligence* has yet to be defined unambiguously. See also a recent article by Fineman (2004) where he critically examines the growth of emotion measurement in organisational behaviour.

I will next review past research on emotions in organisations and then take a look at contemporary research, highlighting some key concepts in the area.

As discussed earlier, research on emotions in organisations can draw profitably from various other disciplines, notably from sociology, psychology, history, anthropology and philosophy (Fineman, 1996). This very fact makes it rather complicated to examine and describe the history of emotion research in an organisational context. Yet, it is common to start with a reference to William James's (1884) psychological research on emotions. James was, indeed, among the first psychologists to pose the question, '*What are emotions?*' His interpretation is interesting: he argued that what comes first is a perception of an event, object or circumstance, which acts as a precursor to emotion. The changes in internal bodily activities that are activated by the perception process and the feelings about these reactions are what form the emotional experience. As noted by Fineman (1996), James's formulation turned common sense on its head: we do not smile because we are happy, we are happy because we smile.

Already before the efforts of the 1990s to describe the field of emotion research in an organisational context, the sociologist Arlie Hochschild had gained international recognition by combining emotions and organisations. Her seminal work *The Managed Heart* (1983) is still much cited, and much of the basic terminology in the field of emotions in organisation studies owes to her research. In the recent literature on the subject, Hochschild is frequently referred to as mother to several basic concepts. In the following I will give a brief account of some of her thoughts in *The Managed Heart*, concentrating specifically on her description of the nature of emotion research at the time when she herself was writing the book.

In 1983, when *The Managed Heart* was published, Hochschild characterised research on emotions as being dominated by two models of emotion that had emerged in the 19th century: namely, 'organismic' and 'interactional'. The *organismic model* draws basically from the works of Charles Darwin, William James and the early Sigmund Freud. The *interactional model* in its different versions is derived from the works of John Dewey, Hans Gerth, C. Wright Mills and Erving Goffman. The two models differ in many respects. The first point of difference is that the organismic model defines

emotion as mainly a *biological* process. For the early Freud, emotion means libidinal discharge; for Darwin, it is instinct; for James, it is the perception of a psychological process. Organismic theorists postulate a basic fixity of emotions and a basic similarity of emotions across categories of people. For interactionists, on the other hand, it is enough to say that emotion always involves some biological component. Their main concern is the *meaning* taken on by psychological processes. Secondly, the organismic model considers the way in which we label, assess, manage or express an emotion as extrinsic to the emotion itself and, therefore, it is of less interest than how the emotion is 'motored by instinct'. Thirdly, the organismic model assumes emotion to have a *prior existence* apart from introspection, and introspection is thought to be passive. Fourthly, interactionists show only little interest in the *origins* of emotion, whereas organismic scholars like Darwin, for instance, trace emotion back to its phylogenetic origin and point to evidence of similarities between emotions in animals and human beings.

Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1955/1872) has influenced numerous researchers and theorists and their models of emotion. Darwin focused on emotive expressions, visible *gestures*, and not on the subjective meanings associated with them. Such gestures had been acquired in the prehistoric period and survived as 'serviceable associated habits'. Emotive gestures were originally linked to actions: there is no emotion without gesture. The emotion of love, for instance, is the vestige of what was once a direct act of copulation. Darwin's theory of emotion is actually a theory of gesture. Are emotive gestures, then, universal or are they culturally specific? Darwin's overall conclusion was that they are universal. What is missing in Darwin's theory from the beginning is a conception of emotion as a subjective experience and a more subtle and complex idea of how social factors impinge on it.

Freud singled out one emotion – *anxiety* – as the model for all the others, reasoning that it was more important because its unpleasantness led to the development of various ego defences against that unpleasantness. Anxiety is atypical of all other emotions in a variety of respects. Obviously joy or love, for example, are not emotions that we try to avoid in the way we typically try to avoid anxiety. Anxiety also differs in that it is an emotion without a defined object. We are not anxious *at* someone as we are furious *at* or in love *with* someone. Like Darwin, Freud had little to say about how cultural rules

might apply (through the superego) to the ego's operations (emotion work) on id (feeling).

Emotion as a construct has been camouflaged by terminology, including terms like 'sentiment', 'mood', 'affect', 'valence' or 'morale'. Studies focusing on the Hawthorne plant of Western Electric Company in the 1930s, for example, referred to workers' *sentiments*. At this time, special stress was placed on the effects of negative emotions on work behaviour. During the 1940s and 1950s, the concept of *morale* began to be used by occupational and industrial psychologists. This was the focus of interest especially in military contexts. In the 1950s, psychoanalytically inspired organisational researchers-cum-consultants from London's Tavistock Institute presented work that offered a dramatic contrast to the consciously driven actor influenced by 'here-and-now' emotions. These organisational psychoanalysts saw negative feelings as predominant: they posited various unconscious desires and anxieties expressed in the organisational processes of leadership, structuring and group functioning. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the focus shifted to a study of job attitudes. *Job satisfaction* was a particular attitude that absorbed much attention and continues to occupy researchers even today. (Fineman, 1996:544)

Fineman (ibid.) writes that the study of human behaviour has taken a strong swing towards the *cognitive* since the 1970s. In recent years cognitive theorists have tried to incorporate emotion into their models, either through the concept of 'hot' cognitions or by adding the influence of specific emotions to models of the decision-making process (Donahue and Ramesh, 1992, in Fineman, 1996). Growing attention to positive emotions is another feature of post-1970s psychological research[15].

Stephen Fineman, as the editor of two books on *Emotion in Organizations* (1993a, 2000a) and in his review articles (1996, 1999), has set much of the tone for current research on emotions in organisations. Recently, Fineman (2003) also came out with a textbook in this area: *Understanding Emotion at Work*. Most of the research compiled into the two volumes of *Emotion in Organizations* represents case studies with a

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[15] For references on positive emotions at work, see Fineman, 1996:544.

qualitative approach and practically excludes the discussion around emotional intelligence.[16] In the preface to the first volume, Hochschild (1993:xii) writes that the volume 'pioneers a new perspective on major institutions and opens up a rich new research agenda on organisations'. This is illustrative of the state of research on emotion in the early 1990s: it was a 'new' topic in organisational studies and offered interesting insights about life in organisations. Hochschild (ibid:ix) saw the volume as having the spirit of a busy workshop, laying out basic theoretical approaches, an array of exciting working concepts. In the introductory chapter, Fineman (1993b:2) refers to the discussion on rationality vs. emotionality, hoping 'that we will bring emotion a step closer to becoming a normal feature of organisational studies – where it rightly belongs'. Besides motivating a place for emotions in organisation research, the first volume of *Emotion in Organizations* discusses other related topics such as emotion work, and emotions and the politics of difference. Gender is also presented as a significant aspect in the study of emotions. In the concluding chapter, Fineman acknowledges a general need for a process view and a contextualised view of emotions. He addresses the critique against emotion researchers who have tended towards a segmentalist approach that isolates single-label emotions, or clusters of similar emotions, for attention. Although these classifications of emotions have important associative meanings, they do not specify the diverse emotional nuances as contexted in specific work circumstances. Fineman concludes the introduction to the book by stating that 'we do not need a new theory of emotions for organisations; what is required is the empirical development of specific propositions which arise from existing social constructionist and psychodynamic thought' (ibid:7). In conclusion, the first volume sets the stage for future research on emotions.

The writers in Fineman's first volume were mostly from Europe. However, the majority of the contributors to the second volume came from outside Europe, mainly from the United States. This volume concentrated on the application of different concepts of emotion to various research topics in an organisational context. The legitimacy of such research no longer had to be defended, even though some doubts were presented about

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[16] Fineman's own comments on *emotional intelligence* in his chapter on 'Commodifying the Emotionally Intelligent' form an exception (Fineman, 2000c:101-114).

the integration of emotion research into mainstream organisational research (Fineman, 2000d:277-79). The book offers several chapters with a similar tone as the first volume, mainly concerned with the emotional texture of organisations, appropriating and organising emotion, and working with emotions. New themes include aesthetics and emotion, authenticity and the emotional body. When Fineman (2000b:2) writes about approaches to workplace emotions, he notes that traditional psychoanalytical perspectives have been relatively eclipsed by the emergence of *social-constructionist* approaches.

In sum, Fineman presents a challenge to emotion researchers to specify the diverse emotional nuances contexted in specific work circumstances. The context of the present study is the work of personnel managers particularly in relation to crisis situations. Following the personnel managers' own definitions, 'crisis' in this study refers to a variety of emotional episodes, from giving notice to an alcoholic to handling a major downsizing situation. For some personnel managers, a crisis bore meanings of *conflict* or *change*. This brings to mind Sandelands and Boudens' (2000) suggestion that the engines of feeling at work are related to *contest* and *conflict*. Similarly, 'change is about feelings and emotion and chang*ing* is itself often emotional' (Fineman, 2003:130). In the following, I will discuss the topic of change and emotions, since one major type of emotional episodes described by the personnel managers in this study had to do with change, one way or another.

2.2.1   Change and emotions

The traditional literature on change – so-called *change literature* – is primarily concerned with emotions that have a negative role in a change. Kiefer (2002) has summarised three main points related to emotions in the change literature. Firstly, change is argued to cause stress and fear. Secondly, negative emotions are considered an obstruction to change. Here Kiefer refers to Zarandona and Camuso (1985) in remarking that many authors think that negative emotions at work have negative consequences for both the individual and the organisation. Thirdly, emotions require correction. Emotional reactions are seen to endanger the rationality – and thereby the

effectiveness – of people at work (e.g. Piderit, 2000, in Kiefer, 2002). In sum, 'emotive' in the change literature generally means 'accompanied with *negative* emotions'.

Huy (1999) suggested some theoretical underpinnings as to why, how and when emotions play a role in shaping the process of radical change. He presented a multilevel theory of emotion and change. Prior research had shown that emotional intelligence facilitates social adaptation and learning at the individual level. At the organisational level, Huy proposed an analogous concept and defined it as *emotional capability*. He also presented a mesolevel framework that relates emotion-attending behaviours to three dynamics of change: receptivity, mobilisation and learning. These behaviours – which he termed *emotional dynamics* – constitute the organisation's emotional capability. Schein (1992, in Huy, 1999) defined emotional capability as an organisation's ability to acknowledge, recognise, monitor, discriminate, and attend to its members' emotions. The emotional capability of an organisation is manifested in its norms and routines that have to do with feelings.

In a more recent study, Huy (2002) writes about *emotional balancing*. His argument is that it falls upon managers to work with their own and their subordinates' feelings, if both change *and* continuity are to be achieved. Huy illustrates the balancing principle in a study of contrasting responses to managing change in a large information technology company. The most successful way for managers to ease the anxieties and doubts that fuelled resistance to change was through actions directed at helping to carry people through the change.

2.2.2   Finnish research on emotions in organisations

Emotions in organisations have not been widely addressed in the Finnish research context. Rather, emotions have emerged as unexpected, surprising findings among research results mainly in interpretive studies. Lämsä (1998) studied managers in downsizing processes and realised that their experiences could be conceptualised in three categories, one of which was *downsizing as emotional work*. When managers described downsizing in emotive terms they focused on care for the laid-off and their

moral reasoning was based on care ethics. If they felt any kind of closeness with the individuals who were made redundant, emotions were bound to arise. Managers began to see their downsizing experiences from the perspective of the victims as individuals with a 'face of their own', instead of from the perspective of a 'faceless' organisation. In describing their emotions the managers seemed to shift themselves away from the public sphere of rational management and into their private spheres. Female managers had a tendency to transfer emotions to 'femininity', while male managers frequently transferred them to a kind of 'black humour'.

The subject area of a study by Laakso-Manninen (1998) resembles the contexts presented in this thesis. Laakso-Manninen looked at human resource management in the downsizing process of a large Finnish bank, concentrating on the effects of specific HRM actions from the perspective of both personnel and managers. HRM actions were divided into two categories: the actions of managers (leadership issues), on one hand, and personnel assistance programmes (e.g. information lectures, psychological coaching, outplacement), on the other. Managers' handling of the downsizing process and the operational part of downsizing and lay-offs was found to have been quite successful. What had proved more difficult was working with people. Half of the respondents representing the personnel described their managers' behaviour as unsatisfactory. Their evaluation criteria were in relation to their expectations. According to Laakso-Manninen's results, most employees would have appreciated some support from their superiors in the form of fairly elementary things like empathy, discussions and help in searching for a new job.[17]

Laakso-Manninen's study shows that line managers tend to neglect the emotional needs of the employees in times of crisis. The present study sets out to explore whether personnel managers engage in responding to such needs as the need for empathy expressed by the employees in Laakso-Manninen's study. The emotional capability of

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[17] Another Finnish study in the area of organisation research with an emotion perspective was conducted by Katila (2000). Katila looked at the survival strategies of Finnish farm-family businesses in times of change, specifically examining the period in which the entrepreneurial ideology was being introduced to farming. She found that there were certain feeling rules which were applied in transmitting the local moral order through intergenerational networks. Especially the emotions of companionate love, guilt and shame played a role in stabilising the local moral order.

an organisation, as presented by Huy, comes under a challenge when an emotional crisis situation is at hand. This implies that the norms and routines having to do with feelings are challenged as well. This study explores the strategies that personnel managers use to deal with emotions in times of crisis. The values and routines related to these strategies will be presented and discussed in the empirical part of this thesis.

2.2.3 Conceptualising emotions in organisational research

The research field of emotions in organisations is laden with concepts. I will next present and discuss some of its central notions and certain specific characteristics of emotions. Of special interest for the current study are the notions of emotion work and emotional labour as well as the idea of emotions as judgements of value. First, however, the concept of emotion will be discussed.

Emotion and feeling. Fineman (1996) asks how emotions could best be conceptualised and refined to understand organisational processes, and argues that the field is confusing and that different terms are used interchangeably. To begin with, some researchers distinguish between the concepts of *feeling* and *emotion* – others do not. *Affect,* which is an all-encompassing expression for any emotional or emotionalised activity, is sometimes used instead of feeling or emotion (Fineman, 2003:8-9). This is how Fineman defines feeling and emotion:

> A feeling is essentially the subjective experience – which is at the heart of most definitions of emotion. To feel means we are aware 'in' ourselves of some bodily state, perturbation, or more diffuse psychological change. Some feelings can in part be determined by early life experiences and expectations – sources of which we may be unaware. (Fineman, 1996:546)

> […] emotions are the personal displays of *affected*, or 'moved', 'agitated' states – such as of joy, love, fear, anger, sadness, shame, embarrassment. They acquire their meaning, their social currency, from the cultural setting – national, local and organisational (Ratner, 1989; Lutz & White, 1986; Fineman 1993). While we may be physiologically 'wired' in ways that permit emotional (and feeling) processes, the arousal requires the use of culturally shared communicative signs –

body movements, facial expressions, cognitive labels, language nuances
– to achieve its understanding, social significance and meaning (Ekman,
1985; Sugrue, 1982). (ibid.)

Hochschild in *The Managed Heart* defines feeling and emotion in the following
way:

> I would define feeling, like emotion, as a sense, like the sense of hearing
> or sight. In a general way, we experience it when bodily sensations are
> joined with what we see or imagine. Like the sense of hearing, emotion
> communicates information. It has, as Freud said of anxiety, a 'signal
> function'. From feeling we discover our own viewpoint of the world.
> (Hochschild 1983:17)

What is of particular importance in Hochschild's view on emotions is that she extends
to all emotions the 'signal function' that Freud reserved for the emotion of anxiety. She
explains that many emotions signal the secret hopes, fears and expectations with which
we actively greet any news, any occurrence. One of Hochschild's main points is that it
is this signal function that is impaired when the private management of feeling is
socially engineered and transformed into 'emotional labour for a wage'. (Hochschild,
1983:x)

Van Maanen and Kunda (1989) define emotions as self-referential feelings that an actor
experiences, or at least claims to experience, in regard to the performances he or she
brings off in the social world. In their words:

> [E]motions are ineffable feelings of the self-referential sort. They index
> or signal our current involvements and evaluations. Like sight and
> hearing, emotions provide a communications channel between the world
> and its moments and our assessments of just how we are gearing in and
> out of his perceptual world. Emotions build up and melt down. They
> may be intense or subtle, fluctuate wildly or show stability within a
> narrow band. What is certain, however, is the fact that we have no
> scientific or otherwise privileged access to feelings either as states or
> processes beyond that provided by self-reports. The validity of an
> emotion for those who feel it is given, is subject to no known truth test,
> and is neither right nor wrong. (ibid:53)

Albrow sees the question of identifying real feelings as purely 'academic'. He argues
that emotional expression or performance is not false, but an 'authentic' part of people's

behaviour in the construction of organisations, 'neither more or less alienated than what goes on in families or between friends' (Albrow, 1997:125 in Sturdy, 2003: 88).

The focus in this study is on the emotion-handling strategies used by personnel managers. What are constructed here, thus, are not the emotions themselves but the *strategies* used for handling those emotions. From the standpoint of data analysis, it sufficed that a personnel manager mentions emotions (emotion words or emotional expressions) in relation to an episode. In other words, an interviewee's construction of an episode that involved negotiating of emotions had to contain some expression revealing that emotions were present in that episode. A very strict definition of the concept of emotion is therefore not central from the perspective of the analysis.

Moods are feelings that linger. They are not linked to any particular object or event; they typically undulate over time. Compared with emotions, moods tend to be less intense and of longer duration. Some people have fairly steady moods, while others are 'moody', experiencing more frequent shifts in feeling. (Frijda, 1993; Fineman, 2003:8)

Emotional labour and *emotion work.* The flight attendants in Hochschilds's (1983) study often spoke of their smiles as being *on* them but not *of* them. In the case of a flight attendant or any other service producer, the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself. This is what Hochschild defines as 'emotional labour':

> This labour requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others – in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place. This kind of labour calls for a co-ordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honour as deep and integral to our individuality. (ibid:7)

Emotional labour here means the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display. Emotional labour is sold for a wage and, therefore, has *exchange value*. Hochschild uses the synonymous terms *emotion work* or *emotion management* to refer to these same acts done in a private context where they have *use value*.

In her more recent research, Hochschild (1993:x) expanded the notion of emotional labour to include 'knowing about, and assessing as well as managing emotions, other people's as well as one's own.' She illustrates her definition by describing the emotional labour of a personnel manager.

> Thus, as part of the personnel manager's emotional labour, he has to learn the company's 'emotional map'. He learns where, along a continuum of outgroup jokes, the laughter begins in a luncheon meeting at the executive club, in the computer room where the engineers eat their packed lunches, in the cafeteria where the truck drivers have a smoke. He has to know where, along an accelerating array of insults, it becomes OK to take offence without too much counter-offence. He has to understand what various expressions 'mean' for a worker with a given biography, disposition, reputation and status within the company. On an overlay map, so to speak, he learns to trace patterns of emotional attribution (for example the secretaries may say their boss is mad today while his own boss doesn't think so at all). (Hochschild, 1993:xi)

Forseth (2001) discusses the uniform negative view of emotional labour in initial research on emotions and how this view has been contested in later works (e.g. Fineman, 1996). The stereotyped negative view has been criticised in the recent literature, as it comes in the way of understanding the joy derived from performing emotional labour. For instance, contrary to Hochschild's early research, many employees in a heterogeneous sample of Swedish private-sector service workers reported that in their work they had learned to handle people better, had acquired a better understanding of people (Abiala, 1999, in Forseth, 2001). However, almost half of the sample reported that they sometimes got so tired of people that they preferred to be alone after work. Two other case studies underscored the fact that emotional labour is double-edged and carries costs as well as rewards for employees.

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) argue that service employees observe feeling rules (or display rules, in their terminology), not only by 'deep acting' or 'surface acting', but also through *genuine emotion*. Thus, the genuine experiencing and expressing of the expected emotions can be regarded as a third means of accomplishing emotional labour, and potential negative consequences in this case are less likely.

The influence of *identity* on emotional labour, especially in service roles, is discussed in depth in Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993) study. Following the social identity theory they argue that some of the effects of emotional labour are moderated by a person's social and personal identities, and that emotional labour stimulates pressures to identify with the service role. The greater the identification with the service role is, the weaker are the negative effects on the person's well-being and the stronger the positive effects. The authors further argue that emotional labour exerts internal (psychological) and external (organisational) pressures to identify with the role, but that service agents may use various behavioural and cognitive defence mechanisms to ameliorate these pressures. They also contend that identification with such a role contains its own emotional risks – like burnout or exacerbation of the psychological impact of job stressors and performance failures.

Feeling rules (Hochschild, 1983:18) give a social pattern to our acts of emotion work When we try to feel, we apply latent feeling rules. We may say, *'I shouldn't feel so angry at what she did'*, or *'given our agreement, I have no right to feel jealous'*. 'Feeling rules are standards used in emotional conversation to determine what is rightly owed and owing in the currency of feeling' (ibid.). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993:89-90) claim, following Rafaeli's and Sutton's (1989) lead, that the term 'display rules' (Ekman, 1973) is better than 'feeling rules', as the former refers to what emotions ought to be *publicly expressed* rather than to what emotions are actually *felt*. 'Because display rules refer to behaviour rather than to internal states, it is relatively easy for customers, managers, and peers to observe one's level of compliance with the rules' (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993:90).

Emotive (or emotional) dissonance. Maintaining a difference between *felt* emotions (feelings) and *feigned* emotions leads to strain in the long run. People may try to reduce this strain by pulling the two closer together either by changing what they feel or by changing what they feign. When display is required by the job, it is usually the feeling that has to change. In consequence, when conditions estrange us from our face, they sometimes estrange us from feeling as well. (Hochschild, 1983:90)

Kunda (1992: 261-262) presents some critique on the notion of *emotive dissonance*. He notes that emotive dissonance is modelled on the more established notion of *cognitive dissonance*. In his view the social psychological and sociological studies of emotion pale in comparison with the extensive analysis of cognitive processes in these disciplines. Although Kunda gives credit to Hochschild's (1983) study of flight attendants and emotion, he argues that the workings of emotive dissonance are more hypothetical than established.

In their seminal studies on emotional labour, Rafaeli and Sutton (1987, 1989; cf. also Sutton and Rafaeli, 1988) showed that service employees' displays of positive emotions (such as smiling) were directly related to positive customer reactions and, consequently, to sales and organisational effectiveness. Interestingly, in one of their studies, Sutton and Rafaeli (1988) found an inverse relationship between sales and smiling. They concluded that clerks had more time to socialise with customers in shops with low sales, whereas in high-sales shops there was no time for smiling and 'being nice'. The authors called this 'the Manhattan effect' to describe the resulting (unexpected) negative relationship between sales volume and smiling.

Emotional / emotionalised zones. We can imagine a cultural map of an organisation which charts the various settings and locations, or *zones*, which have come to 'permit' different types of emotional expression. In the cabin of an aircraft, the galley is the place where it is possible for flight attendants to drop their public mask, if they wish. 'Safe' settings such as these provide fertile territory for power-coded humour and stories, a symbolic attack on those (especially bosses) whose normal status protects them from open criticism. They can reveal to each other some of their feelings about their service encounters, the management, or whatever. The notion of emotionalised zones reminds us that the emotional cultures of organisations are rarely homogeneous. Corridors, coffee rooms and the corners of workshops offer different degrees of emotional freedom – besides which they can also be gendered in different ways. (Hochschild, 1983; Fineman, 1993b:6; Fineman, 1996:556)

Emotional climate. Emotion can also be a group-level phenomenon (cf. Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995). DeRivera (1992:197) defines an emotional climate as 'an objective

phenomenon that can be palpably sensed' and observed objectively – such as the emotional climate during wartime. The emotional climate of an organisation may influence the emotional experiences of the organisational actors at work because the social and the physical environment have an impact on people's emotions (cf. Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987). As will be shown in the empirical part of the study, an emotional climate of fear can influence strongly how organisational members experience other emotions.

The first studies on emotions in organisations concentrated more on lower-level than on managerial jobs. It is harder to find emotion research regarding the qualified work force or the management, although some studies on higher-status jobs do exist (e.g. Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Pierce, 1995; Brown, 1997; Leidner, 1999). However, numerous studies have focused on service jobs that are often occupied by female employees – for example, flight attendants, secretaries or supermarket cashiers. This is especially true of research on emotional labour[18].

As indicated by the pilot interviews for the current study, personnel managers are involved with emotions in emotional episodes at the workplace. Accordingly, their work can be described as *emotion work*. It can be anticipated that the job also involves emotional labour. This will be explored and analysed in the empirical part of the thesis.

Bounded emotionality. In classical organisational theory, the actor is by definition rational and goal-oriented and seeks to maximise gain. As a critique to pure rationality, Simon (1957) introduced the notion of 'bounded rationality' to suggest that optimal choice is limited or restricted by the information-processing ability of the organisational actors and their institutional practices and contexts.

Researchers who use the concept of bounded rationality are criticised for treating emotional experience – defined as feelings, sensations and affective responses to organisational situations – as either a weak or handicapped appendage to reason or as another 'means' to serve organisational ends (Mumby and Putnam, 1992:471). As an

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[18] For references of literature on emotional labour within different occupations, see Forseth (2001:42).

alternative to bounded rationality, Mumby and Putnam (1992:474) advocate the concept of *bounded emotionality*. This concept refers to an alternative mode of organising in which nurturance, caring, community, supportiveness and interrelatedness are fused with individual responsibility to shape organisational experiences. Bounded emotionality encourages the expression of a wider range of emotions than is usually condoned in organisations, while stressing the importance of maintaining interpersonally sensitive, variable boundaries between what is *felt* and what is *expressed* (Martin et al., 1998:436). It encourages the constrained expression of emotions at work in order to support community building and personal well-being in the workplace (ibid:429).

Martin et al. (1998: 436-38) define six characteristics of bounded emotionality – in their words, 'at the risk of extending Mumby and Putnam's ideas with a specificity they did not intend' – namely: 1) intersubjective limitations, 2) emergent (rather than organisationally ascribed) feelings, 3) tolerance of ambiguity, 4) heterarchy of goals and values, 5) integrated self-identity and 6) community building.

1) *Intersubjective limitations* in work settings mean that the enactment of bounded emotionality should begin with the recognition of another person's subjectivity, acknowledging potential differences as well as commonalities and working within whatever emotional limitations both individuals bring to the relationship (Mumby and Putnam, 1992:478; see also Putnam and Mumby, 1993:51-52; Meyerson, 1998). 'Such limitations would include an individual's preferred modes and range of emotional expression. [...] Intersubjective responsiveness to such individual limitations, or preferred modes of emotional expression, would presumably require as a prerequisite some intimate knowledge of the other obtained through careful observation and voluntary self-disclosure' (Martin et al., 1998: 436).

2) *Emergent work feelings* develop spontaneously from the performance of tasks and consequently are not organisationally ascribed.

3) *Tolerance of ambiguity* permits contradictory feelings, positions and demands to coexist.

4) *Heterarchy of goals and values* is the opposite of a hierarchical ordering of value preferences and suggests that no one set of values, even one that gives organisational priority to profit seeking, should take precedence over others.

5) Mumby and Putnam conceptualised *self-identity* in integrated terms, assuming that a person has a single self that can be known. The idea that bounded emotionality can facilitate the experience of being 'authentically oneself' at work would be meaningless without such a concept of self.

6) One purpose of enacting bounded emotionality is to facilitate strong feelings of *community*. Evidence for this argument has been found in a series of studies on bounded emotionality in feminist organisations (Lont, 1988; Wyatt, 1988, cited in Martin et al., 1998). These studies have, however, all focused on relatively small and generally non-profit organisations.

Bounded emotionality is of particular interest as a concept in relation to personnel managers and emotion-handling strategies. It highlights features that can be anticipated as central to dealing with emotions. The recognition of another person's subjectivity is as crucial in emotion handling as is the tolerance of ambiguity, which permits contradictory feelings, positions and demands to coexist. Enhancing a feeling of community is by definition one of the main duties of a personnel manager in an organisation. Finally, the idea that organisational profit seeking should not be considered as the only and ultimate goal in organisational action is worth examining in the context of the present study. Accordingly, the advancement of employee well-being by celebrating other values than profit seeking is investigated in the empirical part of this study. In the following section I will further elaborate on the relationship between emotions and values.

2.2.4   Emotions as judgements of value

Several authors have commented on the close relationship between *moral order* and *emotion*. Crawford et al. (1992) refer to Bedford (1962), who argues that emotive words form part of a vocabulary of appraisal and criticism, and that a number of these words belong to the specific language of moral criticism: 'There is an overlap between the list

of emotions and the lists of vices and virtues that are given by philosophers' (Bedford, 1962:119). Bedford goes on to say that emotional concepts belong to systems of judgement: moral, aesthetic and legal. Attaining a desired object by breaking the rules of the moral order does not bring about feelings of happiness but, instead, feelings of guilt and shame (cf. Harris, 1993). Emotions play an essential role in supporting the moral order (Harré, 1983). Perceived disagreement on important issues, for instance, provokes intense emotions (Jehn, 1997). Harré sees it as highly important to develop a scale of emotions that supports and maintains the local moral order.

Nussbaum (1998) writes that one of the most notorious and paradoxical theses in the history of philosophy is the Stoic thesis of emotions as forms of judgement. Ancient writers such as Seneca and Cicero used their own grief and anger as material for general philosophical reflection. To the Greek and Roman Stoics, philosophy was the art that brought healing to the passions of the soul. One dimension of the Stoic view on emotions is that they are not brutish impulses, but intelligent and discriminating parts of the personality – a type of evaluative thought about objects.

Nussbaum (ibid.) goes on to say that our experiences of emotions can, in fact, be best explained by a version of the Stoic view which regards emotions as a type of evaluative judgement which ascribes to things and people outside a person's own control great importance for that person's own flourishing. Emotions are, in effect, cognitive acknowledgements of neediness and a lack of self-sufficiency. These latter ideas make Nussbaums's thoughts specifically applicable to work life, where feeling is often defined as an awareness of the life of the group one works within.

> The Neo-Stoic view of emotions has implications for the analysis of emotional conflicts. […] The Neo-Stoic view says that when one emotion masters another it is on the basis of certain judgements and ways of seeing: the judgement that this is an immensely valuable and wonderful object defeats the judgement that this object is a threat to our own well-being. Spinoza points out that any object that is immensely important in one's life is also, at least potentially, a threat to our own well-being. (ibid:52)

Emotions do not involve simply ways of seeing an object but also beliefs – often very complex beliefs – about the object. In order to feel fear, one must believe that bad events are impending; that they are not trivially but seriously bad; and that one is not entirely in control of warding them off. We might say that beliefs are not only necessary for emotions to emerge but that they are constituents of the emotions' very identity. The feeling of agitation in itself will not distinguish fear from grief, or grief from pity. In other words, beliefs also ascribe values to their object. (ibid:44-5)

Nussbaum's arguments are supported by Watson's (1994:180) empirical results from his extensive field study on managers. Watson realised that what managers loved and hated were matters that related to their deepest personal values, and that considerable emotion could be brought into play when they saw these values challenged. He further pointed out that one's concept of self, as well as one's values and orientations to one's work, are tightly interwoven (ibid:181).[19] In the context of the current study, I will reflect on a personnel manager's concept of self by applying the idea of a *logic of appropriateness* (see *Chapter 1* for a definition). The aim is to show that the concept of self, presented in the form of a logic of appropriateness, is related to a personnel managers' values and orientations to emotion handling. A notion also used in this study in relation to the values enacted by personnel managers in the frame of their strategy to emotion-handling is *value driver*[20]. This refers to an evaluation or a judgement made by a personnel manager concerning the driving force, belief or value behind his or her actions.

Of the huge body of emotion research outside the field of organisation studies (for an extensive overview of emotion theories in various disciplines, see e.g. Brundin's study of 2002), a useful categorisation for this study is one presented by the psychologist Michael Lewis (1998 in Brundin, 2002). Lewis makes a difference between *emotional states*, *emotional expressions* and *emotional experiences*, a categorisation that appears helpful here.

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[19] In a Finnish context, the relation between moral order and emotion has been illustrated in Katila's (2000) work on the survival strategies of farm-family businesses – see footnote 17 in this chapter.
[20] The *value driver* concept exists in the field of economics as well, but bears another meaning in that context. Here the definition for a value driver is my own.

Emotional states are described as a combination of maturation, socialisation and cognition, drawing support from physiological and neural changes. Lewis argues that an emotional state can occur without the individual being aware of that state and can involve both neurophysiological and hormonal responses as well as facial, bodily and vocal changes. *Emotional expressions* are defined as 'potentially observable surface changes in face, voice, body, and activity level that accompany emotional states' (ibid: 37), which he labels as facial, postural, vocal and locomotor expressions. Whether they reflect internal emotional states is a question of debate. Lewis (1993, in ibid.) himself has noted that the problem with emotional expressions is that they can be masked, dissembled and controlled by the individual. Cultural processes and socialisation obviously play a key role here, since even young children can 'learn' what is appreciated by adults and what is not. Further, Lewis (1998, in ibid.) suggests that a person's emotional expression and another person's response to a specific expression vary as a function of several components – values, culture, age, societal norms, etc. – and notes the importance of the communicative role of emotional expression. *Emotional experience* is defined as 'the interpretation and evaluation by individuals of their perceived emotional state and expression' (Lewis, 1993:226, in ibid.). This indicates that an individual has to be aware of his or her emotional state and expression. According to Lewis, emotional experience calls for cognitive abilities such as the ability to perceive, discriminate, recall, associate and compare and, in addition, a capacity for self-referential behaviour and self-awareness. In his view, emotional experience can occur at different levels of consciousness but requires some degree of attention. Yet, one is not always automatically aware of one's emotional experience. A child who feels pain or fear is one example. The same applies to adults: they may similarly be afraid or in pain without consciously experiencing it because they are fully occupied with handling the situation. What is of particular interest to this study is that the emotional experience of an incident usually comes *after* the actual incident.

Issues like bodily expressions in connection with an emotion do not have much importance from the perspective of this study. Bodily expressions are intrapersonal and also highly volatile; for instance, actors can display emotions physically if they are skilful or trained to do so. Furthermore, the data gathering method for this study should have been based on observation in order to grasp the bodily expressions of emotions.

What ultimately matters here is how personnel managers *account for* their emotions, what they *experience* as emotional in a specific context and how they *construct* the emotional experience itself. Hence, I concluded that the best way to get access to other persons' emotions for this study was by listening to their stories about emotional experiences. Van Maanen and Kunda (1989:53) have noted that what we know for certain is that there is no scientific or otherwise privileged access to feelings either as states or processes beyond that provided by self-reports. No doubt the interaction situation shapes the content of a self-report on emotions, and the memory of the informant can play a role in some cases. However, considering all the complexities of an emotional experience, it seems to be the best way to collect information about this issue. In the next section, I will reflect on the story character of the collected empirical accounts.

2.3   Studying emotions in organisations

Because the emotional episodes analysed in this study often bore the character of a story, I will first reflect on the relationship between stories and emotions. I will then describe the perspective – social constructionism – chosen for the interpretation.

2.3.1   Stories and emotions

Boje (1991:106) writes that storytelling is 'the preferred sense-making currency of human relationships'. The stories we tell – say, in a workplace – give substance, nuance, purpose and legitimacy to our feelings. The story is not a measure of the objective truth of an event, but it is a fine indicator of our feelings and how we wish to present them. For psychoanalysts, organisational stories are ripe for interpretation of hidden meanings; for social constructionists, stories do more than represent individual emotions – they actually *constitute* the emotional aspect of work life. (Fineman, 2003: 17)

> And psychology thinks feeling is an individual affair, yet at the office water cooler, or in the tavern or therapist's office, we hear stories of feeling tangled in webs of personal and group relationships. (Sandelands and Boudens, 2000:46)

In a recent study, Meisiek (2003) focused on the social processes involved in the narrating and sharing of emotional events at the workplace. Meisiek identified specific emotional events that initiated the social sharing of emotions in organisations. He drew the conclusion that emotion appears to function as an impulse for the creation of narratives from work events, and as a trigger or a lubricant for subsequent social sharing in organisations.

Feeling, thus, is not primarily an individual response, but a crucial faculty of social life. Sandelands and Boudens (2000) write that even though feelings at work can vary to an almost infinite degree, the group always figures as a key element. Also, work feeling is *of* work, not *about* work. It is not an intention, but an inner state that refers to no outer object. Work feeling is not stable or internally consistent. We can feel both love and hate in relations with significant others, and similarly we can feel both love and hate in our work – even at the same time. (ibid.)

Moreover, Sandelands and Boudens (ibid.) argue that we need new concepts to represent feelings – concepts that should be true to experiences, not imposed on them by theory. *Indirection* appears to be the key to conveying feeling: the fact is, people rarely speak directly of their feelings at work. Instead, they speak about significant events and especially about relationships at work. Typically, when people name a feeling at work, they follow it up with a story about a work event that exemplifies that feeling. A common pattern is to name a feeling either just before or just after telling a story about work, as if to preview or summarise the feeling of the story. This pattern is also distinguishable in the emotional episodes collected for this study. An emotion or emotions were described in relation to a work event which, in line with the focus of the study, was a crisis situation.

Sandelands and Boudens' thoughts are supported by Theodore Sarbin's ongoing informal survey (1989, in Sandelands and Boudens, 2000) of the way people talk about their emotions. Sarbin has asked people to describe a particular emotion, finding that they almost always respond with a story. He notes that the *emotional truth* of each story is evident. This is a crucial aspect for scientists, whose concern is with the truth. Stories

generate truths about feelings at the workplace, even when they are fables or myths. (ibid.)

Stories are often exceptionally frank expressions of real experience (Fineman and Gabriel, 1996). They offer a unique and indispensable opportunity to study feeling at work. Moreover, stories are *objects* (scientist can collect them, analyse them and talk about them); they are *general phenomena* (people in all cultures and all places tell stories); and they are *indicative* (they exemplify feelings at work and forms of work). Their significant scientific value comes from the way they map the various feelings and forms of social life. This mapping suggests two courses for science to take. In the first place, research can explore how stories can be used to discover the feelings and forms of work. In the second place, research is needed to find out how feelings are used in creating, narrating and enjoying stories about work. Sandelands and Boudens (2000) conclude that for too long researchers have studied feeling at work with measures of job satisfaction that mistake feeling for an intellectual judgement about an individual job. According to the authors, feeling in the work context is a *non-intentional awareness* of the life of the group.

Finally, with respect to this entire study and to emotion research in general, we can ask whether the focus on emotions in working life does not contain some elitist aspects. Western welfare states are among the very few that can afford a discussion about how to combine family and working life or about emotional labour; certainly these are not concerns of the labour force of the third world. Another noteworthy point is that lower-class and working-class people in our Western societies tend to work more with *objects*, while middle- and upper-class people are more likely to have jobs working with *people* (Hochschild, 1983:21). Thus, there is also a social aspect to class patterns which should be considered in relation to human feeling (ibid.).

2.3.2 Social constructionism

Harré (1986) has advocated the social constructionist view on emotions in the book *The Social Construction of Emotions*. Harré argues that the overlay of cultural and linguistic

factors on biology was seen in the 1980s as so great that the physiological aspects of some emotional state had to be relegated to a secondary status, among the effects of more basic sociocultural phenomena. The overwhelming evidence of cultural diversity and cognitive differentiation in the emotions of mankind had become so obvious that a new consensus developed around the idea of *social construction*. In studying emotions, we have to understand that the emotion is not necessarily there to be studied – what *is* there are agitated people, upsetting scenes, sentimental episodes, and so on: in other words, a concrete world of contexts and activities. The dominant contribution to the way emotions unfold in our lives comes from the local social world by way of its linguistic practices and moral judgements in the course of which the emotional quality of these encounters is defined. Many emotions can, in fact, exist only in the reciprocal exchanges of a social encounter. The investigation of emotions must be extended to include the social contexts in which their display, and even their being felt, is proper. (Harré, 1986)

A social constructionist position accepts an active, interpretive role for the organisational members. Emotional behaviours and inner feelings are learned not only from early socialisation experiences, but as part of organisational and occupational socialisation processes as well. Social constructionists explain felt and displayed emotions as determined in part by 'here-and-now' situations, contexts and interactions, rather than as a manifestation of early life experiences. (Domagalski, 1999:13)

The approach of social constructionism provides insights into how emotions shape and are shaped by the social arrangements, rules and languages used. Reality and the expression of reality are a product of interacting individuals and groups who interpret cultural and subcultural cues as they strive for meaning in their daily activities. Social constructionism opens doors to the gender rules of emotional display and to the way that specific social roles determine what we should or should not feel or show we feel. However, social constructionism is not much concerned about what is 'beneath' one's actions and rarely asks where one's emotions emerge from. In this respect, existential and psychodynamic theorists have more to contribute. (Fineman, 1993b,c)

In principle, social constructionists are reluctant to refer to the concept of *personality*. They argue, for instance, that people do not develop any intrinsic personality traits which make them think or behave in certain ways as individuals (cf. Burr, 1995). Rather, social constructionists refer to *identity* and the different roles that individuals take on as identification claims, suggesting a much more active part in the socialisation process. People construct each other's identities. Berger and Luckmann (1967:204) claim that the human organism itself is transformed in the dialectic between nature and the socially constructed world. They argue that a person produces reality and thereby produces him- or herself in this same dialectic. Burr (1995), in discussing personality in social constructionism, agrees that social constructionists have been unable to resolve the dilemma that there does seem to exist such a thing as a subjective experience of motivation and emotions, and that people do seem to bear certain personality traits. Building on the findings of Harris (1993) and Lewis (1993, 1998), Brundin (2002) writes that emotional states, emotional experience, emotional expressions and an awareness of self and of others are contextual and socialised processes. These processes continue throughout a person's adulthood and working life as secondary socialisation – that is, in our interaction as adults with an organisationally, socially and institutionally constructed reality. Brundin's point is that emotions as such are not fixed but evolve constantly and that they do not shape anyone's personality once and for all.

Language and the construction of social reality. Jokinen et al. (1993:18) write that the use of language is a practice which not only describes the world but also gives it meaning and at the same time organises and constructs, renews and changes the social reality we live in. People tend to take for granted many concepts that they use in everyday life. Only if the concept is to be defined from within a culture that does not share our concepts do we notice how loaded words are with latent expectations of what

is considered as natural.[21] Constructionism, thus, is tightly interwoven with the idea of language as constituted of socially shared *systems of meaning*[22]. The idea of constructionist systems of meaning does not see language or the use of language as corresponding to or reflecting reality. This is often referred to as a *non-referential* attitude towards language, according to which language neither reflects the so-called 'reality out there' nor any internal, psychic reality. (Jokinen:18-20) This line of thought seemed applicable for my purpose since I cannot claim, for instance, that I would be able to judge by the use of their language whether the personnel managers in this study had in reality experienced the emotions they were talking about. Rather, the interviewees were constructing a narrative of their view of a certain crisis situation from an emotion standpoint at the time of the interview. Fineman (1993d:221) noted, referring to emotion research, that we cannot 'release' emotion from the cultural symbols, like language, that are available to us.

However, the idea of non-referentialism does not mean that the researcher were disinterested in what is really happening in society – quite the contrary. The idea is to replace too simplistic descriptions of phenomena by descriptions that have greater power to explain how social reality is constructed and constantly reconstructed. For example, a researcher who wants to explore the differences between, say, folks from two different regions in Finland, Häme and Savo[23], will not start by describing their cultural characteristics or differences in personal traits as if these categories of

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[21] Take, for instance, the word 'shoe'. For someone who never saw a shoe, it might be described as a kind of a 'canoe' that is tied on a person's feet with laces, so that the feet are like mussels in their shells. This example of Jokinen et al. (1993) was inspired by a book in which a tribal chief describes European life. To take an example from organisation studies: in discussing the term 'project', Engwall et al. (2003) note that most research and practice-oriented literature in the field of project management are grounded in the underlying idea that projects are a distinctive species due to their intrinsic technical nature. A social-constructionist view to project management, on the other hand, would suggest that project boundaries should be viewed as social constructs, meaning that they are not given entities 'out there'. Engwall et al. point out that an understanding of projects as socially constructed, organisationally embedded and open structures would direct our attention to new, interesting issues outside the traditional agenda of project management research. For suggested directions for future research, see Engwall et al., 2003:128-130.

[22] The concept of *systems of meaning* was originally presented by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1983).

[23] Häme and Savo are regions of Finland whose inhabitants are believed to have certain specific characteristics. Since ancient times, folks from Häme have been described as typically slow, sometimes on the fringe of seeming stupid, but highly reliable, hard-working and honest. People from Savo, on the other hand, are presumed to be talkative and quick-witted, on the edge of being dishonest, and constantly joking.

description were given. Rather, the focus of research would be on the way such categories are produced and how and when self-referential definitions and differences are evoked. (Jokinen: 20-21)

It is important to note that systems of meaning do not arbitrarily pop up in the heads of individuals but are constructed as parts of different social practices. Yet, equally important is understanding that neither is the language used by the researcher a description of 'a reality out there' but is constructionist as well. (ibid:21-23) In other words, the emotion-handling strategies developed in this thesis are *constructions of constructions* – that is, my constructions of the personnel managers' constructions.[24]

Psychodynamics. Fineman (1993b,c) describes psychodynamics as the counterpart to social constructionism, although psychodynamics is markedly social in its origins. Within psychodynamics, a largely invisible world of personal anxieties, fears and yearnings can be seen to underpin some of the routines and rituals of work organisation and behaviour. Our deepest existential fears are camouflaged by the very act of working and organising. We find explanations of organisational form and practice as a direct reflection of the imported emotional needs of the organisational actors. Early life experiences may influence the way in which these actors organise themselves.

2.4   Gender and emotions

Bringing the aspect of gender into a study on personnel management is motivated by the *feminine* label frequently attached to personnel management. As noted in *Chapter 1*, the majority of personnel managers are female in Finland (Korhonen, 1998) and the trend is similar in other Western industrialised countries. In fact, the post of a personnel manager is the only management position where women are in the majority. However, the feminine label of personnel management is not solely due to the female majority. Personnel management is 'people work', which is more often connected to females than

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[24] Thomas and Linstead (2002) applied similar methodology in a study of middle managers and their identity.

to males. People work is also associated with notions of caring, nurturing and emotional support. Thus, within the frame of a study on emotion handling, it can be expected that the relationship between gender and emotions will be observable in the empirical results. This chapter presents the concept of gender and its relationship to emotions.

Several authors have noted that emotion discourse is often closely interrelated with gender discourse (e.g. Hearn and Parkin, 1987). Rafaeli and Worline (2001:100) argue that it was as a result of Enlightenment philosophy and politics that emotions came to be associated with irrationality and the personal and, hence, with the domestic sphere and feminine nature.

'Gender' is usually defined as 'the social sex'. To take an example: when we dress our baby girls in pink and our baby boys in blue, we are constructing gender. One glance into a pram where everything is pink immediately tells us the sex of the sleeping baby. It has become the norm to dress babies in certain colours and not in others according to their sex. Or – in an organisational context – when we think of a secretary we tend to think of a woman, not of a man. The secretarial profession is constructed as female. Green et al. (2001:191-192) have made the distinction between *sex* and *gender* in the following way:

> [S]ex is seen to be a biological category which defines individuals as males or females according to physiological or chromosomal criteria. Gender is seen as a socially constructed phenomenon whereby certain personality or other social characteristics are connoted as masculine or feminine and are inaccurately assumed to be 'naturally' related to the possession of a male or a female body.

Gender, thus, is an integral part of a socially constructed individual identity, both constituting and embodying it. It also constitutes and restructures a multitude of cultural and societal phenomena. (Aaltio and Kovalainen, 2003:175)

Aaltio and Kovalainen (2003:194) note, referring to Marshall (2000), that recent developments in the analysis of gender-theorising see gender as being at the same time discursive, ideological, fictional and socially constructed, and thus a phenomenon which is constantly changing and being reconstructed. But, the authors continue, gender has

practical and material consequences for both women and men, and these can be either oppressing or empowering by nature. Consequently, gender is not only socially constructed and resconstructed in our cultural understandings, organisational settings and discourses, but simultaneously it also has corporeal, material and political dimensions within organisations.

Generally speaking, we tend to think that women are more emotional than men. Fischer (1993) has reflected on the concept of *emotionality*, studying whether the sex differences related to emotionality are facts or stereotypes. Her article begins as follows:

> Research on stereotypes has shown emotionality to be one of the general dimensions of sex stereotypes: women are said to be more expressive, excitable and easily hurt than men. They are also supposed to be more sensitive to the emotions of others (Ashmore & al., 1986; Broverman & al., 1972; Fabes & Martin, 1991; Lutz, 1990; Ruble, 1983). Not surprisingly then, when we think of an emotional person, a woman most quickly comes to our minds (Shields, 1987). (ibid.:303)

According to Fischer, the theoretical assumptions underlying the concept of emotionality can be questioned on the basis of four arguments. First, emotionality is treated like the unipolar disposition of a *personality trait* which is stable over time and largely independent of any social context or past experiences. In short, this discussion disregards a gender perspective towards emotions. Second, feminists have often equated emotionality with *relationality*. However, a relational identity has been defined as focusing on one's relations with others, feeling the need to be intimate with others or being dependent upon others, and this is not the same as experiencing and expressing all kinds of emotions. In order to experience and express emotions one need not be relationally oriented. Third, the concept of emotionality is *aspecific*. It refers to many different aspects of emotions. These aspects should be differentiated, however, because someone who talks about emotions all the time may experience the same emotional intensity as someone who ignores the subject publicly. Fourth, emotionality is often confused with ideological notions like *impulsivity*, instability or irrationality. In other words, someone who is labelled as 'emotional' is generally seen as *too* emotional as compared to the cultural feeling rules. Finally, Fischer continues, emotionality underemphasises the differences between emotions. (ibid: 305-306)

Emotionality suggests that the underlying mechanisms concerning emotional experiences and behaviour can be reduced to a single personality trait. Furthermore, the concept fails to account for the social and cultural contexts of emotions, it is often mixed up with relationality or with ideological notions such as irrationality or instability, and – last but not least – it lacks specificity about the types of emotions or the different aspects of emotions. The main point Fischer (ibid.) makes is that the common claim of women's greater emotionality should be seriously questioned. She argues that the general claim of one sex or the other as being more emotional is impossible; the whole issue is far more complicated. She refers to several authors in remarking that instead of speaking of emotionality as a kind of sex-specific disposition or personality trait, we should acknowledge that emotions are largely social reactions that are embedded in cultural systems of meanings.

In the same context, Fischer (ibid.) reviewed a number of empirical studies to assess the frequency, content and expression of some prototypical emotions. A summary of the results of various studies implied that it is not that women *are* so much more emotional than men but that they *show* their emotions more frequently. This greater emotional expressiveness may be one of the reasons for the persistent stereotype of the 'emotional woman'. It goes without saying that emotions are more likely to be inferred if someone talks about an emotional event rather than ignores the subject, or expresses her fear rather than suppresses it, or cries rather than raises her voice. On the other hand, this stereotype may function as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because women are assumed to be more emotional, they are allowed and socialised to be more so. Thus, the relationship between sex stereotypes and emotional expressiveness is not uni-directional – rather, it is interactional.

In a study on Finnish managers' experiences of downsizing, Lämsä (1998) noticed that male managers resorted to a particular use of language – black humour or irony – to help them to process emotions. Male managers strove to remove emotions from what they considered as 'rational management of downsizing'. Female managers, on the other hand, did not have recourse to irony. Instead, they tended to 'transfer' emotions or connect them with their femininity.

Emotions are traditionally a feminine province, and a discourse on emotions is far more inherent to the social lives of women than men. Moreover, emotions that are consistent with one's sex-role are likely to be judged more favourably. The fact that the feeling rules for men differ from those for women may account for the observation that women generally express their emotions more freely than men. Women are also able to admit and express weak emotions more easily without damaging their public image or their self-image. Fischer (1993) writes that this is not the case for men – at least not for men with a strong masculine identity. Further, the emotional expressions of men and women may have different social implications; for instance, women can make negative emotions more socially productive. (ibid.:313-314) On the other hand, certain behaviours are labelled as 'rational' and 'decisive' when considered in relation to men, but viewed as 'bossy' and 'emotional' when speaking of women (Hearn, 1993:143-149):

> All social and organisational contexts and situations and all people, including men, may be constructed as 'emotional' all the time. […] Not only are men far from unemotional, and organisations far from unemotional arenas, but men can be deconstructed as just as emotional as women and organisations can be deconstructed as just as emotional as non-organisational arenas respectively.

Hearn has illustrated the above argument by examples drawn from professional sporting events. He claims that for men 'being professional' may mean 'not showing certain emotions', and it may also limit certain emotional experiences in the longer run. These men may appear to 'not be emotional' or subscribe to a professional code that values 'not being emotional' (Hearn, 1987).

> They may display 'affective neutrality', even talk about emotions, become 'expert' on emotions, yet not be seen as emotional. A degree of controlled friendliness may conjoin with this denial of emotion. (ibid:140)

We tend to associate efficiency with the public domain, with public wage earning and often with manhood, itself associated with 'level heads' and moderate-sounding tones of voice (Hearn, 1993). The expectation that males conform to some rule of toughness may be expressed as cold unemotionalism in the business world (Mills and Murgatroyd, 1991:77). Nevertheless, working with others' and with one's own emotions can, for

some men, challenge and question the traditional models of masculinity and their own masculinity in a thoroughgoing way (Hearn, 1987:144).

Forseth's work illustrates how gender plays a role in the interpretation of research results on emotions. Her research (1994, 1995a) shows how closely gender is related to emotional labour. For example, she noted that the amount of stress and strain among women in lower-level service occupations was 'veiled' because many of them coped by working part-time. Generally, the reason for working part-time had been put down to the women's roles as mothers and housewives and had not been seen in relation to a stressful working situation. Forseth's informants reported often feeling exhausted – 'like a dishcloth' – after work. Yet at the same time their job had many positive aspects, such as interaction with customers, clients and colleagues. Forseth captures this double-edged nature of their work in the notion of 'joyful exhaustion'. Several of her informants complained that they experienced greater emotional stress in the wake of a recent restructuring, not only due to the restructuring itself but because the introduction of new business concepts meant there was less time to spend on invisible emotional demands. (Forseth, 1994, 1995a,b)

Emotional labour, thus, is performed in a gendered context. Women are often faced with the task of being nice and caring; while men, on the other hand, are often expected to be persuasive and aggressive. Even when men and women hold the same positions, research shows they are met with gendered expectations. (Forseth, 2001:64) This, I believe, has consequences for the current study as well. I will particularly explore the gendered expectation for women to act in a stereotypically caring manner. It can be anticipated that an excessive focus on caring will lead to emotional labour. A focus on caring might also be connected to the values of personnel managers.

Pierce (1995, 1996a,b), in her research entitled *Gender Trials* focusing on two US law firms, uncovered a variety of complexities and contradictions in 'doing emotion and gender'. She was primarily interested in exploring gender in the context of legal work. In the case of litigation units, she found a clear gender division in the patterns of emotional labour. At the top of the organisation, male litigators performed stereotypically male emotional labour, such as intimidation or strategic friendliness.

Both forms of emotional labour are related to gamesmanship and each involves an emotional presentation of self that is intended to favourably influence the feelings of a particular legal audience toward one's client. Pierce called the actors of this pattern 'Rambo litigators'. In contrast to male litigators, female paralegals were expected to be 'selfless mothers' – supporting, caring and deferential – and to support and maintain stability. In order to test the hypothesis of female-linked mothering spilling over to the workplace, Pierce examined the anomalies or 'tokens'[25] (Kanter, 1977) in the two law firms: namely, female lawyers – who were in the minority – and male paralegals – also in a minority position. Female lawyers were caught in a double bind: if they failed to conform to the emotional labour of lawyers by being aggressive and manipulative, they were not considered 'good' as lawyers. But if they did, they were not 'good' as women nor were they considered 'ladylike'. Male paralegals, on the other hand, representing a female semi-profession in a male-dominated organisation, were at the top of the gender hierarchy among paralegals. There were three reasons for this. Firstly, they were often mistaken for attorneys. Secondly, the attorneys assumed that they were bound for law school. And thirdly, they certainly were not expected to 'play mom'. In consequence, the job of male paralegals was more visible and their emotional labour demands were different from those of female paralegals. Pierce further noted that heterosexual paralegal men tended to resist the nurturing and care-giving demands of the job because they found 'feminine' emotional labour demeaning.

One of the major challenges in this study is to reveal such aspects of personnel work that have so far remained invisible. Fletcher (1999) has argued that there is a specific, relational competency which is invisible in organisational life. According to her, there are two distinctively different logics of effectiveness in organisational life. Fletcher suggests that certain behaviours 'get disappeared' – not because they are ineffective but because they are associated with the feminine, relational or 'softer' side of organisational practice. This implicit association with the feminine tends to code these behaviours as inappropriate to the workplace because they are out of line with some

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[25] Those who are few in number, a minority within a majority, are called *tokens* – for instance, the only woman or one of a few in top management is a token. Tokens often become symbols of the minority group, in this case representatives of 'how-women-can-do', as stand-ins for all women. (cf. Kanter, 1977)

deeply-held, gender-linked assumptions about 'good' workers and 'proper' behaviour in organisations. In other words, her findings suggest that there is a *masculine logic of effectiveness* operating in organisations, considered so natural and right that it may seem odd to call it 'masculine'. That logic of effectiveness 'disappears' behaviour that is inconsistent with its basic premises. Such suppressed behaviour reflects a *relational logic of effectiveness* and requires various relational skills like empathy, mutuality, reciprocity and a sensitivity to emotional contexts. It is intentional behaviour motivated by the belief that this way of working is a more effective way of achieving goals and getting a job done than the 'masculine' way. It is rooted in a relational, stereotypically feminine value system and can also be called a *feminine logic of effectiveness*.

Fletcher (1999) focused on the female engineers of a company and examined how they enacted relational practice. *Relational practice* is defined as a way of working that reflects a relational logic of effectiveness and requires a number of relational skills such as empathy or sensitivity to emotional contexts. Fletcher found that there was a dynamic process involved in which a relational way of working 'gets disappeared' as work and 'gets constructed' as something other than work. She detected three separate 'acts of disappearing' in her data: misattribution of motive, limits of language and social construction of gender. As my study also focuses on the invisibility of personnel work – often relational by nature – I will take a closer look at Fletcher's three disappearing mechanisms.

The first disappearing act is a *misinterpretation of the intention* underlying relational practice. It is seen as being motivated not by a desire to work more effectively, but by a personal idiosyncrasy or trait. Such personal traits might include negative characteristics such as naïveté, powerlessness, weakness and emotional need, but also more positive attributes like thoughtfulness, personal style or being nice. The skill of being able to hold on to one's own idea while actively engaging with others to see what they might have to offer gets lost when that behaviour is described as a personal characteristic, such as being polite or self-effacing. The significant finding, according to Fletcher, is that a misinterpretation of the motive underlying the practice taints that behaviour as inappropriate and implicitly marks it as 'non-work'.

Language is the second mechanism that silences the challenge which relational practice might present to the dominant discourse on work. Many of the words used to describe relational practice – 'helping', 'nurturing', 'nice', 'polite' – associate it with the private sphere and with femininity. The female engineers interviewed in Fletcher's study, for example, had no way of describing the output of their relational activity as an achievement in its own right, because outcomes that are embedded in people – confidence, skills or knowledge – do not fit the conventional definition of an outcome as something tangible, measurable and quantifiable. Fletcher explains that what further complicates the situation is that words like 'skill', 'intelligence' or 'outcome' – words that have been defined in ways that exclude the relational – are routinely used to operationalise other key organisational concepts, such as 'achievement' and 'self-efficacy'.

The third mechanism of the disappearing dynamic relates to the *social construction of gender*. According to Fletcher, it is different from the first two aspects of 'getting disappeared' because it has to do with how this way of working gets conflated with images of femininity and motherhood. The first two acts of disappearing would probably be a factor for anyone who works this way, regardless of gender. However, when women enact relational practice, something else happens and a gender dynamic kicks in. Because of gender roles, Fletcher's interviewees – female engineers – felt they were expected to act relationally: to be soft, feminine, helpful, good listeners. But being expected to work relationally was only one side of the gender dynamic; the other had to do with being devalued for doing so. The organisational discourse on work privileges a model of growth and development based on individuation, autonomy and separation. Thus, when faced with behaviour that was symptomatic of a relational model of growth, the system tended to understand it as the devalued side of its own model. This understanding required an explanation of what might motivate someone to engage in an activity that was inherently less valuable. The explanation, rooted in the ideology of 'true womanhood', was that women have greater emotional dependency needs. Many of the behaviours associated with working relationally are easily conflated with images of femininity and ideal womanhood, and can be interpreted as natural expressions of (the female) gender.

> As a result, when female engineers tried to enact mutual empowering, a practice characterised by mutuality and an expectation of reciprocity, they often were misinterpreted as enacting mothering, a practice characterised by selfless giving, and no expectation of reciprocity. In other words, they were responded to as *women* within a patriarchal system of power and entitlement, not as peers or co-workers in an organisational hierarchy. (Fletcher,1999:109)

In Aaltio-Marjosola's (2001) study on men, women and management, one of the interviewees, a male director, commented on female leaders like this: 'It is okay to have a female leader, but if there are too many women as leaders, there is the risk that emotions will gain too much power'[26] (ibid:51). Aaltio remarks that with this logic it would be equally justified to argue that if males are seen as stereotypically rational and relying on reason, then *reason* will gain too much power under male dominance, and *emotions* will be bypassed. Both arguments are simplistic and stereotypical. If women are labelled as the emotional gender, they can profit in the sense that they are allowed to express emotions more freely than men, but, on the other hand, emotionality may have a negative impact on their credibility in leadership positions.

2.4.1 Mothering

The work of personnel managers is sometimes described as 'taking care of the employees'. The idea of caring and nurturing is reinforced by the feminine label of personnel management. 'Mothering' is a concept that lies close to caring and nurturing. As indicated by the research presented in the previous section (e.g. Kanter, 1977; Pierce, 1995, 1996a, 1996b), women are often expected to act as *organisational mothers*. Moreover, it might be possible that male personnel managers, too, engage in mothering or perhaps find other ways of relating to 'people work' in times of crisis. I will apply the concept of *mothering* in the analysis of the data material in the current study.

Mothering carries very diverse connotations and derives its meaning from a number of

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[26] Translation by the author.

contexts and discussions. Within the frame of the religions based on the Bible, for instance, we associate mothering with religious images of the Madonna and the Child, depicting the mother as a symbol of infinite affection for and unconditional acceptance of the child. The caring, peaceful appearance of the Mother of Christ symbolises idealised motherhood. When contemplating the image we are at the same time aware of the sacrifice this particular mother will face in relation to her child. On the other hand, we can associate mothering with our own childhood experiences and think of our own relationship as a daughter or a son to our own mother. Kristeva (in Moi, 1986:176) expresses this beautifully: 'I remember the warmth of her body, the way she held me to her, her unselfish love, her infinite kindness, a memory in the flesh.' Many authors have written about how they have experienced and felt their mother and how they remember her.[27]

In a sociological frame of reference, a mother is defined as the one who does the relational and logistical work of child-rearing. Definitions of mothering share this common theme: the social practices of nurturing and caring for dependant children. Mothering thus involves a dynamic activity and always-evolving relationships. (Arendell, 2000:1192)

> Mothering is associated with women because universally, it is women who do the work of mothering. Motherhood is entwined with notions of femininity (Chodorow, 1989, 1990; Glenn, 1994), and women's gender identity is reinforced by mothering (McMahon, 1995). Especially since the 19th century, mothering has been presumed to be a primary identity for most adult women. That is, womanhood and motherhood are treated as synonymous identities and categories of experience. Yet not all women mother, and mothering as nurturing and caring work is not inevitably the exclusive domain of women (Forcey, 1994; Rothman, 1994; Ruddick, 1994; Schwartz, 1994). (Arendell, 2000:1192)

Ruddick (1983:214) defines *maternal thinking* as a unity of reflection, judgement, and emotion. Even though 'many women and some men express maternal thinking in various kinds of working and caring with others' (ibid:225), Ruddick believes that maternal thought exists for all women in a radically different way than for men. It is

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[27] Incidentally, there has been a boom of Finnish novels on mothers and motherhood over the past few years, e.g. Mäkelä (1999), Ahola (2000), Härkönen (2001) and Hassinen (2002).

because women are daughters, nurtured and trained by women, who early receive maternal love with special reference to its implications for women's bodies, passions and ambitions. Consequently, women are alert to the values and costs of maternal practices – regardless of whether they are determined to engage in them or avoid them.

Critical voices towards mothering have also been heard. Some feminists have presented mothering as something to be avoided. Allen (1983), for example, opposes motherhood entirely and argues that women ought not to have children. She claims that refusing to engage in mothering is a means to women's liberation. One of the central messages in the book *Mothering – Essays in Feminist Theory* (ed. by Trebilcot, 1983) is that it is reasonable, even required, for women to withdraw from mothering.

On the other hand, some radical feminists argue that women's capacity to bear children and sustain new life is responsible for a range of distinctively feminine characteristics. Rich (1976, in Halford and Leonard, 2001) writes that women's ability to bear children is their greatest strength, bestowing on them particular ways of seeing the world and relating to others. Other radical feminists have claimed that the reproductive capacity of women generates a distinct spirituality. Characterised by empathy, caring and a sense of connection with others, women's spirituality is not only understood as different, but as superior to male ways of being. (Halford and Leonard, 2001)

Kanter (1977) claimed that there were four possible roles for women entering an organisation: namely, those of 'mother', 'seductress', 'pet' and 'iron maiden'. All of these informal role traps encapsulated women into a category that men could respond to and understand. The role of *mother* meant that one was rewarded primarily for service, not for independent action. The dominant and powerful aspects of the maternal image might arouse fear, and so a person in a mother's role was expected to stay in her place

as a non-critical, accepting, 'good' mother – or else, lose her rewards. The role of mother was that of an emotional specialist. (Kanter, 1977:233-236) [28]

Not being able to show and celebrate measurable and quantifiable results may be one of the reasons why personnel work continues to be female-dominated. Moreover, it is possible that women with their reproductive ability are less concerned about short-term results than men, who with their different logic of effectiveness are unwilling to engage in invisible work. The activities of preserving, supporting and caring, inherent in the very definition of mothering, typically cannot be described in terms of concrete achievements and do not necessarily result in something measurable. (cf. Aaltio and Hiillos, 2003). Rather, mothering is a long-term project, full of invisible work which enables others to achieve something.

In social research, family has traditionally been connected to women more than to men. However, from the 1980s onwards, research on family has started to focus on fathers in a new way, and today there is a cultural discourse on the rise of a 'new fatherhood'. (Kivimäki, 1997) It is possible that the values cherished by these 'new' fathers will slowly spill over into the context of business life as well. Although mothering seems to bear such connotations that are hard to replace within a short time span, we can play with the thought that in future it might be possible to replace the term 'mothering' by 'fathering'.

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[28] The *seductress*, on the other hand, introduced an element of sexual competition and jealousy into the organisation. She was rewarded for her femaleness and ensured attention from the group, but she was also a source of considerable tension. Needless to say, her perceived sexuality blotted out all other characteristics. The *pet* was 'an amusing little thing' and symbolically taken along on group events as a mascot – a cheerleader for shows of prowess. Finally, Kanter's *iron maiden* was a variation of the stereotypical roles into which strong women are placed. Women who failed to fall into any of the first three roles and resisted the overtures that would trap them in a role were consequently responded to as 'tough' or 'dangerous'. Whereas seductresses and pets incurred protective responses, iron maidens faced abandonment. They were left to flounder on their own and often could not find peers sympathetic to them when they had problems. (Kanter, 1977:233-236) Of these four roles, a female personnel manager would probably most often be stereotypically categorised as a *mother*. Later on in the analysis and results of the study (*Chapter 5*), we will see that the mother stereotype was not unfamiliar among Finnish female personnel managers either.

2.5 Personnel managers negotiating emotional value in crisis situations

I now move on to introduce the idea of seeing the work of personnel managers as similar to negotiating. My aim is to show that their work can be described as *negotiating emotional value in situations of crisis*. The following sections present the area of negotiation research and discuss the context in which personnel managers can be conceived to negotiate emotional value.

The notion that negotiating as a concept might be useful in the context of this study emerged as I was reading a dissertation entitled *Interorganizational developmental processes* (Ness, 2000), in which the focus was on governance and interaction in continuous negotiated agreements. Even though both the research setting and the data differ substantially from those of the current study, Håvard Ness's thesis was a major source of inspiration for this part of my work. The structure of the presentation of negotiation research below follows roughly that of Ness's study.

2.5.1 Negotiation and negotiating

The present study is inspired by the concepts and ideas used in the area of negotiation research. Basically I prefer to use the term 'negotiating' instead of 'negotiation' in this study. The reason is that *negotiation* refers to a setting in which two parties strive to reach an agreement. The problem is that I have only interviewed one party of a negotiation: the personnel manager. Thus, the question arises whether the idea of negotiation is at all appropriate here. On the other hand, the area of negotiation research seemed conceptually suitable for interpreting certain aspects of my data. Some of the elements of negotiation research offered an opportunity to better describe the data and the analysis. The idea of *negotiating* seemed particularly descriptive of the actions taken by personnel managers in crisis situations, and so I decided to integrate negotiation research into the framework of the study. My perspective in this context is unilateral: a negotiation is approached solely from the point of view of the personnel manager.

One of the definitions of 'negotiating' given by *Webster's Dictionary* (1984) is 'accomplishing or coping with'. *Dictionary.com* gives (as one of the three definitions of the verb 'to negotiate') 'to succeed in going over or coping with: negotiate a sharp curve' and 'to succeed in accomplishing or managing: negotiate a difficult musical passage'. It is in the spirit of these definitions that the terms *negotiate* and *negotiating* are used here. In the context of emotion handling in crisis situations, negotiating refers to the activities of personnel managers in relation to the crisis in question. In fact, at some point of the research process I considered using the expression *managing emotions*, but rejected it. 'Managing' as a term implied 'controlling' of emotions, which was not my focus. Since I am going to use some of the key concepts of traditional negotiation research in the analysis part of the study, I will first discuss the concept of negotiation from the perspective of negotiation research.

2.5.2   On negotiation research

Negotiating is used in this study as a *sensitising device* (on sensitising devices see e.g. Giddens, 1984:326). In other words, the analysis is not typical of negotiation research, but I use its ideas to describe and interpret the data material. This section briefly presents negotiation research and some of its key concepts.

Ness (2000) refers to Lax and Sebenius' (1986:11) definition on negotiation as 'a process of potentially opportunistic interaction by which two or more parties, with some apparent conflict, seek to do better through jointly decided action than they could otherwise'. Research on negotiation is a vast area of inquiry. It has two main research streams: the distributive and the integrative. *Distributive negotiating,* or *distributive bargaining* as it is also called, can be described as a win-or-lose situation involving two parties and one issue – for instance, the price of a commodity. Each party seeks to maximise its share of a fixed-sum payoff. The situation resembles a simple game of utility maximisation where economic profit is the only determinant. Thus, if price is under contention, the parties would typically have opposing interests, and the gain achieved on one side would equal the loss on the other. This can be viewed as a competitive decision-making situation, and is often referred to as *claiming value* (Lax

and Sebenius, 1986, in Ness, 2000). The opposite of a fixed-sum situation would be an *integrative negotiating* or *bargaining* situation where the parties involved collaborate to increase their joint gain. The focus is on *creating* rather than *distributing* value. This type of bargaining typically tends towards a joint problem-solving process in which the sharing of information through open communication and trading of issues are key aspects. It can be viewed as a co-operative strategic situation – or, at least not a strictly competitive one. (Ness, 2000)

Early behavioural negotiation research was dominated by distributive models, but more recently the main focus has shifted to integrative models (Lewicki et al., 1992; Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993 in Ness, 2000). Some studies have also considered the co-existence of distributive and integrative aspects in negotiations. Putnam (1990 in Ness, 2000) argued that most negotiations should be understood as involving both a distributive and an integrative dimension.

Although differing perspectives have been used in the literature, most negotiation research can be classified as either *descriptive* or *normative*. It seems that descriptive behavioural models have lately gained increasing importance. The normative negotiation literature, which is based on mathematical modelling and the game theory (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993; Raiffa, 1982 in Ness, 2000), largely examines what 'ultrasmart, impeccably rational, super-people *should* do in competitive, interactive situations' (Raiffa, 1982:21 in Ness, 2000). This is a vast body of literature and has had a major impact on negotiation research in general (Lewicki et al., 1992 in Ness, 2000).

2.5.3   Negotiating emotional value in crisis situations

This section presents the idea that handling of emotions can be conceived as negotiating emotional value. I will discuss the context in which emotional value is negotiated as well as how that context affects and shapes the negotiating procedure. I also look at the actual process of negotiating, in which the notions of emotional value and integrative bargaining as well as the 'dual-concern model' are of particular relevance.

2.5.3.1 Context

I use the word 'context' basically to refer to where and within what limits personnel managers operate in personnel departments. The overall *context* of my study material is Finnish society and Finnish business life, with a specific focus on the personnel departments of business companies and organisations. The organisational culture of a company and its specific industry also shape the context of this study, since a personnel manager's working environment is structured by these different contextual factors.

2.5.3.2 The process of negotiating

All of the personnel managers interviewed for this study had engaged themselves either on their own initiative or upon request, in negotiating an emotionally laden crisis that had demanded someone to handle it. In other words, in some cases the task of emotion handling had been delegated to the personnel manager, whereas in others the personnel manager him- or herself had been the initiator in handling the emotional episode. The interviewees had taken in a variety of actions in such situations, depending on the context and type of the crisis. It was hard to find a common denominator for all the different actions. However, a common feature revealed already in the pilot interviews was that the descriptions of crises evoked talk about emotions. My next step was to investigate *how* and *in what contexts* the personnel managers handled emotions. This led me to realise that what the personnel managers were negotiating in the emotional episodes was *emotional value*, a term used in negotiation theory to describe one type of desirable outcome of negotiation.

Outcomes are an important aspect in negotiation theory. Negotiation theory assumes that the sequencing and interaction of tactics used to operate negotiation strategies are a key determinant of the outcomes of negotiating. Although the traditional way of measuring outcomes focuses on financial measures and quantifiable value, recent contributions to negotiation research appear to consider alternative and complementary outcome measures. (Ness, 2000:67)

Ness presents an alternative model on outcomes advocated by Tripp, Sondak and Bies (1995). They argue that relationships provide three types of desired outcomes to the negotiating parties, namely material value, symbolic value and emotional value. *Material value* refers to the traditional economic outcomes of negotiations, often expressed in monetary terms. It may result from increased cost efficiency, establishment of norms for determining the terms of exchange, or predictability of supply. *Symbolic value* is related to status in a social group, which may refer to the confirmation or preservation of personal or organisational roles in relationships. One's social status, or role in a relationship, often secures the possibility to voice an opinion and discuss matters of interest, instead of exiting the relation or obeying and showing loyalty to some appointed authority (see Hirschmann, 1970). *Emotional value* is related to the degree to which one cares for the relational partner or partners. If some kind of harm is done, it affects the emotional condition of a relationship. This is known to have consequences for subsequent interaction as it can destroy trust and co-operative intentions. There is empirical evidence (Greenhalgh and Chapman, 1995) for the hypothesis that negative emotions are attributable to the use of coercive tactics, and that negative emotions have a negative impact on relationship continuity. On the other hand, positive emotional values are assumed to enhance further co-operation. 'Given that relationships have value, sometimes the value of preserving a relationship will outweigh the value of obtaining extra gains from a single transaction. Thus "rational" negotiators will sometimes "sacrifice" potential material gains in order to preserve or build (or perhaps even enjoy) a relationship.' (Tripp, Sondak and Bies, 1995:54-5)[29]

2.5.3.3 Dual-concern model

In *Negotiation in Social Conflict*, Pruitt and Carnevale (1993) discuss generality problems with some key findings on negotiation. The findings are quite strong when the negotiators are individualistically oriented, with concern only for their own outcomes;

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[29] There is a parallel here to the discussion on *rationality* and *emotionality* (see *Chapter 1*). When a party negotiates emotional value, being rational is described in terms that are not related to the traditional definition of rationality. The traditionally defined rational actor does not sacrifice potential material gains in order to preserve a relationship. But, as Fineman (1996) argues, the weighing of means and ends is not merely rational; rather, it is overwhelmingly *emotional*.

but findings disappear when negotiators are co-operatively oriented, with concern for the other party's outcomes as well as their own. 'Concern for the other party is sometimes genuine and sometimes instrumental (strategic). Whatever its source, this concern appears to have a distinctive impact on negotiation behaviour' (ibid:104).

Most theories on negotiation have assumed an individualistic orientation. This seems one-sided in the light of the generality problems. Pruitt and Carnevale (1993) argue that negotiators are often concerned about the other party's outcomes, and this concern must be worked into theory because it makes a difference. They suggest that a *dual-concern model* rectifies this one-sidedness.

The dual-concern model (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986) is an extension of Blake and Mouton's (1964) 'conflict grid'. Rather than viewing *self-concern* as a constant, as did earlier approaches, this model sees it as a dimension running from weak to strong. When self-concern is strong, one is willing to work hard for outcomes favourable to oneself; when it is weak, one is willing to let one's own interests slip. *Other-concern* is also seen as a dimension that runs from weak to strong. Self-concern and other-concern are regarded as independent dimensions, rather than as opposite ends of the same dimension (Thomas,1976). The dual-concern model turns out to be particularly useful for understanding the determinants of problem-solving behaviour (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993:104).

On the other hand, the position of a personnel manager as the 'man-in-the-middle', discussed earlier in this chapter, calls for a slight modification to the model. For a personnel manager, concern about own outcomes seems to vary according to what position he or she adopts in an emotional episode. This position varies between acting as a representative of the employer or of the employees and is dependent on the nature of the episode. In other words, their self-concern can reflect the organisation's, the employees', or their own personal concern. Combinations of the three are also possible. The model is illustrated in Figure 3, followed by a brief description of the alternative strategies shown in the model.

Figure 3. Modified dual-concern model.

Concern about other's outcomes

```
  ↑
  |    Yielding              Problem
  |                          solving
  |
  |
  |
  |    Inaction/             Contending
  |    withdrawal
  |
  |_____→
```
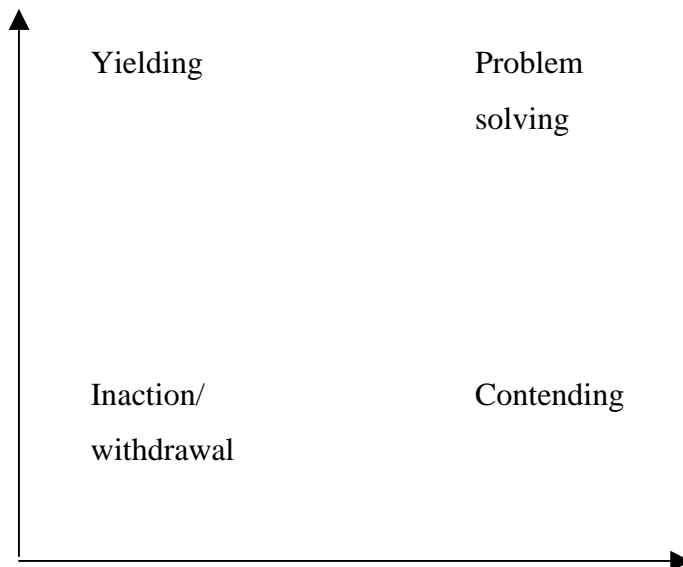
Concern about own outcomes (organisation's, employees' and/or p-m's own personal outcomes)

(Based on Pruitt and Rubin, 1986:29)

P-m = personnel manager

Yielding or concession making. A concession involves reducing one's demands or changing one's proposal so that it provides less benefit to oneself. Usually negotiators assume that their concessions give greater benefit to the other party, thereby moving the negotiation towards agreement. However, this assumption is not always valid, since the other party's values are not always known. Reductions in demands usually involve reductions in the goals underlying these demands.

Contending differs from concession making in that it takes a variety of forms referred to as *tactics*: threats, harassment, political commitments and persuasive arguments. The

aim is to persuade the other party to make concessions or to resist similar efforts by the other.

Problem solving involves an effort to find a mutually acceptable agreement or a win-win solution. There exist various problem-solving tactics. Some refer to *joint* problem solving in which the two parties work together to try to find a mutually acceptable alternative; others refer to *individual* problem solving in which one or two parties act on their own. Problem solving leads to win-win agreements, provided that there is integrative potential and the parties adopt ambitious but at the same time realistic goals.

Inaction and withdrawal. Inaction and withdrawal are fundamentally different from the other strategies in that they do not move the negotiation towards an agreement. Withdrawal means breaking off the negotiation, resulting in no agreement and in success for the parties that are advantaged by the status quo. Inaction may take a number of forms, such as not showing up for discussions or talking around the issues. Inaction is usually a way-station in negotiation – a pause before the adoption of another strategy. But if it continues indefinitely, it is tantamount to withdrawal.

The first users of the dual-concern model (e.g. Blake and Mouton, 1965; Thomas 1976) treated it mainly as a theory on individual differences in conflict style, by which they referred to the way a person most commonly deals with conflict. The dual-concern model is supported by three experiments (Pruitt et al., 1983; Ben-Yoav and Pruitt, 1984a,b) with independently manipulated self-concern and other-concern. Pruitt and Carnevale report that all three studies showed similar results. For instance, win-win solutions (high joint benefit) were particularly likely to be achieved when there was high self-concern and high other-concern, and contentious tactics were especially likely to be used when there was high self-concern and low other-concern.

Another way of looking at the results of these experiments suggests that high other-concern leads to two contrasting types of co-operation, depending on the strength of self-concern: problem solving and concession making. On one hand, if self-concern is strong, other-concern encourages problem solving. This means that negotiators are likely to do their most creative thinking about issues under circumstances that force

them to try to reconcile both parties' interests. On the other hand, when self-concern is weak, high other-concern produces concession making. With no concern about their own outcomes, negotiators develop unrealistic goals which they easily abandon in the face of a strong desire to please the other party. Thus, they do not work at solving the puzzle of how to satisfy the interests of both parties. What all this seems to imply is that concern about other people's interests – whether due to altruism or informed self-interest – is usually quite desirable, but that it will lead to suboptimal results unless coupled with a healthy respect for one's own interests as well. (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993:111-12) A parallel to the concept of *burnout* can be detected here. Concern about others' interests should not be coupled with a disinterest in one's own well-being; otherwise there is a risk of emotional exhaustion leading to burnout. This can also be seen in relation to personnel work.

According to the *perceived feasibility perspective* (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986), the dual-concern model predicts a negotiator's preferred strategy. If the originally chosen strategy seems infeasible, the negotiator will move on to another strategy. Hence, high self-concern will lead to a preference for contending. If contending seems infeasible, however, the parties are likely to shift to problem solving as the next-best approach for achieving their goals. This corrects a limitation of the model: namely, its static perspective.

In addition to the four negotiation tactics of the dual-concern model, the concept of *mediation* will be used in the analysis of the current study. Mediation is a special case of negotiation. 'In mediation, the negotiation continues but is helped along by the third party' (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993: 165). Mediation preserves the voluntary, joint-decision features of negotiation. (ibid.)

In conclusion, some concepts drawn from negotiation research seem to be particularly interesting in view of the current study: *emotional value* (as a part of negotiation outcomes), *integrative bargaining*, *the negotiation tactics of the dual-concern model* as well as *mediation.* These concepts are applied in the interpretation of the data with the aim of showing that handling of emotions in a crisis can be described as *negotiating emotional value*.

This chapter concludes the presentation of the theoretical reference frame of the study. However, some new theoretical concepts will be presented further on, as often happens in abductive research. The next chapter describes how I set out to the field as researcher to collect data for this study.

3. COLLECTING EPISODES OF NEGOTIATING EMOTIONS

The first sections of this chapter account for the research approach adopted in this study, with a focus on the *interpretive paradigm* and *abductive reasoning*. I also reflect on the concept of *pre-understanding*, which is essential in reporting on qualitative research.

I will then move on to describe how I as researcher went to the field to conduct the interviews for this study, and how the focus of research evolved and became defined. I will tell how I chose the interviewees and how I reached them. Next I will describe the interviewing process and the nature of the data – that is, the emotional episodes recounted by the interviewed personnel managers. I proceeded with data collection and analysis in parallel, well aware that data should never be collected without substantial analysis simultaneously (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996), but will, for reasons of clarity present the data and data collection in this chapter, and focus on the analysis and interpretation of data in *Chapter 4*.

3.1 Research approach

The following sections discuss the approaches used in this study and my reasons for choosing them. I will also put forward my arguments for the interpretive, qualitative and abductive design of the study.

3.1.1 The interpretive paradigm

My reason for defining this study as *interpretive* is based on Burrell and Morgan's (1979) four sociological paradigms. These paradigms are constructions of two dimensions. Burrell and Morgan label the first dimension as 'subjective-objective'. A *subjectivist* approach to social science is ontologically nominalist and epistemologically anti-positivist. The model of man in this approach represents a voluntarist view, arguing that man is completely autonomous and free-willed. Its methodology is ideographic, based on the idea that one can understand the world only by obtaining first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation. Conversely, an *objectivist* approach to social science represents realism, positivism and determinism, and a nomothetic methodology which looks for natural laws and regularities. Burrell and Morgan's second dimension is based on the 'order-conflict' debate in sociology. However, in their analysis the authors show that this traditional distinction is not without problems and suggest that this distinction should be replaced by the notions of 'regulation' and 'radical change' as a central theme (ibid:10-16). A sociology of *regulation* refers to the writings of theorists who are primarily concerned with providing explanations of society in terms that emphasise its underlying unity and cohesiveness. Adversely, the basic concern of a sociology of *radical change* is to find explanations for the radical change, deep-seated structural conflict, modes of dominations and structural contradiction which the theorists of radical change see as characteristic of modern society. (ibid:17)

The four distinct paradigms constructed from these two dimensions are called 'functionalist', 'interpretive', 'radical humanist' and 'radical structuralist'. They are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. *The four sociological paradigms.*

The sociology of radical change

Radical humanist	Radical structuralist
Interpretive	Functionalist

Subjective | | Objective

The sociology of regulation
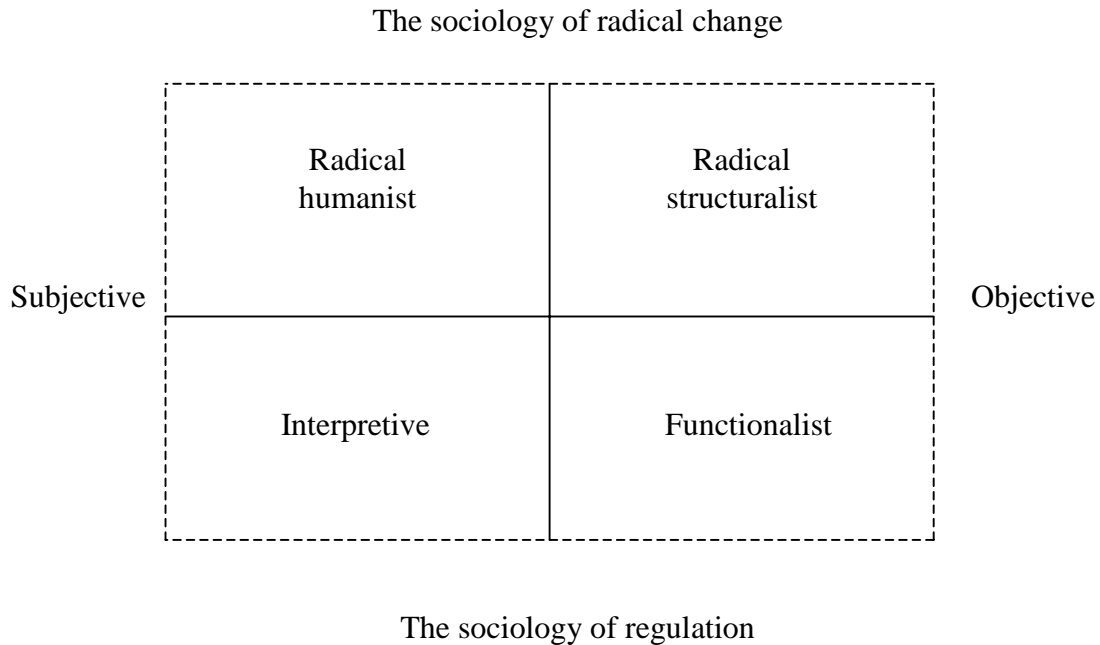
Burrell and Morgan (1979:22).

The *interpretive paradigm* seeks to understand the world as it is, to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience. The frame of reference is that of 'the participant' as opposed to 'the observer' of actions. The social world is seen as an emergent process which is created by the individuals concerned. Social reality is, thus, little more than a network of assumptions and intersubjectively shared meanings. The commitment of interpretive sociologists to the sociology of regulations is implicit rather than explicit, and their ontological assumptions rule out a direct interest in the order-conflict debate as such. Their interest lies in gaining an understanding of the subjectively created social world 'as it is' in terms of an ongoing process. The interpretive paradigm is underwritten by an involvement with issues relating to the nature of status quo, social order, consensus, social integration and cohesion, solidarity and actuality. Any view that attributes to the social world a reality which is independent of people's minds is rejected. Interpretive sociology emphasises that the social world is no more than the subjective constructions

of individual human beings who, through the development and use of a common language and the interactions of everyday life, may create and sustain a world of intersubjectively shared meaning. As a result, the social world is essentially intangible and in a continuous process of reaffirmation or change. (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:28-32, 260)

The interpretive paradigm belongs to the hermeneutic tradition, according to which it is more essential to understand a phenomenon than to explain it. The *hermeneutic circle*[30] is a central concept in this tradition: it is a description of the process by which an understanding of a phenomenon is reached. Human beings and their relationship to other human beings are of central interest in hermeneutics.

The current study focuses on the emotion-handling strategies used by personnel managers. The researcher's role, thus, is to try to understand personnel managers' world(s) in terms of their handling of emotions. It must be remembered that my interpretation is just one interpretation at one certain point in time, and no claims can be made for an 'absolute truth'. The results of a study like this – whose aim is to suggest new ways of looking at personnel work – should be considered as *alternative* truths instead of as new, absolute truths.

Qualitative and quantitative perspectives. One of the primary choices in designing a research approach is choosing between a qualitative and a quantitative study – or considering whether it might be possible to combine the two. Although some research areas have strong traditions favouring either a qualitative or a quantitative approach, the decision should be based on the area of research and on the research questions.

The objective of a *quantitative* approach is to capture a view of the world as described in the form of *causal relationships*. Isolated relationships are identified among a set of variables defined prior to starting the research. The role of a human being is reduced to an element subject to the influence of a (to a varying degree) deterministic set of forces. The quantitative approach subsumes that the researcher knows how to ask the relevant

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[30] The term *hermeneutic spiral* is also used.

research questions. But if we admit that human beings are more than mere elements responding to the world, we will find it difficult to adopt a quantitative approach.

The nature of the knowledge gained by applying a *qualitative* approach is different from that obtained using the quantitative approach. The basic aim of a qualitative study is to achieve an *understanding* of a phenomenon. It is generally accepted that studying even a very limited set of data may yield results that are scientifically interesting and, specifically, may offer new insights to the phenomenon. Qualitative studies may function as 'introductions' to new areas of interest. In fact, it is often recommended to conduct a qualitative study before undertaking a quantitative study, in order to capture what is relevant and interesting in the phenomenon to be researched (cf. Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Due to the explorative nature of the current study, the qualitative approach seemed to me most suitable as an approach.

3.1.2   Abductive reasoning

Traditionally we learn that there are two alternative ways of seeing the relation between theory and data: the deductive and the inductive. The *deductive* approach emphasises the importance of deriving the research questions from existing theory – first the theory, then the data. In other words, empirical research is used only for testing hypotheses built on theories. Thus, a hypothetico-deductive approach to inquiry confines the role of research to the context of testing existing ideas (e.g. Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:155). On the other hand, in an *inductive* approach the data are the primary source from which the research questions are developed: the questions are expected to emerge from the data. Generalisations are then developed on the accumulations of observations and cases.

The crucial question is: how far should the research (question, design) be shaped prior to fieldwork – tightly or loosely? (Miles and Huberman, 1994) This issue intrigued me a lot and was a major source of frustration in the early stages of my research. In trying to find support for either an inductive or a deductive approach for this work, I noticed that researchers often had a distinct personal preference for either the one or the other.

There seemed to be just as much encouragement for choosing either one. As a result of my reflections on this point, I ended up working with theory and data in a style that was actually somewhere in between the deductive and the inductive approach. I later learned that this style of working can be called *abductive reasoning*. Although 'abduction' as a term is less frequently used than 'induction' and 'deduction', it should be noted that analysing data in an abductive manner is nothing new. Even if not termed 'abduction', approaches combining induction and deduction with the aim of theory development have long been applied by researchers.

Peirce (1958) was the first to introduce the term 'abduction'. An abductive approach implies examining a set of data in order to find suggestions for a theory that represents the most plausible explanation, solution or description of a phenomenon. The basic objective – which resembles that of induction – is to investigate the relationship between 'everyday language' and 'concepts'. However, according to Peirce, abduction follows another logic.

Dubois and Gadde (1999) identify the logic of abduction as *systematic combining*. They claim that a systematic combining of theoretical and empirical findings gives the research process a character which differs from both the deductive and the inductive approach. Based on abductive logic they introduce systematic combining as a method for theory generation in which the framework, data collection and analysis evolve simultaneously. The critical difference compared with purely deductive or inductive studies is in the role of the *framework*. In abductive studies the original framework is successively modified, partly along with unanticipated empirical findings but also according to theoretical insights gained during the process. One of Dubois and Gadde's major arguments concerns the intertwined nature of the different activities making up the research process. They criticise the standardised conceptualisation of the process as consisting of successive 'phases', and argue that a researcher who aims at theory generation should be constantly going 'back and forth' from one type of research activity to another. This means that the preliminary analytical framework will be affected by whatever is discovered during data collection as well as during analysis and interpretation. Data analysis, for example, may identify new aspects that will have to be

covered in additional interviews. This is the process Dubois and Gadde refer to as systematic combining.

Abduction is suitable to be applied in research contexts that could be described as 'intransparent' – where only the symptoms are available and the causes have to be inferred (Lundberg, 2000). In such situations, the problem-solver has to construct a mental model that represents as many of the problem's aspects as he or she is able to grasp (Sternberg, 1995, in Lundberg, 2000). This grows into an intuitive sense of what will work as an explanation of a phenomenon or in a particular context, and involves reasoning in situations characterised by unstable meanings and emergent, evolving truths (Turkle, 1997, in Lundberg 2000). 'Abduction can also be viewed as inference to the best explanation, a process that paradoxically seems very effortless to humans, but that often has been computationally intractable' (Lundberg, 2000:702). There are different types of abductive approaches: realising a phenomenon or its characteristics on the basis of incomplete data; developing general laws; describing reality in terms of ideal types; working by analogy; and using a meta-abductive approach where the aim is a change of focus in a discipline (Kirkeby, 1994:149). The approach of the current study can be described as identifying a phenomenon – in this case strategies for emotion handling – on the basis of incomplete data. On the other hand, the results are described in the form of strategies which can be conceived of as ideal types. It must be emphasised, however, that this study does not aim at presenting an exhaustive repertoire of emotion-handling strategies.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996:155) write that both inductive and deductive approaches can prove 'sterile', and that abductive reasoning is 'one useful way to think about the process of generating ideas'. Their main point is that abductive reasoning 'seems to capture more productively how researchers in all disciplines actually think and work. It allows for a more central role for empirical research in the generation of ideas as well as more dynamic interaction between data and theory' (ibid:156). 'Abductive inferences lead us from specific cases or findings toward generic levels that allow us to move conceptually across a wide range of social contexts' (ibid:162).

Even if it starts from the particular, the aim of abductive reasoning is to *transcend* the data. The researcher identifies a particular phenomenon: a surprising or anomalous finding, perhaps. He or she then tries to account for that phenomenon by relating it to broader concepts, and does so by inspecting his or her own experience and stock of knowledge of similar, comparable phenomena. Abductive inferences seek to go beyond the actual data in themselves, to locate them in explanatory or interpretative frameworks. Strange phenomena are not used only to disconfirm existing theories but also to come up with new configurations of ideas. Regularities in the data have to be associated with ideas that go *beyond* the data themselves. (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:156-157)

3.1.3   Preunderstanding: 'A researcher never begins with a clean head'
(Vaughan, 1992:199)

There is no such thing as a researcher 'with a clean head' – that is, without any personal background. Every researcher's past personal experiences influence his or her interpretations and development of new ideas. This phenomenon is called *preunderstanding* (cf. Gummesson, 1988:55ff). Especially in qualitative studies, it is essential to reflect on the background of the researcher and how it may affect the results of an interpretation. Preunderstanding is a key element in generating and interpreting data, and influences the researcher's *theoretical sensitivity* (Holmlund, 1997:20). Strauss and Corbin (1990:41-42) describe theoretical sensitivity as follows:

> Theoretical sensitivity refers to a personal quality of the researcher. It indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data […]. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't…It is theoretical sensitivity that allows one to develop a theory that is grounded, conceptually dense, and well integrated – and to do this more quickly than if this sensitivity were lacking.

Based on the notion of preunderstanding we can define 'contextual understanding' and 'focal understanding'. The term *focal understanding* is used to denote the researcher's

insight within a particular study, while *contextual understanding* refers to knowledge that has been accumulated outside the study but, nevertheless, is relevant and affects it. A researcher's preunderstanding develops iteratively in the course of the research process on to new levels, which makes it difficult to retrospectively explicate the actual development process. Still, it is important to recognise that the researcher's choices are influenced by multiple impulses in a complex pattern. (Holmlund, 1997:21)

My contextual understanding was already explicated in *Chapter 1* when I referred to my experiences at the personnel department of a large Finnish company during the recession of the 1990s. What is also worth mentioning is the group of personnel managers (HRM Team) with whom I, as a team member, have been meeting every two months to discuss everyday personnel work and other topics of current interest. Because all the other members in the group are involved in business life, I have been able to keep up a vivid contact with personnel work. Our discussions have given this study some valuable insights into the subject from the practitioners' perspective and, most notably, have 'validated' my interpretations in practice. My focal understanding, on the other hand, has developed in the course of the entire research process – in attending scientific conferences, presenting papers and writing book chapters in the area of study (e.g. Hiillos, 1999, 2000, 2003; Aaltio and Hiillos, 2003), and meeting colleagues.

Finally, we can well question to what extent it is possible for researchers to report on their own preunderstanding of a phenomenon, or to describe their own paradigm, as noted by Uljens (1989:34). Uljens defines the problem as the difficulty of stepping off the ground we are standing on while simultaneously describing that ground. It is equally difficult to explicate the premises we stand for. One can claim that researchers are always tied to their paradigms and experiences and that a researcher can never entirely step off them without landing on something else (ibid:35).

3.2 Selecting and contacting the interviewees

I set out to interview personnel managers with the aim of collecting descriptions of crisis situations in their work where they had encountered emotions and had to deal with them. In the following I will describe how the interviewees were selected and contacted. At the very beginning of the research process, when I only had the idea of writing about the personnel department and its role in a crisis situation, I made a few pilot interviews. My intention as researcher was to follow David Silverman's advice to be out in the field, gather data and, especially, try to *analyse* it from day one throughout the research process. I conducted the first pilot interview with Varpu, a female personnel manager whom I knew to have been involved in a major organisational restructuring during the 1990s recession. I wanted to ask her what situations she had found difficult in her work, and just let her tell about her own experiences. At this point in time I did not have emotions in mind at all with regard to the study. My initial idea was to use the pilot interviews to clarify the variety of roles of the personnel department in relation to the other departments of a company in handling a crisis. In fact, my intended topic for the thesis at that point was *the role of the personnel department under crisis situations*.[31] After the first pilot interview with Varpu, I decided to contact additional personnel managers with experience of a crisis situation or situations in their work.

First phase of interviewing: Interviewees reached by a notice

A notice (see Appendix 1) was published with the kind consent of the Finnish personnel managers' association HENRY[32] in its newsletter in February 1998, searching for personnel managers with experiences from the Finnish recession of the 1990s. The notice informed that the aim of the study was to examine the personnel departments' role and personnel managers' own experiences during the recession. The notice

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[31] *The role of the personnel department during a crisis* as a potential focus for research is presented in Hiillos, 1999. Also, the idea that personnel departments might function as emotional processors is discussed.

[32] *Henkilöstöjohdon Ryhmä – HENRY ry* (Finnish Association for Human Resource Management) is an association of professionals responsible for the management and development of human resources in Finnish companies and organisations. With about 2000 registered members, it is the leading national organisation of personnel professionals. (Source www.henryorg.fi 13.8.2003)

emphasised that all disclosure of experiences would be highly confidential. Persons who felt interested were asked to write or phone me. Three contacts were established on the basis of the notice: Mikko (male personnel director), Kaarlo (male personnel director), and Ritva (female personnel manager).

Mikko, my first contact through the notice, reported having experienced heavy turbulence in his work during the recession. He had also drawn mind maps on his experiences in the crisis. I made an appointment with him at his office and later interviewed him. The second contact, Kaarlo, had kept a diary during the years of the recession, and was willing to discuss personnel work in the recession. Subsequently he also agreed to share the diary with me. Kaarlo's interview took place in his office.

My third contact, Ritva, led me to interview two additional persons, a female and a male line manager from the organisation where Ritva had been previously employed. At this point the idea was still to concentrate on the roles of the different departments of a company during a crisis situation. With that research idea in mind, I conducted the interview with Ritva, followed by interviews of her two colleagues, and then went back to Ritva to interview her for a second time. All three interviewees had agreed to talk about the organisational restructuring process they had been involved in. It had been a major reorganisation of the company in which Ritva had worked as a personnel manager and which she had just recently left to join another firm. Although I had considered my initial research strategy very good, it did not help to define the roles of the different departments. I was unable to construct any roles for them on the basis of my interview material. The line managers sounded as if they were repeating the same story already told by the personnel manager: both of them referred to her as 'the processor of the crisis' in most of the described episodes. Of course, when I had asked Ritva to select a few colleagues for interviews, it was natural for her as a personnel manager being interviewed for a research project to choose persons with whom she had a good working relationship and who trusted her. This may have influenced the manner in which the line managers described the personnel department's and the personnel manager's role in a crisis. The story told by Ritva herself had already covered all the aspects that appeared interesting; the line managers kept referring to her and her

department as the principal processors of the crisis but failed to go any deeper in their descriptions.

In sum, I conducted altogether seven interviews during the first phase – one with Varpu, two with Ritva, one with each of Ritva's line manager colleagues, and one with Mikko and with Kaarlo – on the topic of crisis situations and the personnel department. Reflecting now on the results of these first-phase interviews, it might have been worthwhile to interview a personnel manager and a couple of line managers from some other company or companies as well. My interviewing skills were perhaps not sufficiently developed at the outset of the research process, and I may also have been too anxious to get results at once. Nevertheless, I rejected the idea of interviewing several managers from one company and, instead, decided to concentrate on interviewing personnel managers from several companies.

Now that I had abandoned the idea of studying the role of the personnel department in crisis situations, I was faced with the question: *What exactly would be the theme of my interviews with personnel managers*? I knew I wanted to ask them about crises or other difficult situations – but that was inadequate as a basis for developing researchable questions. At this stage my colleagues were of great help by listening to my descriptions of the first-phase interviews and processing with me the themes and ideas emerging from them. Gradually we recognised that what the five first-phase interviews with the personnel managers were largely about were *emotions in crisis situations*. This was defined as the focus of the interviews from this point onwards. It must be noted that I did not mention the focus on emotions when I contacted the interviewees. However, I did once make the mistake of mentioning emotions before the interview and realised that it guided the answers and obviously increased the interviewee's tendency to refer to emotions especially at the beginning of the interview.

A comment on the use of the term 'crisis' in this study is necessary here. The risk with the use of the term arises from the fact that there is a huge body of literature on crisis management with respective assumptions. Additionally, concepts like 'change' and 'conflict' are widely used and close to the term 'crisis'. As noted earlier, this study was partly inspired by my experiences of the Finnish recession and the term 'recession'

('*lama*' in Finnish) was often replaced by the term 'crisis' ('*kriisi*', '*lamanaikainen kriisi*' in Finnish) in everyday use. So, in the first-phase interviews, the word 'crisis' was used to refer *de facto* to crisis situations in the recession. In subsequent interviews, however, I did not define the term in any way to the interviewees – in other words, since my interest was no longer specifically focused on the recession, I wanted to allow the personnel managers to define for themselves what 'crisis' meant to them. This generated very divergent descriptions, from giving notice to an alcoholic to handling a major organisational downsizing process. What also happened was that some of the personnel managers inquired about my own exact definition of a crisis, to which I responded that it was up to them to define its meaning. When, in some instances, the interviewee was not satisfied with my answer, I added that he or she could think of some difficult or challenging situation in their work. The use of the term 'crisis' was intended to capture episodes that had brought emotions to the surface or to entice the personnel managers to recount an incident from which it might be possible to construct an emotional episode. It was to lead the interviewees to talk about situations in which emotions could be expected to be strong and consequently easier to construct. Emotions could also be anticipated to play an especially important role in crisis situations, as indicated by my first-phase interviews dealing with the recession. It could be assumed that the emotions that a personnel manager has to handle are not everyday emotions but, rather, of the type that surface in serious problem situations. There is a kind of parallel to the concept of 'critical incident' which means an incident in which a certain phenomenon is clearly visible, clearly manifested.

The next step was to gather more data, analyse it and try to find some patterns or themes in the stories recounted by the personnel managers.

Second phase of interviewing*: Interviewees contacted by phone*
For the selection of additional interviewees I had tentatively in mind the concept of *purposeful sampling* as defined by Patton (1990:169-183). Although Patton describes 16 different strategies for purposeful sampling, his general idea is that one should find cases that are rich in information. I further refer to Stake's (1994) recommendation that an opportunity to learn from one's data is more important than finding representativeness or some other criteria. Patton (1990:184) points out that there is no

single 'right' rule for defining the optimal amount of cases in qualitative research but that the researcher has to determine how many cases to include according to the aim and resources of the study. In my search for *richness* in the data I decided to try to find interviewees as different as possible with reference to their sex, age, experience in personnel work, and the industry they represented. In this fashion I aimed to obtain a rich variety of episodes of emotion handling. This sampling method has similarities with Arnold's (1970) *dimensional sampling* (cf. also Takala and Uusitalo, 1995; Lämsä, 1998:79-82). Dimensional sampling is claimed to be useful when the investigation focuses on a small number of cases, as compared with single-case studies or a large number of cases. According to dimensional sampling it is essential to select dimensions in relation to which the cases differ from each other. The choice of dimensions is not based on statistical randomisation but, rather, is characterised by purposefulness and reflection. The principles on which the dimensions are chosen must be essential in relation to the studied phenomenon and they must be explicated and motivated. Moreover, a dimension can be created on one or several criteria. Each dimensional class should be represented by at least one case. The number and character of the interviewees then is based on their representativeness for each dimension. However, Arnold (1970:148) notes that it is not possible to define the fully 'right' dimensions in an absolute sense; rather, we can say that sensible and useful principles increase the trustworthiness of research compared to sampling without any grounds. It is, of course, essential that the researcher is able to explicate the choice of the principles used in creating the dimensions.

As mentioned, I had the idea from the beginning that the interviewees should be as different as possible in order to guarantee the richness of the collected emotional episodes. Although I did not consciously apply dimensional sampling in selecting my interviewees, I later realised that the way I had proceeded reflected Arnold's concept to a great extent. I chose *sex* as one of the four dimensions of variability for sampling. Fischer (1993), for example, has noted that men and women do not seem to differ so much in respect to the emotions they experience, but that their way of expressing emotions is different. Since the expression of emotions might differ between the sexes, it was important to have both sexes represented in the sample. The data also represent different industries, from raw material handling through high-tech to services. *Industry*

was chosen as a dimension because it could be anticipated that the business area of a company influences its culture, and this, in turn, can have effects on the emotional climate (see *Chapter 3* for a definition) and the way emotions are expressed in a culture. As the last two dimensions I chose *age* and the length of *experience* in personnel work. Konovsky and Jaster (1989), for instance, found that when people explain their behaviour in ethically demanding situations, the length of their work experience influences their explanation for the ethical correctness of their actions in difficult situations. However, it was not easy to find much variation in the age dimension, as the post of a personnel manager, especially that of a personnel director, is usually not reached until at a mature age. After I had formed an idea of the desired profiles, I consulted my fellow members of a professional development group for personnel managers (HRM Team) asking them to suggest some names that might match my criteria. For example, to gain variation in age, I simply requested them to help me to find 'older' and 'younger' interviewees. My contacts were partly established on the basis of suggestions by the HRM Team members, partly on information obtained from my former business colleagues.

Purposeful sampling does not consider the idea of 'saturation' presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967). According to the *saturation strategy*, interviews are conducted until the investigator senses that nothing new is emerging from further interviews. This together with the idea of richness of data was my original thought in setting out to the field and selecting additional interviewees after the first-phase interviews. The saturation method often leads to a huge number of interviews. It has been criticised for not giving a clear guideline to the researcher when to finish data gathering (cf. Syrjälä et al., 1996:48). The researcher often feels that new information and new problems are constantly emerging and may have difficulty in deciding when the saturation point has been reached. During my final interviews at the end of 1999 and beginning of 2000, when over 30 episodes of emotion handling had already been gathered, I sensed that the saturation point was nearing. Although it is possible that additional data might have further enriched the description of the episodes, I thought it unlikely that I would be able to construct any more new themes (in addition to those constructed later into emotion-handling strategies). Approaching the saturation point could be described as a feeling of '*I have heard this several times before*', or by a realisation that the

descriptions of episodes were overlapping with previous ones. In conclusion, my choice of the character and number of interviewees was partly based on the saturation point strategy and partly on reasoning similar to Arnold's dimensional sampling.

So, when I contacted personnel managers on the phone, I told them who I was, what the purpose of the research was and what was expected of them. None of the contacted persons refused my request to interview them. I said I was interested in their way of working and urged them to think of some crises or difficult and problematic situations in their work and tell me about them. Some of the interviewees seemed slightly hesitant upon hearing that the interview was for academic purposes, asking whether they should prepare somehow for the interview. I told them it was not necessary; what I was interested in were their own personal experiences. Some were relieved to hear that no preparation was expected. Moreover, as noted, I made no mention of my specific interest in emotions. All of the interviewees invited me to their offices to make the interview (with the exception of one pilot interview held at my workplace due to practical reasons). The personnel managers all agreed on the phone to their interview being tape-recorded. The interview lasted from 40 minutes to two hours, usually about one hour and a half. The tapes were later transcribed, resulting in a total of approximately 200 pages of text.

Altogether 18 persons were interviewed: in addition to the two previously mentioned line managers there were 16 interviewed personnel managers, 8 females and 8 males. I interviewed two of the female personnel managers twice, which brings the total amount of interviews to 20. One of these was Ritva, with whom I conducted another interview after interviewing her former line manager colleagues. The other one was Laura, whom I contacted for a follow-up interview. Moreover, in the case of Mikko, one of the male personnel directors, we first had a meeting in his office where I told him about the research project, after which I returned after a couple of weeks to interview him. There was one interview which proceeded along different lines than the others. This was my interview with Kaarlo, the male personnel director who had kept a diary during the recession and agreed to share it with me. The interview was more like a conversation in which we spoke about the recession and the role of the personnel department. It was not

tape-recorded like the other interviews since the primary objective had been to acquire information through the diary. However, I did make notes during the interview.

Finally, neither Kaarlo's diary nor the interviews with the two line managers were included in the data analysed for this study. The information contained in the diary was predominantly factual and it functioned mainly as an interesting background for the recession. The first-phase or pilot interviews with the line managers had been related to a research strategy that was later rejected. However, I have used some of the information gained in these two interviews as supplementary material in reflecting on the research results. The other first-phase interviews (with personnel managers) are analysed in this study, because they contained emotional episodes suitable for the analysis.

Only one of the 18 interviewees was personally known to me beforehand. The interviews of the first phase were conducted in 1998[33] and the interviews of the second phase between August 1999 and January 2000[34]. A summary of the persons interviewed for this study is presented in Table 1.

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[33] The interview with Varpu, however, had been conducted already in late 1996.
[34] The second interview with Laura was an exception, conducted at the end of 2001.

Table 1. *Interviewees listed in the order in which the interviews were conducted.*

Name	Sex	Position	Industry
		Pilot interviews/First phase	
Varpu	f	Personnel manager	Banking
Kaarlo	m	Personnel director	Construction
Ritva 1st	f	Personnel manager	Banking
Line manager 1*	m	Line manager	Banking
Line manager 2*	f	Line manager	Banking
Ritva 2nd			
Mikko**	m	Personnel director	High-tech machinery
		Interviews/Second phase	
Risto	m	Personnel director	Construction
Hannu	m	Personnel director	High-tech communication
Raita	f	Personnel director	Finance
Jaana	f	Personnel development manager	Traditional heavy industry
Pauli	m	Personnel director	High-tech machinery
Matti	m	Personnel director	High-tech instruments
Laura 1st	f	Personnel manager	Insurance
Anna	f	Personnel manager	Commerce
Solja	f	Personnel planning manager	Retail
Kalevi	m	Personnel manager	Fast-food industry
Tiina	f	Personnel manager	Distribution
Timo	m	Personnel director	Retail
Laura 2nd			
		Summary	
Interviews	20		
Interviewees	18		
Males	9	8 personnel managers, 1 line manager	
Females	9	8 personnel managers, 1 line manager	
		*Not included in the final data material analysed for the study	** Two meetings, interview in the latter

3.3 Conducting the interviews

There were some intervals between the interviews, which made it possible for me to reflect on the previous interviews before engaging in new ones. Interviewing was like a cumulative data-gathering process. Each new interview contributed more emotional

episodes and additional aspects to previous ideas and patterns. Entirely new ideas and confusing or contradictory elements emerged as well. Interviewing was continued until I sensed that it was unlikely that any major new topics of emotion-handling strategies would be found.

In conducting the interviews I followed an interview guide[35] and started by asking general questions, such as what the interviewees thought personnel work was all about. The intention was to put the interviewee at ease and begin with questions that were easy to answer. The questions were not identical in all interviews, because I would pursue some upcoming themes that I deemed interesting. Each personnel manager was asked to tell about a crisis situation in his or her work. Some chose to describe only one crisis, often a major event like a corporate re-organisation; others recounted several difficult situations. I did not mention the subject of emotions until towards the end of the interview, posing a few questions directly related to the subject, like: *'Do you think your work is emotional by nature?'* At the end I also asked a couple of questions regarding the topic of gender and emotions. I made some notes after the interviews, mainly about aspects that would not be visible in the transcriptions, such as the atmosphere of the interview.

Role of the interviewer. In the course of the interviewing process I noticed that as the interviewer my role was a shifting one. For instance, in my interview with one of the male personnel professionals, an elderly personnel director of an esteemed traditional company, I felt I was being treated like a young girl student from the university seeking information from a far more experienced and knowledgeable source. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the interview I had briefly described my background as a former personnel specialist. To give another example of my shifting role: in interviewing a female personnel manager who was about my own age I felt I was treated like a peer. Silverman (1993) refers to Carolyn Baker's description of this phenomenon:

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[35] See *Appendix 2*.

> When we talk about the world we live in, we engage in the activity of giving it a particular character. Inevitably, we assign features and phenomena to it and make it out to work in a particular way.
>
> When we talk with someone else about the world, we take into account who the other is, what that other person could be presumed to know, 'where' that other is in relation to ourself in the world we talk about. (Baker, 1982:109)

The above citation questions the idea of treating the questions and answers in an interview as 'passive filters' that reveal truths about people. Instead, Baker tells us that the interviewer and the interviewee actively *construct* a version of the world which is appropriate to what we take to be self-evident about the person being spoken to and the context of the question. (Silverman, 1993:90)

The interviewees – in this context, the personnel managers – are to be viewed as experiencing subjects who actively construct their social worlds; the primary objective of the interviews is to generate data which give an insight into people's experiences (cf. Silverman, 1993:91). My specific interest was not in whether or not the personnel managers told the 'truth'; instead, I focused on their talk as a social construction. As a tendency in interactionism suggests, interview responses should not be considered simply as true or false *reports* about reality – rather, they should be treated as *displays* of perspectives and moral forms (cf. Silverman, 1993:107).

The interview data collected for this study can be said to have the character of *narratives* or *stories*. Thinking about the stories in the data can enable us to think creatively about the sorts of data we collect and how we interpret them. It has been shown that social actors often remember and order their memories or their careers as a series of narrative chronicles or stories marked by key happenings. (cf. Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:55-6) This was clearly evident in the accounts of the interviewed personnel managers: their descriptions of incidents related to crises situations were of a distinctly *narrative* nature. Narratives are a common genre for retelling or coming to terms with particularly sensitive or traumatic times and events (ibid.). Some of the personnel managers' responses to certain interview questions were also typically narrative by nature (cf. ibid:59).

One aspect worth considering in an interview is how much weight should be given to a kind of 'impression management' in the stories of the interviewees. Even though the personnel managers were unaware of the exact aim of my study, it is possible that they wanted to impress me as the interviewer by giving an account which emphasised those aspects of personnel work they themselves considered valuable. Though it is impossible to answer this question, it urges the reader to bear in mind the impression aspect of interaction in interviews. The investigator is always a part of the account (Fineman, 1993d:222).

Validity and reliability of interview data

For positivists, the language of the interviewee serves primarily as an instrument for communicating social or psychological facts (cf. Silverman, 1993:92). In assessing what makes interview responses valid in qualitative research we may depart from the positivist position. If the interviewees are to be viewed as subjects who actively construct the features of their cognitive worlds, then the aim of their interviews should be to obtain intersubjective depth between interviewer and interviewee so that a deep mutual understanding can be achieved. (cf. ibid:94-95) As Reason and Rowan (1981:205-206, in Silverman, 1993:95) argue: 'Humanistic approaches favour "depth interviews" in which interviewee and interviewer become "peers" or even "companions"'. In a 'humanistic' version of the interview, both the type of knowledge gained and the validity of the analysis are based on *deep understanding*. In Reason and Rowan's view, this is because the humanistic framework supports 'meaningful understanding of the person ... and wholeness in human inquiry'. (ibid.)

The reliability of the analysis is less frequently addressed in qualitative than in quantitative research. Instead, what qualitative researchers make claims about is their ability to reveal those local practices through which given 'end-products' – like stories, files or descriptions – are assembled. Silverman (1993:10-11) has noted that, compared with the field-notes of observational data, recordings and transcripts can offer a highly reliable record to which researchers can return as they develop new hypotheses.

It has also been claimed that we should give another meaning to validity and reliability within the social practice of hermeneutics. Accordingly, Helenius (1990), for instance,

suggests that *validity* could stand for 'a question which opens new doors and windows' and *reliability* for logical reasoning and understandable reporting.

3.4 The data

Nature of the data. The interviews with personnel managers enabled the construction of 34 individual emotional episodes. The research data thus consist of descriptions of emotion-handling episodes collected in semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, and are qualitative by nature.

3.4.1 Sorting and coding the data

All interviews were transcribed to facilitate the handling of the data. This was followed by sorting and coding of the data for the purpose of ordering and reducing them into data-sets to make interpretation easier.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996:26-27) write that the segmenting and coding of data are often considered as taken-for-granted elements of a qualitative research process. The aim is to condense the bulk of the data into analysable units by creating categories 'with and from' the data. Coding may involve a rather mechanistic process, but Coffey and Atkinson propose that it can also be thought of as generating concepts with and from the data. It is worth stressing that although coding may be part of the analysis process, it should not be thought of as the actual analysis itself or as a substitute for analysis. It would be equally mistaken to think of coding as an activity that is universally understood across the qualitative research spectrum. The term *coding* encompasses a variety of approaches to and ways of organising qualitative data. Coffey and Atkinson continue, however, that attaching codes to data and generating concepts have important functions as parts of an analytical process in enabling the researcher to rigorously review what the data are saying.

In addition to simplification and reduction of data, coding can also be understood as data complication, expanding the conceptual frameworks and dimensions of the analysis. In this sense, coding means actually going beyond the data – thinking creatively with the data, asking the data questions, and generating theories and frameworks. Thus, coding usually represents a mixture of *data reduction* and *data complication*. It is used to break up and segment the data into simpler, general categories *as well as* to expand and 'tease out' the data in order to formulate new questions and levels of interpretation. The researcher should try to ensure that not more is lost than is gained: it is especially important to avoid coding merely for the purpose of attaching simple and deterministic labels to the data. Coding should be thought of as essentially heuristic. Ultimately it is the processes of reflection that are more important than the precise procedures and representations that are employed. (ibid:29-30)

I mentioned earlier that the gathering of data for this study could be described as a cumulative process. After each interview I took time to reflect on what had been new or surprising in the latest interview. This made it easier to conduct the next interview as my understanding of how to sort – and also interpret – the data was gradually improving. I started coding the accumulated data already after the first few interviews. Coding was done manually. The first stage was to underline emotion words or expressions of emotion in the transcripts. By *emotion words* I mean adjectives that describe or qualify an emotion: 'sad', 'happy' and 'angry', for instance. *Expressions of emotions*, on the other hand, refer to wordings or phrases that can be understood as describing an emotion: like 'it made me mad', 'it made me cry'. The second stage, partly overlapping with the first, consisted of identifying whether the emotion words and expressions of emotion occurred in connection with a description of a crisis. Not all were linked to crisis situations and were therefore of lesser interest for the current study. I began to refer to those chunks of text in which the emotion word or expression of emotion was connected to a crisis situation as *emotional episodes* (later *emotion-handling episodes*). The third stage, then, involved coding of these emotional episodes. At this point, coding and sorting of data were already overlapping with interpretation and analysis. This stage was much more complex than the preceding ones, which could be described as more or less mechanical.

In a sense, the three stages of coding the data for this study were not clearly sequential; rather, they could be described as parallel and overlapping. I kept in mind the idea of emotion handling as a theme of interest throughout the process. However, the emotion-handling episodes were recounted in the interviews in a wide variety of ways, which posed a big challenge for me to identify what they were actually about. Coding at this third stage was, therefore, done over and over again, with many ideas and thoughts in mind, and might at times have seemed messy and confusing. I had written keywords or code words in the margins of the transcript repeatedly, as new, different ideas came to mind. Coding was now a question of data complication (cf. Coffey and Atkinson, 1996): expanding the conceptual frameworks and dimensions of the analysis.

Towards the end of the coding process – when it had become clear that my aim would be to construct emotion-handling episodes – two of the interviews caused a problem. I was unable to construct any emotion-handling episodes at all on their basis. Their interpretation was especially challenging (see *Chapter 4*). Another aspect that intrigued me during my several readings of the material was the similarity in the 'style' with which the personnel managers recounted their experiences. I had difficulty figuring out how to describe this style, the specific manner in which the interviewees constructed their stories. Later on I had recourse to some negotiation literature and recognised that the personnel managers' way of describing an emotion-handling episode actually resembled a negotiation situation. This insight came to me relatively late in the research process – although I discuss it in this study already at the beginning for clarity of presentation. Consequently, what ultimately became the unit of analysis were episodes of *negotiating emotions*.

The crucial question then is: *'What counts as an episode of negotiating emotions?'* Firstly, the coding process already indicated that a coupling of emotion(s) and crisis had to be detectable in the transcript of the episode. Secondly, in order to be constructed into an emotional episode, the interviewee's story had to contain enough information about the context and/or the issues discussed during the episode. Identifying these episodes meant more than just picking them out from specific places in the transcribed text. Talk in an interview often contains many references to a certain situation or episode at various different points of the interview, and analysis of a text transcribed from such

talk is quite challenging. Consequently, constructing the emotional episodes sometimes resembled putting together a puzzle.

Thus, in the final phase of coding the data, the 34 episodes of negotiating emotions were grouped according to the type of crisis, description of emotion(s), and issues discussed and/or context, as well as in relation to whom the personnel manager was handling emotions. This is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *The data: 34 emotional episodes.*

P-m = personnel manager, E(-s) = employee(s), M(-s) = manager(s).

Episode number	Type of crisis	Emotion(s) / expression(s) of emotion	Context / issues discussed	In relation to
1	Closure of warehouse	Humiliation (E)	Running down of warehouse operations. P-m proposes early pension scheme to warehouse foreman.	E
2	Lay-offs	Pain (E-s)	Giving notice	E-s
3	Death of elderly person in midst of downsizing process	Feeling deeply upset, sorrow, feelings of horribleness in midst of recession, 'I will never forget this case' (P-m) Under pressure, fear (E)	Recession, P-m tries to relocate employee within same company	E
4	Major organisational restructuring	Bad feelings (E-s)	Recession, traditional company culture in change	E-s
5	Implementation of new global bonus system in Finnish unit. Cultural conflict. Strong resistance by E-s	Strong feelings (E-s)	P-m acts between E-s and management, putting forward E-s' standpoints, 'softening' the situation.	E-s
6	Change and lay-offs	Negative feelings (E-s)	P-m counsels and gives personal support	E-s
7	Closing down of all company operations in one town	Unpleasantness (P-m) Feelings of passiveness (E-s) Feelings of opposition, stubbornness, opportunistic behaviour (M)	Closure of office: hard for E-s and M to accept	E-s, M
8	Downsizing	Unpleasantness, sadness, crying (P-m) Difficult feelings (E-s)	Giving notice	P-m E-s
9	Closure and partial sale of IT unit	Feeling 'heavy' (P-m) Distress, pain (E-s)	P-m herself under threat of losing her job, at same time relocating E-s who were still unaware of upcoming closure	E-s
10	Lay-off by P-m of his own team members	Fear, helplessness, desperation (P-m) Breaking down, crying, anger (E-s)	Recession, termination of job contracts, P-m gives notice to each employee	P-m, E-s
11	Sale of formerly very prosperous company	Anger (P-m) (E-s) (M-s)	Recession, major conflict between employer and trade union	P-m, E-s, M-s

12	Fusion of two departments. Downsizing. Lay-offs	Difficult feelings, disgust, 'lousy feelings', crying (P-m) Anger, hatred, aggression, crying (E-s)	Counselling and information session organised by P-m for those laid-off. Situation turns against P-m. E-s pour their own ill feelings on P-m.	P-m, E-s
13	Termination of job contract by P-m. P-m nearly victim of violence	Confusion (P-m) 'Strong reaction' (E)	Recession, traditional company culture in change. E about to hit P-m upon knowing that termination was final.	E
14	Termination of job contract by P-m	Desperation, helplessness (P-m) 'Went mute' (E)	Recession, traditional company culture in change. After info about termination E did not say a word, turned around and left.	E
15	Restructuring. Feedback from superior	Confusion, feelings of being crushed (E-s)	'Safe' company culture. People not used to direct feed-back. Fairness of feed-back becomes an issue.	E-s
16	Giving notice to 20 persons simultaneously	Feeling like complete idiot (P-m) Fear (E-s)	P-m: 'Nobody shook my hand. Nobody.' Situation when P-m enters unit where 20 persons will be laid off.	P-m, E-s
17	Lay-off of young mother	'It was tough and difficult', embarrassment (P-m) Desperation, initial shock (E)	Termination of job discussed. E takes her little child to office for lay-off situation.	P-m, E
18	Major corporate reorganisation	Bad and heavy feelings, exhaustion (E-s)	Things that E-s had learnt earlier seem useless and learning new things takes time: work overload.	E-s
19	Bankruptcy of company	In shock, crying, 'total' pain, insecurity, anger (E-s) Worry, pain (P-m)	Topics related to chaos caused by announcement of bankruptcy.	E-s, P-m
20	Serious failure of E to live up to expectations	Disappointment, 'worst feelings', difficult feelings (P-m) Difficult feelings (E)	Personal problems of E: P-m notifies E of problems, in the end gives notice	P-m, E
21	Lay-off of alcoholic E	'Really horrible' feelings (P-m) Crying, desperation ('I'll go hang myself') (E)	Personal discussion with E: alcohol problem cannot be tolerated anymore, lay-off	E
22	Alcohol problem of E. Crisis between M and E	Outrage (M) Unfairness (E)	After an incident related to crisis, M wants to sack E immediately, E feels there is no alcohol problem or it is exaggerated	M, E

23	Conflict between M and E. M seeking advice	Loneliness (M)	M wants to rid himself of his burden as superior	M
24	Lay-off of site-M	Nasty feelings (P-m) (M) (E)	P-m supports M's superior in lay-off situation. P-m demands M's key on site and shows him out.	P-m, M
25	Change in organisation's role. Newly appointed CEO wondering over his new role	Confusion (M)	P-m acts as a counsellor. Filters expectations of organisation on M's role as CEO to him.	M
26	Problems with co-operation among department foremen	Difficult feelings (P-m)	Egoism among foremen, not thinking about effects of their actions	P-m
27	Unresolved workplace problems bothering E	Emotional exhaustion (E)	P-m tries to prevent burnout of E	E
28	Dead body of drug-user found by E-s in company premises	Devastation, distress (E-s)	P-m discusses feelings of distress with E-s. Counselling by health care professionals.	E-s
29	Sexual harassment of E by M	Difficult feelings (P-m) (M) (E)	Conflict is processed with M and E and trade union representative. Reorganising, giving a warning to M.	E, M
30	Conflict between E-s, personal chemistry not working	Conflicting feelings (E-s)	P-m uses questioning techniques to resolve conflicts	E-s
31	Quarrel about which teamwork method to use	Humiliation (P-m) Fear (E-s) (M-s)	P-m wants to introduce new teamwork method in corporate planning seminar. E-s in favour, management against.	P-m, E-s, M-s
32	Public libel. Crisis between two E-s	Unfairness (E1) Humiliation (E2)	E1 wrote libel about E2 on company's intranet. E1 is sacked. P-m tries to find fair solution, also for sacked person.	Two E-s also trade union representative involved
33	Internal conflicts within one unit: mobbing	Negative feelings (E-s) (M)	P-m discreetly discusses situation with all parties	E-s, M
34	Quarrel about personnel benefits	Quarrelsome feelings (E-s)	P-m tries to take neutral stand in discussion.	E-s

Chapter 4 describes the analysis and interpretation of the data and presents the results.

4. EMOTION-HANDLING STRATEGIES

This chapter describes the analysis and interpretation of the data and presents the results of the study. It is worth remembering, as Coffey and Atkinson (1996:2-7) have pointed out, that there is no single 'right' way to analyse qualitative data. The central issue is to find productive ways of using the data for reflection and for organising and inspecting the material. Some authors conceive analysis as primarily referring to the tasks of coding, indexing, sorting, retrieving, or otherwise manipulating data. They understand the task of analysis mainly in terms of data handling in which organisation and retrieval are the principal procedures. For others, analysis refers in the first place to the imaginative work of interpretation, and the more procedural, categorising tasks are relegated to the preliminary process of ordering and sorting the data. Analysis is, for them, essentially imaginative and speculative by nature. The previous chapter described the handling of data for this study. My aim in this chapter is to concentrate on what Coffey and Atkinson call 'the imaginative work of interpretation'.

In the following, I will first discuss the nature of the emotional episodes described by the interviewees. Then I will present and exemplify the emotion-handling strategies and the two logics of appropriateness which emerged from the data material. At the end of the chapter, I will present an overview and reflections on the results.

4.1 Nature of emotional episodes

4.1.1 Emotions

Not surprisingly, the emotions that arose in connection with the described emotional episodes were negative in character (see Table 2 in *Chapter 3* for a listing of emotions).

It was the negative emotions that demanded attention on the part of personnel managers in crisis situations. This finding agrees with the *change literature*, which concentrates on emotions that play a negative role in a change (cf. Kiefer, 2002). The change literature argues that emotional reactions endanger the rationality – and thereby the effectiveness – of people at work (Piderit, 2000 in Kiefer, 2002). Except for the withdrawal strategy described later in this chapter, the personnel managers expressed no arguments that negative emotions *per se* would be a threat to organisational efficiency. On the contrary, negative emotions and their handling in crisis situations was considered as a natural and inherent part of a personnel manager's tasks. The interviewees' experience was that by handling negative emotions in an adequate way they could have a positive influence on the emotional climate of the organisation and negotiate additional *emotional value* within the organisation.

4.1.2   Crisis situations

The emotional episodes related to crisis situations could be broadly divided into three categories: crisis situations in which the *organisation's* problems call for emotion-handling (e.g. downsizing, bankruptcy), crisis situations *between an employer and an employee* which call for emotion-handling (e.g. lay-off of an alcoholic), and crisis situations *between employees* which call for emotion-handling (e.g. mobbing). Roughly, the emotional episodes 1-19 belong in the first category, episodes 20-24 in the second category and episodes 26-34 in the third category in Table 2.[36]

4.2   Emotion-handling strategies

The relation of the interviewed personnel managers to the emotions expressed in various crisis situations are illustrated by the emotion-handling strategies they used. In

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[36] Episode 25 is a special case. It refers to a major change in the organisation, which had led to the situation in which the newly appointed CEO now found himself, and it was his confusion over his new role that was being handled.

the following I will also describe the relationship between these strategies and the idea of negotiating emotional value in a crisis. It is important to emphasise that emotion-handling strategies are constructed in relation to four dimensions: the crisis, emotion(s), the context and/or issues discussed, and the person whose emotions are handled. Thus, an emotion-handling strategy could be conceived of as a function, i.e.

strategy = f (emotion, crisis, context/ issue, person).

In other words, the strategies emerged from the emotional episodes described in the data material. What an emotional episode consisted of was, first of all, an emotion or emotions and a crisis situation. Gradually I realised that it was important to involve the person in relation to whom the emotions were handled by the personnel manager. Moreover, to form a proper picture of the strategy used it became essential to define the context of the emotional episode or the issues discussed in the crisis.

Thus, as indicated by the above function, not all the emotional episodes in the data qualified as a basis for a strategy. All the four elements – emotion, crisis, context or issue, and the person in question – had to be there in order for a strategy to emerge. In practice this meant that even if only one of the elements was missing, a strategy could not be constructed. Some of the descriptions of the emotional episodes were too limited to be constructed into strategies. Nevertheless, during the analysis and interpretation phases I was able to use these 'weak' episodes as a kind of support, as I could make some assumptions and guesses and in this way 'fill in' the missing elements in the episodes. These limited episodes are not included as data in this study, however.

The five emotion-handling strategies to be presented in this chapter are labelled as: *empathy at a distance*, *mediator*, *Lelia's couch*, *outsourcing* and *withdrawal*. I chose the names for the strategies to represent the nature of the strategy and to depict how emotions were handled within that strategy. The names of two strategies, namely 'empathetic at a distance' and 'Lelia's couch', were taken from words or expressions used by the interviewees themselves. *Lelia's couch* derives from a Finnish expression (explained in more detail in *Section 4.2.3* below). I thought up the name for the *mediator* strategy already before integrating negotiation research into the study. It

reflects the actions taken by the personnel managers in enacting that strategy. Mediation also proved to be a central term within negotiation research and was deemed to reflect well the negotiation character that was clearly visible in this strategy. *Outsourcing* as a strategy name refers to the idea of emotions being handled by someone else than the personnel manager. And lastly, the *withdrawal* strategy derives its name from negotiation tactics and refers to the negotiating party withdrawing from the negotiation situation.

At a preliminary stage of the analysis the *Lelia's couch* strategy was included under the *empathy at a distance* strategy. In other words, there was a wider category of episodes in which the personnel manager was acting in an empathetic manner. Further on in the analysis I realised that it was essential to make a distinction based on whose emotions were being processed in the empathetic strategy: an employee's or a top manager's. *Lelia's couch* then became to denote those episodes where top managers' emotions were handled. After this insight, I also realised that there were other features in which the two differed, which argued for interpreting them as separate strategies.

Thus, initially the number of emotion-handling strategies had been seven (*empathy, Lelia's couch, mediator, guardian of justice, active outsourcing, passive outsourcing, withdrawal*) (cf. Hiillos, 2000[37]), but was later reduced to five. The *mediator* strategy was at first represented by two strategies, labelled mediator and guardian of justice. Upon reflection I recognised that the types of crises and the contexts or issues discussed were quite similar in the two, and so they were merged into one. *Active* and *passive outsourcing* were originally also presented as two separate strategies but later combined into one.

Consequently, I will next discuss and describe the emotion-handling strategies and the four dimensions (emotion, crisis, context/issue, person) on which a strategy has been constructed. Extracts from the interviews with personnel managers are added to illustrate the descriptions.

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[37] The *withdrawal* strategy was called *non-handling* strategy in Hiillos, 2000. Later, withdrawal was deemed to describe better the nature of emotion handling than the term non-handling within this particular strategy. Also, withdrawal corresponds with the terminology in negotiation research.

4.2.1　Emotion-handling strategy 1: Empathy at a distance

It's really enormously important how you deal with the employees so that you can help them to cope with their own difficulties and crises and also to find reasonable alternative solutions to the situation at hand from the employees' point of view. ... On the other hand, the work of a personnel manager shouldn't really be social work in the first place.

A common view among businesspeople as well as laymen is that a personnel management position is somehow 'softer' than other management positions. The idea of softness may reflect the fact that the majority of personnel managers are women, and the stereotypical personnel manager is an empathetic female. It could, therefore, be anticipated that an emotion-handling strategy would emerge in which empathy was a central element.

Empathy can be described as a perceptual capacity to feel with others – perhaps our oldest perceptual capacity. It is the ability to discern, for example, in a performance the feeling that went into its making and informed its every part – be it a question of a piece of music, a story or an emotional outburst. 'Through empathy, the listener forges a connection to the performer that is more direct and fully developed than any that could be denoted in words.' (Sandelands and Boudens, 2000:56) Pruitt and Carnevale (1993:42) remark that empathy is of great value, for instance, to negotiators who wish to find out about the other party's goals, values and priorities. They benefit if they are able to take the perspective of the other party, imagine themselves in the other's shoes and sense what the other is feeling[38].

Sometimes we may use the terms 'empathy' and 'compassion' interchangeably in everyday language. Compassion is indeed a concept that is closely related to empathy. Frost et al. (2000:27) discuss the concept in an organisational context, noting that some

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[38] Mazzarella (2001:67) writes that empathy in the sense of being able to imagine someone else's feelings is not necessarily noble in a moral sense: a sadistic torturer is very well aware of what his victim is feeling – and still enjoys the victim's pain.

researchers define compassionate acts as forms of empathy or personal support offered by one person to another. In contrast to psychological views, Frost et al. assume that compassion goes beyond an individual feeling of empathy and that it is expressed through some kind of action. The word 'compassion' was never actually mentioned in my interview material, but in some instances the personnel managers did talk about 'empathy'. That is one reason for my choice of the term 'empathy' instead of 'compassion' to describe the strategy.[39] Another reason is that even though empathy, too, appeared to bear actionary meanings, it was often associated with a desire to keep one's distance to other people's problems. Empathy did not lead to action in all cases: sometimes the personnel manager had found it impossible to convert empathy into action.

Personnel managers constructed this strategy as a way of acting understandingly or trying to find solutions that were reasonable from the employee's point of view. It was, however, characteristic for the interviewees to attach reservations to an empathetic attitude. They added reservations like some kind of attributes to empathy, implying that a personnel manager should not act *too* empathetically. This was expressed in diverse ways – for instance, by saying that one must not take all other people's troubles 'too much to heart'. In general, the aim of such reservations was to point out that even if one felt and showed empathy, it was necessary to keep a distance to be able to do one's job and cope with one's own feelings. The word 'distance' reflects these reservations.

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[39] The use of the term *empathy* instead of *compassion* can be further motivated by referring to Strauss' (1987) thoughts on coding of data material. He makes a distinction between sociologically constructed and *in vivo* codes. The latter refer to codes that derive from the terms and language used by social actors – for instance, in interviews. Thus, although the empathetic strategy was socially constructed in this study, empathy was also used as an *in vivo* code.

I can't even bother to count how many such situations I've been in where one, two or twenty or a hundred employees have been laid off and the way that has influenced me. Because you can't get used to it – of course, you learn with experience not to let these matters get too much to heart, because then you yourself won't survive. I've been in such a state that every Friday when I got home I cried. Until my husband said that, hey, this has got to stop. That there's a limit to everything. That somebody's got to take care of you, too. ... Naturally, it's a kind of a school you go to – the thing is, of course, that I can't go and live other people's lives.

Anna, female personnel manager (Episode 8)

This idea of feeling empathy while maintaining a distance brings to mind the discussion on *emotional labour.* It seems that the personnel managers were aware of the risks and costs of emotional labour, and had consciously built a shield between themselves and emotions that were too overwhelming. An awareness of the possibility of a burnout may also explain the need to keep a distance. Studies have shown that women managers experience more stress than their male counterparts due to their excessive focus on human relations problems (for a summary, see Alvesson and Billing, 1997:147-150).

Here [in the position of a personnel manager] you have very good possibilities to burn out because of the demands and expectations of others in the company.

Jaana, personnel development manager

Indeed, all of the personnel managers who enacted this strategy were female. One interpretation for keeping a distance would be that they as women were well aware of the role-trap inherent in depicting their management style as highly empathetic and understanding – that is, stereotypically very female. In fact, some social and cultural discourses view women as most suitable for part-time work or for occupations that require stereotypically feminine qualities such as caring and empathy (Meriläinen, 2000:417). In these discourses women are primarily perceived as caretakers who organise domestic life and social reproduction, and only secondarily as serious members of the labour force (ibid.). It could, therefore, be a fear of constructing oneself as a 'caretaker' rather than as a committed employee that lies behind these sometimes explicit formulations about 'keeping a distance' and not being '*too* empathetic and caring'.

> ... And then I had to think that I'm doing the best I can, but that I can't take any more, so that my empathy shouldn't go too far in that respect, that you mustn't start mourning over things too much. And then, of course, I've always had my hobbies and my family and so on – you have to draw a line somewhere.
>
> Solja, female personnel planning manager (Episode 1)

When female bank managers spoke about combining career and family life in Meriläinen's (2000) study, she was able to detect the images of an empathising and attending female manager. Her two female interviewees did not represent themselves in a stereotypical, culturally specific sense of a *mother* when they talked about the private sphere of the home. However, in describing their strengths as managers, they listed qualities that are traditionally linked with motherliness in the public sphere of work life. These qualities emerged in their talk as an accepted and appreciated part of their professional selves. In a quote by one of the female bank managers I recognised similar reservations as in those cited in the current study: 'I am quite empathising, too, but not too much' (ibid:427). Thus, my interviewees are not alone in having reservations towards presenting themselves as overly empathetic.

Failure to keep a distance. The examples of crisis situations given by Tiina, a female personnel manager, concerned a major restructuring of the organisation she worked in caused by the adoption of a new corporate data system (Episode 12). Several persons were made redundant in the process. Tiina said she had made every effort to provide 'terminal care' for the laid-off. She had planned a professional counselling session for all those who had to leave the company, thinking that meeting others in the same situation might give them strength as 'they were all in the same boat'.

> And I had invited care professionals to attend that session, I chaired it, and there were counsellors from the state employment office, and I also had the workplace priest there ... but the whole situation turned against me. Since I was the only one representing the company, all that shit was thrown at me: 'why is the company doing this to us?', 'why is it doing this to me?' It was the toughest moment of my life ... and then, of course, there was the feeling that I've really tried to help the other person and then it turns against me, that it's me who's the evil one. ... I tried to go on helping and counselling but they all attacked me, every single one of them, until I just left and was so low down that when I got back into my office – and this is one of the few times I did this – I turned on the red signal light [indicating that I was occupied] and cried, but didn't cry for myself, but because I understood their point precisely. They had to find someone to take their bad feelings out on, and I was the one representing the company.
>
> Tiina, female personnel manager (Episode 12)

Afterwards, one of the superiors to the laid-off was told about the counselling session and how it had ended. He remarked that it should naturally have been *his* job to take the feedback, not Tiina's. After describing the episode, Tiina said that was the last time she would fail to engage the superiors of the laid-off in a session like this.

Tiina constructed her story as an instructive example: this is not the right way to proceed – rather, it is the way you will easily get hurt yourself. The story further illustrates that building a distance also means building a shield to protect one's own emotions. This personnel manager concluded her story as follows:

> My heart still pounds when I think of it. ... And can you imagine, on top of it all, the whole thing took place just before Christmas. ... Emotions really surfaced: so this was our Christmas present from the company!
>
> Tiina (Episode 12)

4.2.1.1   The nature of negotiating

Yielding.   On first thought, it might be expected that yielding (or concession making) would emerge as a dominant negotiation style in the empathetic strategy.   The assumption would be that the personnel manager would score low on self-concern and high on other-concern. This was not quite the case, however. The empathetic strategy

emerges as carrying high own-concern as well. Although the personnel managers thought of themselves as those whose professional duty it was to listen and show empathy, they were also concerned for themselves, saying they acted empathetically, but kept a distance. 'Yielding' here does not directly correspond to the position of the co-ordinates in Pruitt and Rubin's (1986) dual-concern model. Other-concern and self-concern are both high in this style of negotiation within the empathetic strategy, as opposed to high other-concern and low self-concern in Pruitt's and Rubin's model.

Contending also emerges as a negotiation strategy from the interview material. It is worth noting that 'contending' here does not represent the kind of contentious behaviour in which the other party is forced in some violent manner to act according to another negotiator's self-concern. In this respect, contending merges with problem solving, as both other-concern and self-concern are high. The contending strategy was enacted, for instance, by a personnel manager who had realised that she had relevant information on a matter that would seriously affect the future of an employee. This demanded that the personnel manager act in a way that would lead to the best solution from the employee's standpoint. It might mean that she would have to contend with the employee to challenge him to act in a manner that would guarantee the best end-result for himself. In short, contending in the case of the empathetic strategy is different from the contentious behaviour of the dual-concern model, in which other-concern should be low. Other-concern is always high in the empathetic strategy, regardless of the terms in which the negotiating situation is constructed.

Problem solving. Anna, also a female personnel manager, said the most contradictory situation she had faced in her present job was having had to terminate an employee's work contract even though she had tried to do everything in her power to help and counsel the employee. Problem solving here refers to an effort to find a mutual win-win solution. Self-concern and other-concern are both high in this negotiating strategy. In Anna's case, however, problem solving failed.

> When you've tried, and you've given [the person] another chance many times, and you've corrected him, and told him 'come on, you've got to try and take care of your duties', 'this is your last chance'... And then finally I'm faced with the fact that no matter how much I believed in him and trusted him, the employee still doesn't make it. ... You couldn't do this job if you didn't really like people and didn't have some kind of an ability to care for people. ... So this is the most difficult part, because I do have my role as a personnel manager.
>
> Anna, female personnel manager (Episode 20)

In the above case, distance is constructed as living up to the role of personnel manager. In the end, Anna had no other choice but to give notice to the employee.

Inaction. In the stories of some of the personnel managers, they enacted the empathetic strategy only by listening; there was no action involved.

4.2.1.2   Negotiating emotional value

What was typical of the personnel managers' accounts of their actions and thoughts in enacting the empathetic strategy was their consideration of the broader consequences of their actions to the employee. There were several examples of this. For instance, a personnel manager who knew she was better informed than other employees about the company's financial situation tried to persuade employees whom she called 'far too loyal' to leave the company in good time. Only later did the employees understand why she had done this. A typical context in which the empathetic strategy was used concerned major downsizing operations. Several personnel managers reported having reorganised the lists of the laid-off according to their knowledge of the employees' general family situation. They would avoid, for instance, giving notice to a sole breadwinner or to an employee whose spouse had been laid off, or if they knew there was severe illness in the family[40]. The understanding that employees should be treated as *whole persons* acting in the organisation, not only as public persons but also as private individuals, reflects the empathetic negotiating strategy.

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[40] The recession of the 1990s was an exceptionally hard time for many families. Unemployment in Finland soared to 19% and even higher up in some industrial regions.

> There were some cases in which I was able to influence the situation, if both of them [a couple] were working for us and both would have been laid off – so in order for at least one of them to keep a job, so that the entire family wouldn't suddenly be left without any earnings ... So in these cases we were able to find humane solutions...
>
> Solja, female personnel planning manager (Episode 9)

The notion of a whole person or whole people in the context of the empathetic strategy means that the private side of an employee's life is also taken into account in corporate decision making – and this, in the frame of the current study, may call for negative decisions from the employer's point of view. Thus, when employees are considered as 'whole persons', the employer is not the direct beneficiary: it is the employee. However, some personnel managers remarked that treating employees in a humane and appropriate manner in crisis situations was also a 'business case'[41]. In the long run it never pays to treat an employee badly – it is neither good for the reputation of the company nor does it build trust or motivate those who are still employed by the company.

4.2.2 Emotion-handling strategy 2: Mediator

You must always hear both parties and get the employee's viewpoint as well, and then try to find out whether there's a misunderstanding of some sort between the manager and the employee. People are very attitudinal sometimes – we tend to see only one side of things.

The following excerpt illustrates how one of the interviewees described what it meant to be a personnel manager.

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[41] The concept of a *whole person* is often used in discussions on diversity, which argue for the so-called *business case* for equal opportunities. The aim is to make strategic use of the differences of employees for the benefit of the organisation and open-mindedly acknowledge, even commend, the fact that employees have roles outside the office. The core idea is that skills and knowledge can be transferred from one sphere of life to another. (Friedman et al., 1998:120; Foreman, 2001:222)

> Well, in this job you mostly take care of other people's affairs – you're like a jack-of-all-trades – and the company's affairs. … I feel that nearly, yes, nearly all those things that have anything at all to do with the personnel end up here [at the personnel department]. I'm asked to take part in a huge number of meetings and projects – and it's actually quite useful to attend, because then you know what's happening in the house and you're able to connect those different facts, so that you become a sort of contact person between those various projects.
>
>   Laura, female personnel manager

Here the personnel manager is a 'jack-of-all-trades' or a kind of a liaison officer, a bit involved in everything. I call this strategy the *mediator strategy*, as it is typical of those who used this strategy to see themselves as the 'men-in-the-middle', between management and employees.[42] They enact their role as in-betweens, a position of special value if a conflict 'gets emotional'. The mediator strategy emerges in conflict situations between manager(s) and/or employee(s). The personnel manager interprets his/her role as that of a neutral party, a person whom everyone can trust even when emotions get hot. Several studies have shown that rapport with and trust in the mediator are important predictors of agreement (Carnevale and Pegnetter, 1985; Pruitt et al., 1989). Mediating means discussing, negotiating and trying to get both parties together at the same table. In Pruitt and Carnevale's words (1993:169), 'A typical mediator will try to figure out what the problem is, and then try to solve it. Mediators will almost always do certain things, such as get information, and try to build rapport with the parties. Other activities are tied to the nature of the problem.'

Dealing with the issues being negotiated is a central aspect of mediation. It means identifying the issues, uncovering the negotiators' underlying interests and concerns, setting an agenda, packaging, sequencing and prioritising the issues, and interpreting and shaping proposals. (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993:170)

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[42] Cf. Watson's (1977) description of the ambiguous role of the personnel manager.

4.2.2.1   Guardian of justice

The personnel managers' descriptions of mediating yield two different stories. The first could be depicted as a story about a 'pure' strategy of mediation with an emphasis on the act of mediating itself. This is described, for instance, as 'functioning as a bridge' between the conflicting parties. The second type of stories stress the morale underlying the act of mediating. The actual act of mediating is not highlighted, but instead, the focus is on finding a just and fair solution to a conflict. As a result, this type of mediator strategy emphasises equal handling of employees. Fairness and the just treatment of all parties in an emotional situation emerge almost as a mantra in the stories: 'A personnel manager has to be just'. The personnel managers enacting this latter variant of the strategy talked about the ideal of fair treatment of every employee, whether a shop-floor worker or a vice president. This was considered as the most important aspect of personnel work. I call this second variant of the mediator strategy the *guardian-of-justice* strategy.

> Every now and then I get these situations where I've had to call foreman-level persons
> to order, like 'you really can't behave like that' and 'that's going to stop right now in
> this house', 'we don't act like that and that's not the way we treat employees here'. So
> it's clear that sometimes I'm also representing the employees.
>   Kalevi, male personnel manager

During the 1990s recession, half of the employees of a large Finnish corporation were laid off. The personnel managers of this big company were responsible for the task of giving notice to the individual employees. One of them was a female personnel manager named Varpu, who described her job during the lay-offs. She noted that in many instances she thought of herself as a representative of the employer, but when caught in the middle of the massive restructuring of the company she felt she was neither representing the employer nor the employees but that her position was 'somewhere in between'. Varpu explained this shift to middle ground by saying that in extreme situations in connection with major conflicts a personnel manager will find herself in a dead end – that is, unless she is able to mediate. No progress will be made if the differing perspectives on the conflict cannot be reconciled.

Some personnel managers described their position as resembling that of an 'outsider' in the organisation. They regarded this as an advantage. One of them, for example, talked about an instance in which she together with employees had been processing a superior's feedback to the employees (Episode 15). This feedback had been given in written form, which was quite unusual. Some employees had found this unpleasant, even frightening. The personnel manager felt it was an advantage to be an outsider in such a situation because 'it was easier for the employees to talk to me, because I'm not their direct superior'. She felt that her position as an outsider guaranteed her a mediating position.

4.2.2.2   Reflections on the dual-concern model

In the mediator strategy, the personnel manager acts as a third party in a negotiation. Personnel managers themselves are not a direct negotiating party but rather comparable to a fair and neutral judge. In such cases, the literature on negotiation research uses the term *mediation*[43]. 'Mediation is like negotiation except that a third party helps the disputants to reach an agreement' (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993:4). Consequently, it is not possible to contemplate this strategy from the standpoint of the dual-concern model, which focuses on negotiation between two parties. We might say that emotion-handling in the mediator strategy has many similarities with negotiation tactics, specifically with mediation.

4.2.2.3   Negotiating emotional value

Tiina, a female personnel manager, had reflected thoroughly on the principle of fair handling of employees. When recounting a conflict between a manager and an employee and the emotions inherent in that situation, she first described how she usually goes about in a conflict like this. In this particular case the manager, the

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[43] I chose the name for this strategy, *the mediator strategy*, quite early in the analysis. At that point, I was not yet familiar with negotiation research, and so I did not originally derive the name from the term *mediation* in negotiation research.

superior, had been outraged by the conduct of a subordinate and wanted to get rid of him immediately. The personnel manager tried to find out whether the manager's emotionally laden accusations were really true.

> You must always hear both parties and get the employee's viewpoint as well, and then try to find out whether there's a misunderstanding of some sort between the manager and the employee. People are very attitudinal sometimes – we tend to see only one side of things.
> Tiina, female personnel manager (Episode 22)

However, towards the end of the story, Tiina expressed her doubts as to whether an employee really does get fair treatment in an incident like this.

> And now we come to the part that's really hard in the role of a personnel manager. It's very difficult to take a neutral position and get things done right. Now we come to the core question in this profession: will the employee really be fairly treated in a situation like that, since the balance, nevertheless, always tends to incline a little bit to the employer's side.
> Tiina, female personnel manager (Episode 22)

Yet, when Tiina was asked where she herself thought she was positioned on the employer-employee continuum, her answer was 'right in the middle'. In the light of her previous comments, it seems that is where she would have wanted to be, whereas in her practical work she had a sense that it was not always so.[44]

The picture of a personnel manager that could be drawn from the descriptions of the mediator strategy was that of a 'fair judge'. The ideal of representing *a neutral party* (Value driver 1), capable of bridging conflicts in the turbulence and power struggles of an organisation, emerges as the guiding principle for personnel managers. The need to preserve neutrality also resembles the observation made by Pruitt and Carnevale (1993:168) in their research on mediation. Mediators have to steer a precise course

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[44] Even though two-thirds of the personnel managers interviewed in Watson's study agreed to the idea of the man-in-the-middle, they ultimately placed themselves on the side of the management. Reflecting on this, Watson writes that although a personnel manager has to establish his usefulness and effectiveness with the rest of the management, he nevertheless has to retain some element of neutrality, objectivity, or whatever as a *means* towards making his contribution to management goals (Watson, 1977:176).

between the conflicting parties so as not to alienate one side and lose their credibility and acceptability. There is always a risk that one or both parties will come to believe that the mediator is hostile or biased against them. The argument is supported by Watson's (1977) descriptions of the ambivalent role of the personnel manager. The position of the personnel manager as the man-in-the-middle, representing neither management nor employees, appears to be beneficial in mediating a dispute.

The *guardian-of-justice* variant of the mediator strategy rests on an ideational ground. The personnel managers had certainly reflected on what exactly justice signifies in practice. Also the question of *whose* justice was to be applied intrigued them (cf. Tiina's above comments). Their reflections centred around two themes: *equal handling of all employees (including managers)* (Value driver 2a) and *fair handling of all employees (including managers)* (Value driver 2b). However, Tiina's comments imply that personnel managers sense that they must, in any case, live up to their role as representatives of the management of the organisation.

The ultimate test of the effectiveness of a mediator is probably whether, as a result of mediation, the parties will be capable of resolving future conflicts on their own (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993:181). Indeed, this was mentioned by some personnel managers as a goal, as an ideal state of affairs: an organisation with no personnel specialists. However, in the same breath they remarked that this would never happen in reality, because 'managers and executives are so busy and often lack an interest in people matters'. Or, as Tiina in a humorous tone put it:

> I try to make myself useless, so that the other managers could take care of their job [as personnel managers], but heck, there'll always be new young executives who don't know a thing [about how to take care of personnel issues] and you have to start from scratch again – the show goes on, and you have to start all over again.
> Tiina, female personnel manager

4.2.3   Emotion-handling strategy 3: 'Lelia's couch'

What has been quite exciting over the years is that
I've quite often had to serve as their 'Lelia's couch'.
You know, managers are the loneliest people in
the world and they, too, need someone to talk to.

As a young girl I was curious to read my grandmother's women's magazines. Each issue carried a column of a couple of pages with questions and answers under the heading 'Lelia's couch'. I can still remember the black-and-white picture of an easy-chair or couch by the column, but, of course, I was most intrigued by the letters with all kinds of questions to 'Lelia'. To my mind, these letters dealt with extremely fascinating and sometimes very strange matters. The questions mostly dealt with heartaches, and the answers purportd to offer solutions and consolation to the writer. 'Lelia's couch' provided a glimpse into the world of grown-up women – as well as a lesson in sentimental education.[45]

The column ceased to appear already some decades ago, but its influence had been so extensive that even today the expression *Lelia's couch* is generally understood as a situation in which one can talk about one's emotions to a trustworthy and knowledgeable listener. This is an expression that would not be frequently used in everyday speech, but to my surprise the personnel managers kept using it to refer to contexts in which they had shown empathy to their own superiors or other top managers (as opposed to a show of empathy to employees in the empathetic strategy). These 'Lelias' typically tried to give strength and support an executive or manager in a difficult situation. Listening to their problems, especially emotional ones, was also

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[45] A British colleague told me that the British equivalent of *Lelia's couch* would probably be *Dear Marge.*

described in the interviews as offering other managers a 'shoulder to lean on'.

> And these managers, it's emotions they talk about when they come to see me. So the talk is very much about emotions, especially when the manager is looking for a shoulder to lean on.
>
> Tiina, female personnel manager

The personnel managers' construction of their work as serving as a 'Lelia' also conveys the idea that although the discussion on the couch was usually about emotions, they also provided professional advice, for instance, on what the law says about what a superior is allowed to do in certain tricky personnel cases. One example of this had to do with giving notice to an alcoholic (Episode 22).

'Lelias' often acted in response to a manager's move, but at times they also took the initiative themselves, as shown by the following quote.

> Our CEO is a specialist, a wonderful, marvellous person with a background as a leader of specialists. When he was appointed CEO, I took the initiative and just said to him that 'hey, come and visit my office some time'. And when he came I advised him that 'you have to take another role now that you're the CEO. People will be watching how you're doing. You'll have to meet the expectations invested in you as the CEO, it's no longer enough to be an excellent specialist in [the business area of the organisation].'
>
> Raita, female personnel director (Episode 25)

'Lelias' were always women. All were mature persons with several years' experience in personnel management. One of them talked about managers as if she were talking about children, referring to an analogy between them and children. Although this is reminiscent of the mother role, there is something else inherent in the 'Lelia' role than just mothering. Based on extensive field studies, Gherardi (1995:74-79) points out how the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology correspond to specific embodiments of maleness and femaleness in modern organisational cultures (Bolen, 1984, 1989; Bowles, 1993, cited in Gherardi, 1995). 'Lelia' certainly resembles Demeter, the goddess with a maternal instinct, who realises herself through the provision of physical, psychological and moral nourishment to others. But 'Lelias' also remind us of another of the five goddesses, Athena, the goddess of wisdom and the arts. It is she who is the

counsellor, ally and guardian of heroes and men of valour. Athena presides over battle strategy in times of war, and over the domestic arts in times of peace. She stands resolutely at the side of a dauntless leader, who relies on her advice. The 'great man' who has chosen her, whose trust she has won with her devotion and tireless work, and to whom she now is indispensable, receives advice from her which is undoubtedly useful but, at times, merciless. Yet, Athena's model of femaleness conceals the flaws of her patron and defends his public image. This description of the Athena type of femaleness has similarities with Raita's anecdote (cf. previous quote).

When I spoke about this combined image of Demeter and Athena with my network of personnel managers (the HRM team), they agreed that this type of personnel manager surely exists. She (and it is always a *she*) is the listener kind of person who has won the absolute trust of her superior through her devotion to her work and to her boss. This entitles her to give open feedback to the superior. However, at the same time, she wants to protect him or her against criticism from others.

4.2.3.1 The nature of negotiating

Although problem solving can be constructed as the aim of a negotiation between a 'Lelia' and an executive, the situation mainly involves counselling and support on the part of the personnel manager. However, if we really reflect on the meaning of *problem solving*, one of its key objectives is to construct a win-win solution (high self-concern, high other-concern). Those personnel managers who enacted the 'Lelia' strategy described counselling and support as the best way to reaching a solution to the managers' problems. They could help the manager by counselling (other-concern) while at the same time resolving problems, which was their responsibility in any case (self-concern).

4.2.3.2   Negotiating emotional value

'Lelias' who assumed an active role and approached a top manager to discuss a certain issue that they found important constructed their behaviour as assisting the managers to cope with their role. One of the interviewees described this as 'helping out at the Big League level'. Also those who did not take an initiative themselves but were approached by a manager described their task as helping managers to cope in their lone role.

4.2.4   Emotion-handling strategy 4: Outsourcing

But now professionals stepped in to deal with the really bad cases. My role was to identify the problem spots and advise these people to seek help from the professionals – but not to offer help myself.

The personnel manager was not always the one called on to process the emotions of the employees in times of crisis. Some personnel managers who had been involved in major downsizing situations, for instance, had hired outside help for the employees. They had sought assistance from change consultants, psychologists, state employment offices or company priests[46]. They motivated the use of outside help mainly by the scope of the crisis. In a crisis affecting many people, in some cases even thousands of employees, it was not possible for the personnel department to commit its own resources to helping these employees to cope. Outside assistance was also sought in case of an emotionally shocking event. In other words, the personnel manager would outsource the handling of emotions, while his or her role emerged more as that of an administrator and co-ordinator.

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[46] Over 90% of the Finnish population belongs to the Lutheran church, which is the state church. The state church provides a discussion and counselling service by so-called *company priests* or *workplace priests* to foster employees' well-being in Finnish working life. These company priests visit the workplace either regularly or in case of a crisis situation. - It is not very common to use the services of a workplace priest.

In contrast to this kind of *active outsourcing*, where the personnel manager purposefully looked for help, there were other examples of outsourcing of emotions. Some personnel managers recounted how they had suddenly realised that there was someone else in the organisation who was actually processing the emotional distress of employees. This kind of 'outsourcing' was not intentional, nor had it been encouraged – 'things had just evolved that way'. The person that had taken over the task of handling emotions might be the company nurse or a senior secretary or someone like that. Interviewees described turning to these persons as a source of information to find out just how the organisation as a whole was doing at the emotional level.

> There were always employees to whom the personnel department staff represented the lengthened arm of corporate management. So then it was the company nurse to whom you would tell the real truth [about personal exhaustion or unresolved problems at the workplace] and then she was able to summarise her perceptions of the well-being of the organisation or individual employees.
>
> Pauli, male personnel director (Episode 27)

Some personnel managers had been surprised to find out that there was someone else in the organisation who engaged in emotion handling; others had guessed this to be the case. I prefer to label this variant of the outsourcing strategy as *passive outsourcing*, because the personnel manager was usually not aware where employees' emotions were handled. Passive outsourcing was typical when the crisis in question was not a major one in terms of the number of persons being laid off or the severity of the emotional shock – that is, when it was a question of what could be described as a recurring emotional workplace crisis, like not getting along with one's superior.

In some cases the use of an outsourcing strategy was based on the personnel manager's unwillingness to process emotions. But, as mentioned earlier, active outsourcing was mostly applied in a major crisis affecting numerous individuals, when outsourcing was undoubtedly a reasonable solution for emotion handling.

> Interviewer: When you talked about situations in which you had to give notice, you mentioned that you tried to 'soften' the situation. What concrete actions soften such situations?
>
> Timo, male personnel director:
> With the resources we have there's no possibility to do that 'softening' ourselves, so in some cases the units have called on change consultants in lay-off situations.

In other descriptions, the reason for active outsourcing had been some very unusual event or shock that had triggered emotions. One such situation occurred when the employees of a fast-food restaurant found the dead body of a drug user in the restaurant toilettes (Episode 28). The experience of finding a dead man and seeing the needle still in an upright position in his body had been devastating. The personnel manager had asked the company's health care professionals to counsel employees on how to cope after the shock. Below is another example of active outsourcing, this time in a major bankruptcy situation:

> Had I adopted the role of a 'soft' personnel manager who gets emotionally involved, we honestly wouldn't have made it through that situation. I mean, we wouldn't have made it. It would only have caused more pain. But now professionals stepped in to deal with the really bad cases. My role was to identify the problem spots and advise these people to seek help from the professionals – but not to offer help myself.
> Raita, female personnel director (Episode 19)

4.2.4.1 The nature of negotiating

In terms of negotiation tactics, outsourcing can be basically described as *inaction* or *withdrawal*: inaction in the case of passive and withdrawal in the case of active outsourcing. However, inaction is valid as a description only up to the point when the personnel manager realised that emotions were being processed somewhere else in the organisation. After this insight he or she would take an active role and seek information from whoever had been taking care of emotion handling. Whether the argument for both low self-concern and low other-concern applies to inaction is questionable. It looks like

the personnel managers in these cases were not actually concerned about emotions at all; rather, they seemed to lack the sensitivity to discern emotions or to recognise who was handling emotions in the organisation. Withdrawal could be said to apply to the active outsourcing strategy, because the personnel manager did not personally and directly confront the emotions of the employees. However, the negative connotation of withdrawal[47] does not necessarily hold here, since in many cases the personnel manager made a *professional decision* to withdraw from emotion handling due to the massive scale of the crisis in question.

4.2.4.2   Negotiating emotional value

The episodes in which outsourcing was constructed as the emotion-handling strategy did not give a basis for constructing value drivers. I was unable to detect any such reflections in the actual descriptions of these emotional episodes. However, at other points of the interviews there were indications that the value driver in active outsourcing is the enhancement of employee well-being or coping in crisis situations – in other words, a kind of a professionalism in dealing with personnel matters. Such professionalism was described to function as a shield in the turbulence of a major crisis. For example, in the case of massive lay-offs some personnel managers clearly indicated that they would not have been able to cope with the challenges of the crisis, had they themselves engaged in helping the employees.

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[47] *Withdrawal* or *inaction* as a negotiation strategy can refer to a no-show situation in which one party opts for a strategy of not showing up for a negotiation. (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993)

4.2.5   Emotion-handling strategy 5: Withdrawal

Well, there was this kind of emotional upheaval in the beginning, but then we agreed – I didn't want to take this matter much further right then because he was in such an emotional shock at first – and we agreed that we would meet next day outside the office, at the golf course.

The *withdrawal strategy* was constructed in relation to emotional episodes[48] in two interviews. Firstly, this was the single strategy used by Matti, a male personnel director, in all the crisis situations he talked about. Secondly, in an interview with Jaana, a female personnel development manager, I was initially unable to construct any emotion-handling strategies whatsoever. However, later it appeared that the company culture in Jaana's organisation was imbued with fear, which could be interpreted as an explanation for the absence of other emotions. As both interviews were special in the sense that only one emotion-handling strategy was constructed and enacted in relation to all emotional episodes, I will discuss the interviews and episodes in Matti's and Jaana's interviews individually.

Matti talked about two types of crises. The first was a contradictory situation, even 'schizophrenic' in his own words, in which the company had to downsize 2500 employees simultaneously because of a merger and build up a new management development programme for the key personnel. This was the primary topic of discussion throughout the interview. Matti described several critical scenes in connection with this crisis. The second situation had to do with the lay-off of the managing director - who had just recently hired Matti as the personnel director of the company. The interviewee referred to this second crisis only briefly, but I as the interviewer later raised it up again.

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[48] The specific character of the emotional episodes within withdrawal strategy will be discussed in the end of section 4.2.5.3.

When crisis situations were discussed in the interview, this personnel director did not mention any emotions. This differentiated Matti's interview from the others, in which emotions emerged as a natural topic in the descriptions or stories of crisis situations. As noted, I did not tell the interviewees at the beginning of their interview that the specific focus of my study was on emotions, which meant that they did not necessarily have to talk about emotions. But, as proven by the other interviews, emotions featured as a predominant topic in the stories. This particular interview with Matti, however, was conspicuous in its scarcity of emotions. He used no emotion words in describing the crises, and the interview totally lacked the emotional side of the story. The single exception to the absence of emotional descriptions was the term 'emotional upheaval', which Matti used in connection with one scene. This expression came up in his description of the situation in which he as the personnel director had had to give notice to the managing director who had just hired him, that is, to his superior. In other words, the personnel director mentioned emotions at a general level in describing the obviously very loaded scene of laying off the managing director, but he did not name any emotions as such. It is interesting to examine Matti's response to the managing director's 'emotional upheaval' – he seems to think of it as a 'disturbance' and attempts to play it down.

> This was a terrible, a real shock to this person [the managing director] because, he told me, had this announcement come just a little bit earlier ... He had been offered new jobs and other things, but he had turned them down because he thought he would continue to have a role in this company. Well, there was this kind of emotional upheaval in the beginning, but then we agreed – I didn't want to take this matter much further then because he was in such an emotional shock at first – and we agreed to meet next day outside the office, at the golf course. And well, we spent several hours there and it gave quite a different starting point for our discussion. … The whole process was quite matter-of-fact.

The expression 'matter-of-fact' or 'in a matter-of-fact way'[49] occurred frequently in Matti's speech. He used this expression when referring to something that had been taken care of well and properly, in a business-like manner. The expression is illustrative

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[49] In Finnish '*asiallinen', 'asiallisesti'*.

of this interviewee's attitude to the way things should be run in a business context: everything should be based on factual data.

This particular interview contained numerous examples about obeying the rules or following other guidelines. It was the background against which the whole withdrawal strategy was constructed.

> These kinds of collective, let's say collective downsizing events, they're of course run according to certain rules of the game and mathematics and so on. There were negotiations held with trade union representatives and with the unions and the thing was to stick to the rules of the game and not do any more harm to anybody than what is necessary.

This quote is illustrative of Matti's way of constructing the withdrawal strategy. In his view, the best solution in crisis situations was to follow the guidelines or the 'rules of the game'. This, he believed, would guarantee the least painful outcome for everyone.

> I have generally taken it as a starting point, in this and in all other downsizing cases, that this kind of situation in itself is always negative. And the aim is to draw every possible positive aspect out of this negativity ... or, so to say, to take care of the process despite all the negativity so that people would, nonetheless, feel that the process was taken care of according to the rules of fair play.

The interviewee repeatedly referred to 'fair play', 'matter-of-factness', 'rules of the game', 'mathematics', 'frame of reference', 'hard facts', 'the law', and 'collective bargain'.

It must be pointed out, though, that the picture of this personnel director did not emerge as insensitive or cold. On the contrary, it seemed that Matti had made a conscious and well-reflected choice of not involving emotions in business decisions. It was what he considered to be the right way to act in crisis situations. The choice to omit emotions is also reflected in his answer to the question I asked each interviewee right at the start of the interview: what did they feel was the nature of personnel work? Matti's reply had a

highly professional tone and he used a great deal of professional terminology[50], but in his description he made no reference whatsoever to any individuals or employees. He constructed personnel work very much along the lines of SHRM, concentrating on describing the strategy of the company and the way it influenced personnel work.

4.2.5.1   Negotiating emotional value

Although it might be tempting to think that withdrawal is synonymous with alexithymia[51], this is actually not the case. Rather, it seems that the value driver for the withdrawal strategy stems from a belief that *it is not desirable to bring emotions to the workplace* – a traditionally cherished belief in a business context. As discussed earlier, the conventional assumption of business life is that the actors are highly rational, profit-maximising individuals in quest of the ultimately best business choices. This is the prevailing picture of the businessman in economic theories, for example. Lämsä's (1998) study on the downsizing experiences of managers supports this view. The four managers in her study considered coping with emotional distress as something of a very private nature. The organisations in which these managers were engaged seemed to function on the assumption that emotions and emotional conflicts did not belong within the sphere of management. In other words, managers were implicitly expected to act outside the realm of emotional conflicts – or, at least, to cope with them privately. Lämsä concludes that emotions were assumed to have a place of their own in the lives of the managers but that this place was a private place, separate from the public organisation.

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[50] As an exercise for one of the doctoral courses, I made a tentative discourse analysis about how my interviewees constructed personnel work. My analysis of Matti's interview revealed that his construction of personnel work was abundant in professional concepts, which were often expressed using English terms (instead of Finnish, the language of the interview). The word *employee* was conspicuously absent from his speech as compared to the interviews with the other personnel managers.

[51] For the alexithymic, it is the absence of emotions that leads to problems. Alexithymics appear to remain unperturbed by experiences that other people would find emotionally devastating. They are as incapable of empathy as they are of self-awareness. This, combined with the alexithymic's mechanical, robotic responses to conflict, amounts to psychological illiteracy. In the absence of emotions, these persons live in a world of rules and rituals. They have poor capabilities to show empathy and their reactions to interpersonal conflicts are mechanical. (Kets de Vries, 2001)

On the other hand, Matti did show sensitivity to the employees' situation. In a downsizing event, for example, he expressed his concern for families whose both parents were about to be laid off and attempted to cancel the notice of the other parent. Although the personnel managers who enacted the empathetic strategy expressed similar concerns, Matti's description and the words and expressions used by him were different in that they lacked a similar tone of caring and nurturing. Matti's belief that emotions do not belong into the arena of working life could be seen in his answer to one of the final check-up questions:

Interviewer:	Do you feel your work is emotional? Do you handle a lot of emotions in your work, if you consider both your own and other persons' emotions?
Matti:	No [laughs] ... or, well, not in that sense, I don't experience it that way. I feel that this work is very much about working through facts, even though real people are in a dominant role, of course...
Interviewer:	Do you think emotions surface more in crisis situations than in your work in general?
Matti:	Well, emotions are bound to emerge in crisis situations, but I personally have always striven to handle them as facts, as facts that have to be taken care of, so that it's not an action addressed to any person as an individual in that sense.

Even though the interviewee talked about *facts* as a basis for action at the personnel department, he did mention sensitivity a couple of times. He thought it important to have sensitivity to other people especially in a deadlock or stagnant situation. Matti further noted that in a major crisis situation, like the one where 2500 people were being laid off simultaneously, it was 'very much the responsibility of the personnel people to see to it that all the 2500 were handled as persons and as individual cases'.

4.2.5.2 The nature of negotiating

In terms of negotiating, the withdrawal strategy can obviously be described as representing the inaction/withdrawal tactic. When confronted with emotions, the personnel director enacting this strategy blew the game off and waited for emotions to cool down. Only after the arena had been swept clean of emotions was a real effort

made to solve the conflict. In other words, Matti did not deny the existence of emotions, he recognised them, but he did not think they should be taken into account in a business context. In Fineman's (1996) words, emotions seemed to 'interfere with rationality' in this personnel director's view.

4.2.5.3   Fear

And I want to tell you that if you succeed, that success won't be ascribed to you – there are others who will take it in their name. Whereas if you fail, the address is clear...

Amongst my interviews with personnel managers there was one out of which, try as I might, I was unable to construct any emotion-handling strategies whatsoever – although the interview certainly dealt with emotional episodes. This was the interview with Jaana, a female personnel development manager. After my first reading of the material, I set this interview aside with some initial comments on the language used by the interviewee, thinking that I would return to the transcript after the other constructions had taken more shape. Yet, what had especially struck me already while first reading the interview was the description of the organisational culture of the company. This was a company representing a traditional industry, and its corporate culture was described by the personnel manager as 'hierarchical and traditional' and 'old-fashioned', abounding in organisational power games. Only those at the highest organisational level were entitled to express themselves – there was a strict formula according to which all matters had to be presented. For example, once someone had presented a project or an idea to his or her superiors, it was no longer to be changed or modified.

> We have a fixed working pattern which we follow here. We work seriously, it's a
> question of getting results, counting the barrels. The only ones to speak are those at the
> highest level in the hierarchy, and so on … in a way, things have started to lead a life
> of their own, you no longer can work like a normal human being.

Jaana was depressed at the mentality that was watering down her projects; she felt that some of the managers were constantly throwing spanners in the works. She would have wanted to introduce a number of new personnel development methods but deemed that the corporation was not ready for such measures. Her way of seeing every employee as a resource with specific competencies failed to receive understanding on the part of the corporate management. The company had a tradition of dividing its young managers into 'promising' and 'unpromising' ones, which in Jaana's opinion was not a good idea.

When this personnel manager was asked to describe a crisis situation in her work, she replied that she could not claim to have experienced any major set-backs – rather, her problems had to do with introducing new ideas to the organisation. She told an example of a seminar organised by the corporate management. She had been radical enough to suggest presenting a new teamwork method at the seminar, proposing that issues of general interest would be processed jointly by the management and the employees. Jaana remarked that it had taken half a year of 'active marketing' to gain acceptance for the idea, but the seminar was approaching and there were still many obstacles on the way. She had worked hard at various teamwork concepts, and after finding one that was even better than what she had been 'marketing', she received a condescending remark from the management.

> ... OK, so you [Jaana] didn't really know what you were presenting to us last time, since you weren't aware of this new method [that you are presenting now].
>> (Episode 31)

Finally, when the seminar was about to take place, she was told by her superior:

> Look, Jaana, you're all alone with your teamwork method. There's nobody here backing you. And I want to tell you that if you succeed, that success won't be ascribed to you – there are others who will take it in their name. Whereas if you fail, the address is clear...
>> (Episode 31)

The following quote is descriptive of the organisational culture in the company. Jaana described the workplace atmosphere like this:

> People are afraid of new ways of working, and I think it's because they're afraid of losing their own position in the corporation. In other words, if their own incompetence were revealed ... 'Would I still have..., would I be appreciated, could I keep this job?' and so on. And people are afraid of the power structures. Because we have this employees-vs.-management [culture]: 'If I give in an inch to the employees, will they take a mile?' I think this fear is partly unconscious, partly conscious.

According to Armon-Jones (1986:62), fear can be said to have an instrumental role in regulating a variety of other attitudes. Fear in Jaana's interview appeared to be close to a feeling of shame or a fear of humiliation and loss of integrity (cf. ibid). In organisations with fixed and rigid power structures, people are coupled with strong ties of shame to the prevailing organisational forms, ideas, views, beliefs and ideologies (Mäntylä, 2000). And moreover, shame typically has low visibility (Scheff, 1988).

It seems that when fear is the generalised emotion in an organisation, other emotions cannot enter the arena. Jaana never directly addressed any other emotions in the interview – only referred to the underlying fear in the stories she told. Fear appeared to suppress all other emotions. The entire interview with this personnel manager was characterised by a presence of fear: her own fear of presenting new ideas that were bound to meet rejection, her superior's fear of the reactions of the other directors, and the management's fear of new ideas and their potential success. In Jaana's talk the experience of fear was most frequently constructed as an emotion displayed by the management whenever any changes or new working methods were intended to be implemented.

Kets de Vries and Miller (1987:7-19) point out that the predominant fantasies, beliefs and aspirations of the key decision makers tend to influence the nature of their organisation. The neurotic personality styles of top executives of troubled companies, for instance, affect the entire organisation: its strategy, strategy making, structure and corporate culture. Kets de Vries and Miller explain that we all have certain mildly dysfunctional neurotic traits, but that occasionally some people exhibit a number of characteristics that all manifest a common neurotic style. These individuals display such characteristics so frequently that their behaviour becomes quite rigid and inappropriate. They do not appear to be sick, nor is their conduct bizarre. The inflexibility of these

individuals, however, limits their effectiveness as top managers, consistently distorting their perceptions of other people and events and influencing their goals, their modes of decision making, and even their preferred social setting.

A tendency in many pathological organisations is that the tone for the whole company is set by one or two top executives who guide its strategy and create a particular structural climate. They try to ensure the compatibility and similarity of personnel in their selection, reward/punishment, and promotion procedures. The organisational culture strongly determines the nature of personalities that will be attracted to them and rise to power. Indeed, any elements of neurotic pathology in the management style of a company are likely to be extensively mirrored in the way it is run. (ibid:20-22)

Jaana described the leadership style of her company's top management as unpredictable, distrustful and reluctant to take any risks. If risks were detected, their style became aggressive and indecisive. Top managers could use rude language and make cutting remarks. Their subordinates were like marionettes, not knowing which direction to take. They might abruptly be asked to initiate projects that they thought had been already rejected or, conversely, they might realise that they had been preparing projects for nothing.

Jaana also told about a brilliant specialist who had been appointed to the position of a unit director. This story illustrates the character of the organisational culture in her company. New directors were needed to head some of the units, and Jaana as the personnel manager was involved in assessing in-house candidates for these posts. The particular specialist who was finally nominated to head one of the units had previously received dismal feedback on her ability to lead people. The management team nevertheless decided to appoint her against Jaana's advice. Some time later Jaana had to interview an employee who had worked under this new unit director and was leaving the company for another job.

I was conducting the so-called 'farewell interview' with an employee ... This person described what the management style in his unit was like. That he had been on the lookout for a new job for a year now, and he described the level of discussion in the unit [giving an example of what the unit head had told him]: 'Your presence makes me throw up'. And, 'I didn't pick you into this unit and so I don't want to work with you'. The situation in the unit was so inflamed that this employee described it as nearly peeing in his pants every morning when he came to work. That he didn't want to take part in anything extra at the workplace, like professional training after working hours, because he didn't want to be there. This employee fortunately survived...

The above extract illustrates how fear had impregnated the entire organisation, from the top management to the level of the individual employee. This interview differed from the others in that I was unable to construct any emotion-handling strategies on its basis. This was due to the prevailing emotional climate (deRivera, 1992) of fear. Jaana's case bears a certain similarity with the withdrawal strategy represented by Matti in the sense that no emotions – except fear – are visible. However, in Matti's case withdrawal clearly emerged as a means to handle emotions, as an emotion-handling strategy, whereas Jaana's case is special because no emotion-handling could be constructed. It is with reservation, therefore, that the emotional episodes described by Jaana can be categorised as representing the withdrawal strategy. Rather, it would seem that fear had paralysed the organisation. This made it difficult for other emotions to emerge and even more so to think that such emotions could be handled by an organisation so prone to fear.

A short comment on the use of the term emotional episode within the withdrawal strategy is necessary here. Even if the term emotional episode was used here to describe the crisis situations that Matti recounted for, the episodes are not included in Table 2 where the 34 emotional episodes are listed. In order to construct an emotional episode, it was necessary to identify an emotion and that was not possible in Matti's case. However, I chose to use the term emotional episode in the description of the crisis situations in order to compare similar units of stories in the other interviews. Another option would have been to integrate the two crisis situations described by Matti to the table and highlight the absence of emotions in the anecdotes. In that case, the number of the emotional episodes would amount to 36. – As the emotions of fear and

humiliation (as a part of fear) were mentioned in the interview with Jaana, it was possible to construct emotional episodes with regard to her interview.

4.3 Two logics of appropriateness: mothering and guide-following

As already discussed in connection with abduction, the interpretation of data is not always a linear process in which the analysis of one phase logically follows another. On the contrary, the process can sometimes be quite unpredictable. Bits and pieces of interpretation can remain 'hanging in the air' for some time before the researcher suddenly realises that he or she has been trying fit the pieces into the wrong puzzle. This is exactly how I felt about the two further emotion-handling approaches emerging from the interview data: *mothering* and *guide-following*.

Repeated readings of the interviews had suggested that there was something else in the data relating to crises and emotions besides the five strategies. That 'something else' began to take shape, or actually two distinct shapes. First I noted that female personnel managers tended to act like organisational *mothers* in times of crisis. Then I recognised that their male counterparts were likely to look for *rules* or *guidelines* on which to base their strategies in crisis situations. I decided to call these two ways of acting 'mothering' and 'guide-following'. These approaches often emerged when interviewees described how they handled their own emotions, and so I treated mothering and guide-following as strategies addressing the emotions of the personnel managers themselves instead of focused on the emotions of management and employees – like in the other five strategies.

Yet, this categorising proved problematic. It looked like some of the five strategies overlapped with mothering and guide-following. *Empathy at a distance*, for example, clearly had some overlap with mothering. Also, *withdrawal* showed similarities with guide-following. I tried to think of mothering and guide-following as second-level constructions, which only became visible after the other strategies had been constructed. This was not satisfactory either, because mothering and guide-following were certainly visible even without the first constructions, provided one had the sensitivity to detect

them. At this point I was quite confused and had a hard time trying to sort out what mothering and guide-following really represented. It was difficult to explain the overlapping with the other strategies.

Finally I opted for a practical solution and decided to first write down the five strategies dealing with the emotions of employees and managers, and then see whether any new ideas would evolve during the writing process. Indeed, this proved helpful. I finally began to make out a pattern, although quite the opposite of what I had anticipated. The pattern indicated that mothering and guide-following were not second-level constructions at all but should actually be described as first-level constructions, as two very basic approaches to emotion handling. In this light, the other strategies emerge as derivations of mothering and guide-following or as consequences of these two basic approaches.

We can say that the five emotion-handling strategies are operative at the level of the organisation itself, while mothering and guide-following are *logics of appropriateness* (March, 1981). In other words, the logics provide advice on what is appropriate action in a given situation. However, because these logics also helped the personnel managers to recognise the situation at hand and find a way to identify themselves in the situation, they also functioned as emotion handling strategies in relation to the personnel managers themselves. In enacting either mothering or guide-following the personnel manager also reflects on his or her emotions and their relation to the situation.

When I re-read the interviews for the first time after gaining the insight that mothering and guide-following could be thought of as logics of appropriateness, I realised that they often gave a specific tone or atmosphere to the interview. For instance, interviews in which a personnel manager derived the emotion-handling strategies from mothering were characterised by the use of words and terms that had a *caring* tone. On the other hand, interviews in which guide-following was the logic of appropriateness carried a different tone, with the use of terms that were more *factual* by nature.

Mothering and guide-following can both be considered as forms of *rule-following* in that there are certain rules of action and rule-bound behaviour that apply to them. A

mothering personnel manager finds the appropriate way of acting in a critical situation by having recourse to the rules of mothering, a set of rules based on the mother role or how a mother is expected to behave in a corresponding situation. Similarly, a guide-following personnel manager looks to an authority, a father figure or other guideline for advice or guidance in a difficult situation. Guide-following personnel managers seek solid instructions on how to act in a crisis.

In sum, mothering and guide-following are forms of rule-following. However, rule-following in the traditional sense means following a logic of *consequentiality*, whereas the logic in mothering and guide-following is one of *appropriateness*. In other words, there are no ready-made, bureaucratic rules that could be applied without reflection in a given situation; rather, it is a question of the appropriateness of the rule to the situation at hand.

4.3.1   Mothering

To give some examples of mothering in the study data, I will use an extract from the interview with Solja, one of the female personnel managers (Episode 1). The context is the closure of a warehouse, and the termination of everybody else's employment contracts had already been arranged except the warehouse foreman's. This was a company man who, without any schooling, had risen to the position which was now to be terminated as the last one. The warehouse foreman had been working closely with Solja during the process of running down the warehouse. In this extract Solja tells how she finally had to raise the matter of the foreman's own contract.

> But then we came to that [difficult matter], and I said, 'well, now we ought to think about what to do in your case', and I remember that he went completely pale. … And then I started discussing the situation with him, that 'hey, your age would give us the opportunity' [to arrange a premature pension scheme with a preliminary short period of unemployment], and I remember that he utterly refused, he absolutely did not want that. And then I said that what if we'd look into this possibility anyway, that we've made some financial estimates for you, and we looked them through even though he didn't want to. Then he received various other estimations and then we agreed that we would meet on day x. … I scheduled the day of the meeting so that I could be sure he would come, I arranged it so that there were still other matters to discuss, because I was afraid he wouldn't show up.
>
> Solja, female personnel manager (Episode 1)

A brief explanation may be helpful here. In Finland at the time it was considered shameful and embarrassing to go to the state employment office – only the 'asocial elements of society' needed state employment assistance. Yet, in order to obtain this advantageous pension scheme organised by the company, it was necessary to register personally as unemployed for a set period of time.

> This was really a tough call for him. ... In our next discussion he threatened to resign from the company pension scheme [which was very advantageous], and so on, all kinds of things. But then he kind of returned to reality, realising that [I was doing all this for his own benefit] and that he'd have to visit the state employment office. I strongly emphasised that he must stick to the terms when he goes to the office, and then we prepared the appropriate documents...
>
> Well, at last he reluctantly accepted this arrangement … but then after a couple of years I bumped into him – how glad and happy he was, and he said this was a wonderful solution, that now he understands it, 'thank you so much' ... So it came with a time lag, this 'thank you so much', but it was genuine and so nice to hear...
>
> Solja, female personnel manager (Episode 1)

In other words, this personnel manager had made every effort to arrange the warehouse foreman's life in the best way possible, even though his behaviour in the situation could be described as unmanageable and even childish. Also in relation to other crisis situations, Solja talked about employees in a motherly fashion. She used expressions like 'my girls' in describing how she had tried to arrange jobs for her younger

colleagues in a reorganisation context, and constructed her way of acting in caring terms.

We might construct her answer to the question, '*Who am I'?* as follows: '*I am a personnel manager whose duty it is, on one hand, to terminate employees' employment contracts and, on the other hand, to do it in a caring manner*.' Her answer to the question, '*What kind of situation is this?'* could be constructed as: '*This is an unpleasant situation for both parties, but I have been through this before and know how to handle it in a caring manner'.* Solja's answer to the question, '*What is the appropriate action for me in this situation?'* could be constructed as:' *As a professional I do my job of giving notice to employees and taking care of the necessary arrangements, but I also look after whoever loses his or her job as if that person were important to me regardless of his or her behaviour in that situation.'*

From an outsider's standpoint, engaging in mothering might at times seem unreasonable and excessive, even foolish. This is illustrated by Raita's answer to her husband's comment on her preoccupation with her work in the bankruptcy situation.

> When we'd been working a couple of months in the bankruptcy administration my own husband said to me, 'hey Raita, don't you realise you're working in a bankrupt company, you won't have a job there anymore'. And at that point I guess I got this 'personnel-worker feeling', that come on, until every single one of these employees in this bankrupt company has been taken care of whom we are able to take care of […], we'll do it. I'll take care of this, don't you come and say a thing even if I work like mad, I'm doing this and I can cope with it, and I'm not going to burn out.
>   Raita, personnel director (Episode 19)

It is typical of mothering to feel a deep concern for employees' well-being and coping in a time of crisis. In the above bankruptcy situation, it would have been quite possible to let people cope on their own, since the company had ceased to exist and in that sense the personnel director was no longer responsible for the employees. However, in her actions Raita extended the mothering approach beyond her responsibilities as a personnel director.

4.3.2   Guide-following

To use a family metaphor, we could think of the guide-follower as a child who looks to the father for advice. Although it may seem strange to compare a personnel manager to a child, there are a number of similarities that make it an interesting analogy.   The guide-follower and the child both seek instructions and guidance from an authority – a father figure or God, for instance. In an organisational context, there are certain guidelines set by the 'father' which it is the 'child's' duty to follow.

The guidelines evoked by the personnel managers were varying in character. Some were derived from religion: from the Bible or the Ten Commandments, for example.

> [Talking about how he managed to balance between the demands of the trade union and the management in a highly turbulent situation, as the company was struggling to survive:] I was trying to approach everyone in a personal manner and didn't seek to revenge any wrongs and in a way I tried – saying this may sound a bit stupid – but I tried to think like a Christian and at least in some way to act honestly.
>> Mikko, male personnel manager (Episode 11)

> You should act in the way you yourself would wish to be treated in the same situation... [similar to the Golden Rule in the New Testament]
>> Risto, male personnel director (Episode 10)

Finland is a secularised country, and it is not common in Finnish society to talk about religion or to refer to one's religious conviction or worldview – and even less so in a business context. It was, therefore, surprising that the topic was brought up in some of the interviews. The subject of religion emerged when personnel managers described how they had searched for guidelines or looked to an authority figure for advice on how to act in a crisis situation.

Other examples of guide-following include references to the authorities or to legislation. Business life was, for example, presented as a game to which certain rules of the game applied, as in the already cited excerpt from Matti's interview:

> These kinds of collective, let's say collective downsizing events, they're of course run according to certain rules of the game and mathematics and so on.
>
> Matti, male personnel director

Again, we can construct potential answers that a guide-follower would give to the three questions: '*Who am I'?*, '*What kind of situation is this?*' and '*What is the appropriate action for me in this situation?*' The answer now could be: '*I am a personnel director whose duty it is, on one hand, to organise lay-offs and, on the other hand, to arrange the downsizing process following the given guidelines. This is a part of business life and should be handled according to the law and other existing regulations. The appropriate action for me is to carry out the downsizing process and to do it in accordance with the rules applicable to this situation*'. In other words, in contrast to mothering where the logic refers to a person-to-person situation, here the focus is on guidelines that stipulate the relationship between employer and employee.

At some point in the analysis I wondered whether the feminine label of personnel work might have pushed male interviewees to reinforce their maleness by presenting themselves as more guide-following than they actually were. At times in the interviews with male personnel managers I sensed that they wanted to give a clear-cut and rational picture of personnel work as opposed to its 'soft' and caring image. Aaltio-Marjosola (2001:38) has written that women and men bring into working life and organisational cultures their own specific traditions, values and ways of working. These represent a source of cultural diversity which companies can profit by and use. On the other hand, organisational cultures may occasionally narrow down the repertoire of acceptable behaviour for men, for instance. The men's role is sometimes that of an actor without soul or emotions.

To sum up the previous sections, there appear to be two sets of rules – mothering and guide-following – and three metaphors grounded on the concept of family: father, mother and child. A guide-following personnel manager is like a child asking for advice from a father, while a mothering personnel manager draws her rules from maternal thinking and takes care of the employees as she would of her own children.

It is important to note that mothering and guide-following do not refer to any personal roles like those of a mother or father in the family. Rather, they refer to rules that have developed in the contexts of society, religions, organisations or work communities – which is to say, in wide social and societal contexts. Mothering and guide-following are, therefore, treated here as logics of appropriateness that offer rules for action.

The difference between mothering and guide-following can be illustrated in the following way (Figure 5).

Figure 5. *The difference between mothering and guide- following.*[52]

Mothering	**Guide-following**
Immediate relationship	Mediated relationship

Guide:

Authority, father figure, law

PM ⟷ E   PM   E
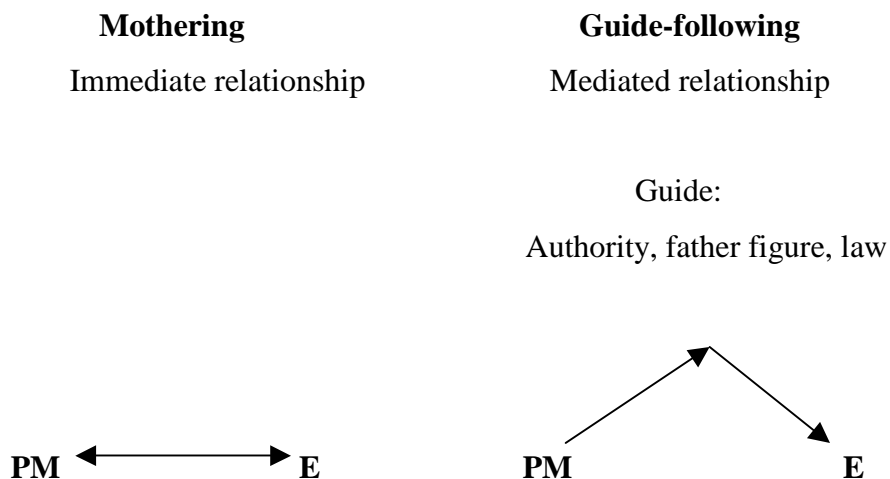
PM = personnel manager, E = employee

It was possible to form four different categories of personnel managers in relation to mothering and guide-following from the study data. The first category, let us call it *mothering women*, consists of female personnel managers who used mothering as the logic of appropriateness. The second category, *mothering men*, includes those few men who used mothering terms at some points of the interview. The third category

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[52] I thank Jeff Hearn for pointing out the importance of illustrating this difference between *mothering* and *guide-following*.

comprises *guide-following men*. The fourth category, however, is empty – there were no *guide-following women*. Additionally, it should be noted that the case in which fear was a factor was special in the sense that neither mothering nor guide-following could be constructed as a logic of appropriateness. Figure 6 describes these four categories of personnel managers in relation to the logics of appropriateness.

Figure 6. Four possible categories of personnel managers in relation to mothering and guide-following.
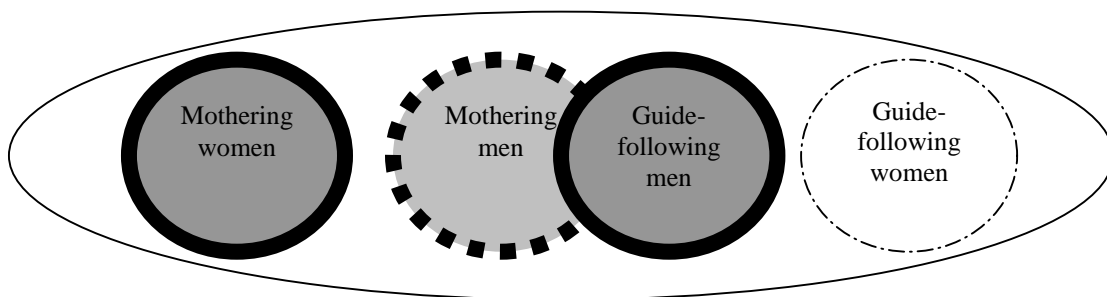
I was slightly hesitant to present mothering men as a separate group, but opted for this interpretation because some of the male personnel managers used mothering terms to describe the nature of personnel work or the values they wanted to enact. Still, what is especially worth emphasising is that although some men could be depicted as 'mothering' on the basis of their talk, they did not apply mothering in their emotion-handling strategies. For instance, they never enacted the empathetic strategy: this strategy was solely constructed in relation to female personnel managers. It is also worth noting that one of the four potential categories is empty. There were no guide-following female personnel managers in the data; guide-following was only enacted by men. Next I will consider a few aspects that might give some background for the observed categories.

Early life experiences: girls' play and boys' games

Mills and Murgatroyd (1991) reflect on the early organisational experience of girls and boys and its impact on their future organisational roles. They refer to Richer (1984), who realised that girls tend to engage in *play* activity, whereas boys tend to become involved in *games*. In playing competitive games, boys become familiar with the complex notions of rules and rule negotiation, roles and role taking, teamwork and leadership – in short, 'a learning environment for the cultivation of skills later demanded by bureaucratic work organisations' (Mackie, 1987:137, in Mills and Murgatroyd, 1991). Girls, on the other hand, 'prefer turn-taking activities, where each girl skips or bounces a ball' and consequently are often engaged in watching what is going on. Female play is more frequently individual, dyadic or confined to small groups, it is quieter and more restricted in body movement, and it is more likely to be carried on indoors (Mackie, 1987:135). The general outcome appears to be that:

> Boys emerge from the Game Stage with the ability to take the role of the generalised other, to comprehend the abstraction of social relationships. Girls, on the other hand, have become more and more proficient in taking the role of significant others. (Mackie, 1987:137)

Using the method of memory work to study gender and emotions, Crawford et al. (1992:75) looked at the transgression and apology memories of girls (now women) and boys (now men). The writers especially ponder the relationship between responsibility and autonomy, which seems to be very differently constructed in the memories of women and men. Young girls appeared to see both a positive and a negative aspect to responsibility. Sometimes they were proud of the adult expectation for them to behave responsibly (in an 'adult' way) and this expectation enhanced their sense of self as competent, autonomous people. If under those circumstances they deemed themselves to have betrayed that trust, they felt guilt and shame. On the other hand, they often felt being held responsible for irritating or upsetting the social realm of adults, where their actions were intended to have quite different results. Their apparent expectation of being held responsible for other people's well-being was in marked contrast with boys' memories, which showed no such expectation.

Care ethics

Conceptualisation of the two logics of appropriateness, mothering and guide-following, can be compared to the concept of 'care ethics' (Gilligan, 1982). According to Gilligan, men's thinking is based on rights. The rights of an individual create a certain context of freedom within which one can try to achieve one's own gains without violating the rights of others. This easily leads to a situation in which other individuals are seen as competitors. Accordingly, the 'threatening' other is kept at a safe distance by referring to the rights and rules of general justice. Women's ethical thinking, in contrast, takes relations to other people as the starting point. Women enact ethics from the standpoint of other individuals and in relation to them, instead of in relation to abstract deeds or as separate, autonomous actors. According to Gilligan, women do not see other people as threatening competitors but, rather, as individuals to be cared for.

In Aaltio-Marjosola's study (2001), the interviewed senior female managers reported that in their job they wanted to pursue the kind of values that emphasise life itself and resemble values associated with parenthood and family. Aaltio-Marjosola notes that this is a key element of being a woman – of women's role in society and in various cultures. Women entrepreneurs, for example, often choose to enact the values of caring, hospitality, nurturing and aesthetics, in businesses like restaurants, catering, hair-dressing, elderly care, etc. It is much more demanding to do so in large companies. The present study confirms Aaltio-Marjosola's reflection that a female manager probably enacts such values in another form in a big company or other large-scale organisation. The findings of this study further imply that the mothering logic and the emotion-handling strategies applied by female personnel managers tend to emphasise values that are life-preserving and familial.

Even though the logics of mothering and guide-following were constructed in connection with crisis situations in the first place, I later realised that these logics could be discerned in other contexts as well. At the beginning of each interview, the personnel manager was asked to tell what he or she thought personnel work was all about. In this connection, mothering personnel managers tended to focus more on the individual employee and talk less about HRM strategies or the impacts of globalisation on their work than did guide-following personnel managers.

To conclude, the two logics of appropriateness, mothering and guide-following, are basic approaches to emotion handling, and the five emotion-handling strategies are derivations of these two logics. However, the logics also function as emotion-handling strategies in relation to the emotions of the personnel managers themselves.

4.4   Overview and reflections

Some of the interviewed personnel managers – while telling about one specific crisis situation – would comment on their story by describing what they *usually* did in corresponding situations. Such reflections were often very useful for the interpretations because they gave additional information about the thoughts of these personnel managers. However, the actual analysis was based on specific crisis situations, that is, on the described emotional episodes. In practice this meant that I categorised and coded only those recounted situations from which it was possible to construct a *crisis*, *emotion(s)*, and *context or issues discussed*, and where it was clear *whose emotions* were handled. As could be concluded from the above descriptions, personnel managers enacted their emotion-handling strategies in relation to other managers (often their superiors), to employees as well as to themselves. These relationships are illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7. *Emotion-handling strategies enacted in relation to managers, employees and the personnel managers themselves.*

Managers

Strategies:
Lelia's couch
Mediator
Outsourcing
Withdrawal

Emotion handling
in relation to

Employees

Strategies:
Empathy
Mediator
Outsourcing
Withdrawal

Personnel managers themselves

Logics:
Mothering
Guide-
following
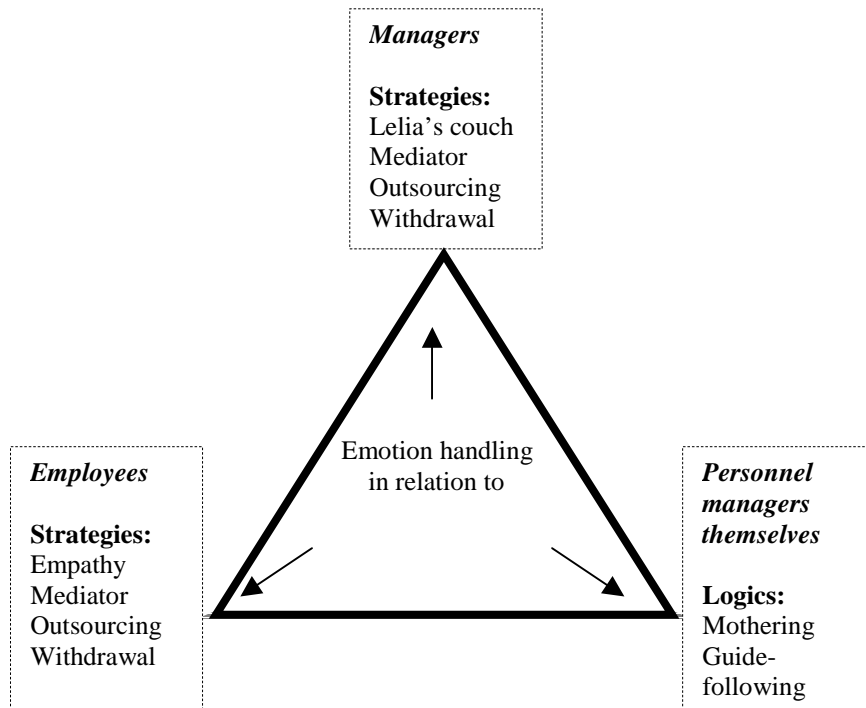
The results of this study clearly show that a personnel manager engages in emotion work. Within the frame of some emotion-handling strategies, it is obvious that personnel managers also enact emotional labour (for emotion work vs. emotional labour, see Section 2.2.3.). However, the interviewed personnel managers were well aware of the risks related to emotional labour and could recognise situations where there lay a risk of burnout. They seemed capable of protecting themselves at least to some extent – for instance, by keeping a distance in enacting the empathetic strategy. The withdrawal strategy also gave a means to avoid emotional labour.

The value drivers for the strategies reflect a heterarchy of values (cf. bounded emotionality) as opposed to the prevalent value of organisational profit-seeking in a business context. As pointed out with reference to the emotion-handling strategies, it was possible to construct specific value drivers for each strategy on the basis of the interviews. These value drivers represent either the personnel managers' approach to

emotions or reflect their approach to their handling of employees in an emotional episode. Table 3 gives a summary of the five emotion-handling strategies found in this study.

Table 3. *The five emotion-handling strategies.*

EMOTION-HANDLING STRATEGY	IN RELATION TO	BRIEF CHARACTERISATION	VALUE DRIVER(S) OF THE STRATEGY
1. Empathy at a distance	*Employees'* emotions	Personnel manager approaches employees and handling of emotions in empathetic and caring manner – but keeps a distance, preserving his/her own integrity ; 'you shouldn't let these matters get too much to heart'.	Belief that employees should be treated as *whole persons*, also taking into consideration their private life
2. Mediator/ guardian of justice	*Employees' and/or managers'* emotions	Personnel manager acts like a 'man-in-the-middle' or 'bridge' between employees/managers or between manager(s) and employee(s) in an emotional conflict situation.	*Equal and fair handling* of all employees, personnel manager is a neutral party
3. Lelia's couch	*Managers'* emotions	Typically mature female personnel manager ('Lelia') acts as 'shoulder to lean on' for top managers, either on her own initiative helping managers to 'open up' with their emotional problems or on the managers' request.	Helping top *managers to cope* with their lone role
4. Active and passive outsourcing	*Employees' or managers'* emotions	Personnel manager resorts to *active outsourcing*, i.e. hires outside help (psychologists, consultants, workplace priests) to handle emotions in major crises (downsizing, etc.) or: Personnel manager, not having realised that emotions were being handled somewhere else (by switchboard operator, secretary, company nurse), resorts to *passive outsourcing*, i.e. seeks information from the source in question.	Active outsourcing: *'professionalism'* in dealing with personnel issues, 'if you can't deal with a problem yourself, you know where to get help'. Passive outsourcing: ---
5. Withdrawal	Emotions *not dealt with (employees' or managers')*	1. Personnel manager does not deal with emotions in a crisis even though he realises that emotions are involved. 2. A strong emotion, (fear) asphyxiates other emotions.	1. Belief in the cognitive *rationality* of the organisation and its actors, 'it's not desirable to bring emotions to the workplace' 2. -

Table 4 gives an overview of the types of strategies and the most common combinations of strategies enacted by the interviewed personnel managers.

Table 4. *Types of emotion-handling strategies enacted by each interviewed personnel manager.*

(f=female, m=male)

Strategy:	Empathy at a distance	Mediator / guardian of justice	Lelia's couch	Active or passive outsourcing	Withdrawal
Anna (f)	X	X			
Jaana (f)					X (FEAR)
Laura (f)	X			X	
Raita (f)	X	X	X	X	
Ritva (f)	X	X			
Solja (f)	X	X			
Tiina (f)		X	X	X	
Varpu (f)	X	X			
Hannu (m)		X			
Kalevi (m)		X		X	
Matti (m)					X
Mikko (m)		X			
Pauli (m)		X		X	
Risto (m)		X		X	
Timo (m)		X		X	

Table 4 indicates that it was fairly common for a personnel manager to enact two different strategies, however much the combinations might vary. Some personnel managers would apply only one specific strategy in a given crisis; others might use diverse strategies in relation to one and the same crisis. A few examples of this are given in Table 5.

Table 5. *Examples of emotion-handling strategies used by three personnel managers in crisis situations.*

SOLJA		KALEVI		RAITA	
Episode (No.)	**Strategy**	**Episode (No.)**	**Strategy**	**Episode (No.)**	**Strategy**
Closing down of all company operations in one town (7)	Empathy Mediator	**Sexual harassment (29)**	Mediator	**Bankruptcy (19)**	Empathy Mediator Active outsourcing
Closure of a warehouse (1)	Empathy Mediator	**Lay-off (24)**	Mediator	**Major change affecting role of new CEO (25)**	Lelia's couch
Closure of an IT unit (9)	Empathy Mediator	**Conflict between employees (30)**	Mediator		
Lay-offs (2)	Empathy Mediator	**Death of client (28)**	Active outsourcing		

On the basis of the data, it was not possible to argue that certain crisis situations would be handled with certain strategies. On one hand it was difficult to compare the descriptions of similar types of crisis (e.g. lay-offs) as the nature of the descriptions varied a lot. On the other hand, there was so much variation that patterns could not be detected.

As noted earlier, there emerged two logics of appropriateness that could be conceived of as general approaches to emotion handling among personnel managers – namely, mothering and guide-following. Moreover, the personnel managers handled their *own* emotions as well by applying these logics. The five emotion-handing strategies can,

thus, be understood as derivations of mothering and guide-following, as illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8. *The five emotion-handling strategies as derivations of the two logics of appropriateness: mothering and guide-following.*
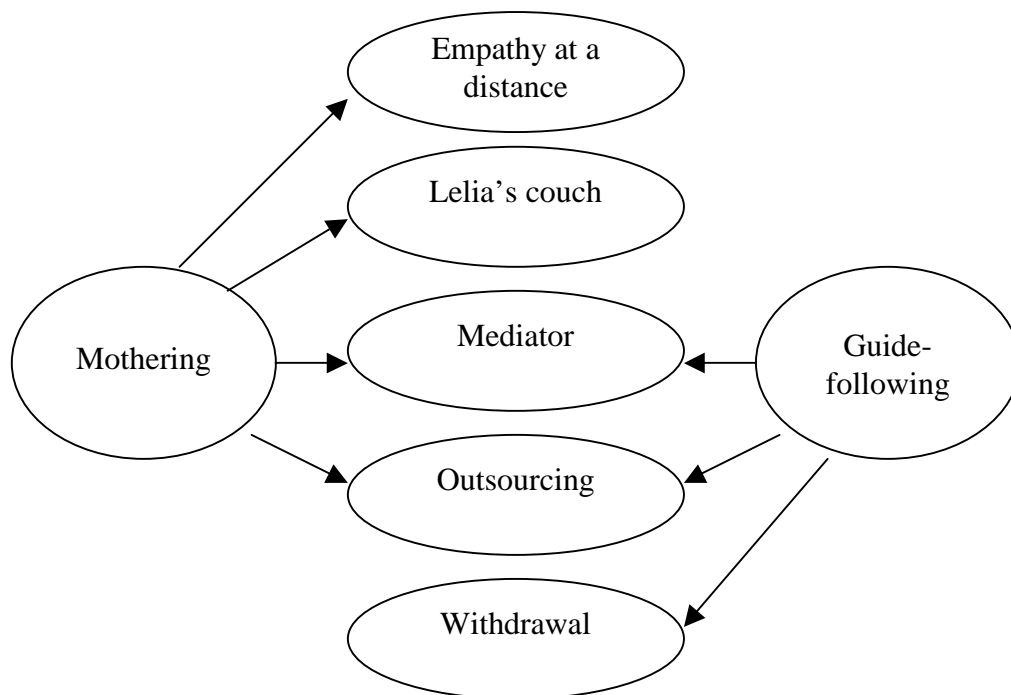
As illustrated earlier in Figure 6, the logic of mothering was enacted only by female and guide-following only by male personnel managers. From among the five emotion-handling strategies found in this study, two were used only by female personnel managers, two by both female and male personnel managers, and one only by male personnel managers.[53] Again, it must be emphasised that this pattern is not a fixed one, and other data might show a somewhat different pattern. However, it can be argued, at

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[53] The case dealing with fear recounted by Jaana, a female personnel development manager, was special. It was not possible to construct a logic of appropriateness in this case. In addition, it was, with some reservations on my part, categorized within the withdrawal strategy. Thus, withdrawal is here treated as a masculine strategy derived from guide-following.

least tentatively, that there exist strategies of emotion handling that may be characterised as masculine and as feminine.

The dual-concern model and negotiation tactics

Whatever their negotiation tactics, the interviewees always constructed high self-concern as well as high other-concern. Bearing in mind that the personnel managers themselves had chosen what anecdotes or stories to tell, it was natural for them to select material which implied both high self- and other-concern. In this respect, the co-ordinates of the negotiation tactics used by the interviewed personnel managers are not identical to those in Pruitt and Rubin's original dual-concern model. However, as noted in connection with the modified dual-concern model in *Chapter 2* (Figure 3), the position of a personnel manager as 'the man-in-the-middle' affected what they constructed as 'self-concern'. Their 'self-concern' referred alternately to the company, the employees and to themselves personally.

The overall value of applying negotiation tactics to the analysis lay primarily in the fact that the concept of negotiating captured the nature of the context as well as the manner in which the issues were discussed in the described emotional episodes. In other words, the emotion-handling episodes resembled negotiating situations where integrative potential was sought after. The personnel managers were aiming at creating emotional value for all the parties concerned.

Talk on emotions

Several researchers have noted that women's talk characteristically has a personal and concrete style. Case (1994:152), for example, writes that women often reason from personal experience. Her earlier studies (Case, 1985, 1988, 1990) indicated that when women tried to convince others of their point of view they would refer to personal experiences rather than to authority 89% of the time, whereas men used proof from authority and appealed to objectivity 91% of the time. In the frame of the current study, Case's findings would suggest that talking in mothering terms is typical of the way women express themselves. Their personal experiences as present or potential mothers appear to shape their manner of expression. As Fischer (1993) noted, women tend to talk more about emotions than men. Yet it cannot be concluded that women are more

emotional than men just on the basis of the way they talk. In interpreting the results of this study it must, therefore, be borne in mind that emotions are largely social reactions, embedded in cultural systems of meanings. In other words, the personnel managers' talk analysed in this study has to be considered also in a wider cultural perspective.

Boundary-stretching character of personnel management

A specific aspect of personnel work which emerged from the interviews is its boundary-stretching character. The work of personnel managers extends beyond the conventional boundary of the organisation onwards into the sphere of private life. This phenomenon is also recognised by the employees of the organisation, as illustrated by the following quote:

> [Talking about the most challenging situations in his job:] There was one case – this happened years ago – I was supposed to discuss the termination of a person's job, and she had taken along her child of two or three with her, she had taken the child along. And we were discussing, like, where she's going to earn a living for her family. ... So that she wanted to influence me. This has stuck in my mind. I thought it was very unusual. ... This happened during office hours, and she knew this was a meeting where we would discuss the termination of her job.
>
> Hannu, male personnel director (Episode 17)

Would a similar scene have happened if it had been a line manager, not a personnel manager, giving notice to this young woman? The interviewed personnel managers explained that their aim was to develop a confidential relationship with all employees, in good *and* in bad times. What they considered one of the most rewarding sides of personnel work was the chance to share positive experiences, like career advancement or new sales records, with the employees. But there is obviously another side to the coin. When things did not go well, the barrier to go and complain to the personnel manager seemed much lower than to speak to one's own superior. In a lay-off situation, for instance, it was common for the employees to pour their ill feelings on the personnel manager instead of the line manager (see Episode 12).

Brunsson (2003) refers to the hypocrisy prevailing in organisations and notes that there are many popular ideas in modern society about what is generally considered as rational, just or good. 'Such ideas tend to be general, vague and simple, making them

attractive as ideas' (Strang and Meyer, 1993 in Brunsson, 2003: 204), but they are 'more difficult to translate into concrete, specific actions in a way that is as attractive and uncontroversial as the ideas' (Sartori, 1962, in ibid.). Because organisations are systems which are expected to act, the tension between attractive ideas and the limits and specifications of practice grows acute. They are easy victims to be criticised for having perverted the common ideals. Thus, Brunsson concludes, modern organisations are squeezed between ideology and practice. Similarly, in the frame of the present study, it is possible to recognise efforts to translate attractive ideas into actions through the emotion-handling strategies. Some of the strategies can be conceived of as attempts to apply the ideology of enhanced employee well-being into practice. The value drivers for these strategies reflect the ideologies held by the interviewed personnel managers, whereas the emotion-handling strategies reflect the actual practice. Yet, the sense of being squeezed between ideology and practice emerged in the interviews as well. Tiina, one of the female personnel managers, for instance, reflected on whether employees really get fair treatment in conflicts between the management and an individual employee. She held the ideal of equal handling of all employees, but doubted whether this ideal was truly enacted in all instances. Balancing between ideology and practice, thus, seems to be inherent to the work of personnel managers.

It can be argued that the handling of emotions in a time of crisis is an important means by which the organisation, perhaps unknowingly, improves its chances to survive. If personnel managers succeed in negotiating emotional value, this will increase the emotional capability of the organisation (Huy, 1999). The results of this study indicate that relying on outsourcing is appropriate in certain specific cases, but full reliance on outsourced emotion handling can hardly be considered a viable alternative.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This last chapter starts by providing the reader with a summary of the research. This is followed by a discussion of the results and reflections on the approach chosen for the study. Some implications for management practice are then drawn from the findings. The final section presents suggestions for future research.

The idea of handling emotions as a part of a personnel manager's work – or, as a part of any manager's work, for that matter – is not a new one. All who have worked in or had contact with organisations know that organisational life is far from being an unemotional arena (e.g. Fineman, 1993c; Hearn, 1993; Sjöstrand, 1997). The approach advocated by emotion researchers is to consider emotions as an integral element of working life, acknowledging them as something worth taking into consideration, maybe even worth celebrating, in an organisational context. Nevertheless, the traditional view of business life as a non-emotional, rational context continues to persist. We know that within the discipline of economics, for example, modelling is based on the conception of a rational, gain-maximising actor. Emotions are often regarded as too 'messy', unpredictable and inappropriate to be integrated into modelling. Yet, paradoxically, if we take a look at the reactions in the stock market, it appears to be a pretty emotional business arena – investors' emotions are sure to have economic impacts. At a general level, however, business life is regarded as an emotion-free zone, and researchers like Fineman (1993c) have noted that it is high time to bring emotions in. The present thesis is aimed at doing this by offering descriptions of personnel management in crisis situations involving emotions. More specifically, the focus is on the way personnel managers handle these emotions in various crisis situations.

5.1   Summary of the research

The particular aim of this study was to construct and analyse the kinds of strategies which personnel managers enact in handling emotions in crisis situations. A point of central interest was to explore the strategies they use to handle the emotions of the employees and other managers as well as their own emotions. Another ambition was to classify those strategies according to logics of appropriateness. The research questions were:

1. *What are the strategies of personnel managers in handling employees' and their own emotions?*

2. *How can these strategies be classified according to logics of appropriateness, in this context especially with respect to personnel managers' values?*

Altogether 34 emotional episodes were collected in 18 in-depth interviews with 16 personnel managers. The interviewees were asked to tell about crisis situations in their work contexts. The idea was that the personnel managers themselves would define what the term 'crisis' meant to them. This approach was chosen in order to obtain as diverse descriptions of emotional episodes as possible. The types of the crisis situations varied widely: some personnel managers might talk about a major reorganisation, other might discuss laying off an alcoholic employee. The episodes were classified according to four dimensions: type of emotion and crisis, context/issues discussed in the crisis, and person(s) whose emotions were being handled by the personnel manager. The emotional episodes were then coded, sorted and analysed with special reference to the strategies used for handling emotions.

This study is explorative and non-prescriptive by nature. Its research design is abductive, meaning that the research framework, data gathering and analysis evolved simultaneously. The initial framework of personnel management research was expanded to include the literature on emotions in organisations as well as some ideas drawn from negotiation research. The approach applied to the data is interpretive, and the perspective is that of social constructionism.

Five distinct types of strategies were identified among those enacted by the personnel managers in the emotional episodes they recounted. These form the main findings of the study. The results further indicate that the strategies are derived from two logics of appropriateness: mothering and guide-following. These account for the personnel managers' general approach in enacting their strategies for emotion handling and were also used to handle the personnel managers' own emotions.

The collected emotional episodes describe how the interviewed personnel managers handle emotions in relation to employees (non-managers), managers and themselves. So-called value drivers were also constructed for each strategy to describe the personnel managers' principal rationale(s) for enacting a strategy. The terminology applied in interpreting the data material is drawn from negotiation research, which offered a vocabulary that helped to describe certain aspects of the data. Specifically, the idea of negotiating immaterial value – emotional value, in this context – for the organisation is descriptive of the way personnel managers enacted their strategies. A summary of the five emotion-handling strategies follows.

Emotion-handling strategy 1: Empathy at a distance

Personnel managers enacting this strategy used it to handle the emotions of employees. Their approach to employees and to emotion handling was empathetic and caring. However, they emphasised that they strove to keep a distance to employees' problems in order to preserve their own integrity. This was expressed, for instance, as: 'You shouldn't let these matters get too much to heart'. These personnel managers believed that employees should be treated as whole persons, taking into consideration their private life as well.

All four negotiation tactics of the *dual-concern model* (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986) can be found within the empathetic strategy. In other words, these personnel managers used yielding, problem solving, contending and inaction/withdrawal in dealing with emotions.

Emotion-handling strategy 2: Mediator/guardian of justice

Personnel managers using this strategy handled emotions in negotiations with employees and other managers. They acted like the 'man-in-the-middle' or a 'bridge' between employees or between employee(s) and manager(s) in an emotional conflict situation. There are two variants of the strategy. The first can be depicted as a 'pure' mediation strategy with an emphasis of the act of mediating. The second variant stresses the morale underlying the act of mediation. This variant does not highlight the actual act of mediating; instead, the focus is on finding a fair and just solution to a conflict.

Two value drivers were constructed for this strategy. The value driver for the mediator variant was equal handling of the employees, including managers. The value driver for the guardian-of-justice variant was fair and just treatment of all employees. The negotiation tactic was that of mediation.

Emotion-handling strategy 3: 'Lelia's couch'

Mature female personnel managers typically enacted the 'Lelia´s couch' strategy. Furthermore, the strategy was used only in meetings with top managers. These personnel managers acted as a 'shoulder to lean on' for their superiors. Occasionally they took the initiative themselves to help top managers to open up with their problems; sometimes they were asked for help by the managers.

The value driver here is to help managers to cope with their lone role; the negotiation tactic is that of problem solving.

Emotion-handling strategy 4: Active and passive outsourcing

The emotions of employees or managers or both were handled with this strategy. Personnel managers had recourse to *active* outsourcing when they hired outside help (psychologists, consultants, workplace priests) to deal with emotions in major crises such as downsizing or bankruptcy. *Passive* outsourcing was sometimes used – for example, when a personnel manager failed to realise that emotions were being handled somewhere else, by a secretary or company nurse. Upon realising that emotions were

being handled somewhere else in the organisation, they might seek information from the source in question.

Professionalism is the value driver constructed for active outsourcing. 'If you can't deal with a problem yourself, you know where to get help' is descriptive of this value driver. For passive outsourcing, however, it was not possible to construct any value drivers.

Emotion-handling strategy 5: Withdrawal

Personnel managers enacting this strategy did not actively handle emotions. Even if they realised the existence of emotions in relation to a crisis situation, these were not approached or were evaded altogether. Emotions were either considered as disturbances or deviations from normal practice, or there was one overpowering emotion, fear, that asphyxiated all others. In the former case, the personnel manager believed that it was not desirable to bring emotions to the workplace, and that if some emotions arose they should first be cooled down before the personnel manager would engage in rational action. In the latter case, the personnel manager was unable to handle emotions because the emotion of fear stiffened the entire organisation and prevented the emergence of other emotions.

The value driver in the former case is a belief in the cognitive rationality of the organisation. In the latter case, it was not possible to construct any value drivers. The personnel manager was struggling to cope with the prevalent climate of fear in the organisation. It was not possible to construct any emotion-handling strategies nor was it possible to construct a logic of appropriateness in her case. The negotiation tactic within the strategy is that of withdrawal/inaction.

Two logics of appropriateness

A logic of appropriateness (Cyert and March, 1963) refers to a rationality which includes a judgment of what is appropriate action in a given situation. Logics of appropriateness provide guidelines for action as well as judgments and reflections on the situation at hand and on the identity of the actor. Two logics of appropriateness, *mothering* and *guide-following*, could be constructed on the basis of the data. They are conceived of as general approaches to handling emotions. The female personnel

managers in this study tended to enact mothering as a general approach to emotion handling, whereas their male counterparts were likely to engage in guide-following. A mothering personnel manager would negotiate emotional value in a manner which judged caring and nurturing as the appropriate way of acting. Guide-following personnel managers, on the other hand, had recourse to some higher authority – legislation, religion or the company's established working practices. In other words, they sought guidelines which they might follow in a crisis situation. The five emotion-handling strategies, in turn, are derivations of these two basic approaches to emotion handling: mothering and guide-following. The empathetic strategy, for example, was solely enacted by mothering personnel managers.

The described emotion-handling strategies were enacted in relation to the emotions of employees or other managers or both. However, personnel managers are not 'emotionless' strategists capable of separating their own emotions from the emotional episodes they encounter in their work. Indeed, the interviewees sometimes referred to or described the kind of emotions they themselves had experienced during the episodes. Yet, they did not use the emotion-handling strategies in dealing with their own emotions – instead, they used mothering or guide-following to do this. Besides functioning as general approaches to emotion handling, the logics of appropriateness – identifying oneself as either mothering or guide-following – were used to handle the personnel managers' own emotions.

Since this study can be characterised as a first explorative investigation into the research topic, it makes no claims of presenting a universal picture of the emotion-handling strategies used by personnel managers. However, some interesting systematic features can be observed in the strategies. The descriptions of the five strategies indicate that, the empathetic strategy was only enacted in relation to employees, whereas the 'Lelia's couch' strategy was enacted solely in relation to top managers. The mediator, outsourcing and withdrawal strategies were used in relation to both employees and managers. Thus, a strategy tends to be coupled with emotion handling related to a certain group of employees: either non-managers, managers or both. Moreover, certain negotiation tactics are inclined to be associated with certain emotion-handling strategies. To take an example, 'Lelia's couch' was constructed as a problem-solving

strategy, whereas the empathy strategy covered all the four negotiation tactics: yielding, problem solving, contending, and withdrawal/inaction.

Emotions and crisis situations

Because the episodes were constructed in relation to situations of crisis, it was natural for the emotions in the personnel managers' stories to be negative in character. Consequently, the emotion-handling strategies were applied in dealing with negative emotions. The described crises can roughly be divided into three categories: situations in which the organisation's problems called for emotion handling (e.g. downsizing, bankruptcy), incidents between employer and employee which called for emotion handling (e.g. lay-off of an alcoholic), and incidents between employees which called for emotion handling (e.g. workplace mobbing).

Male and female personnel managers

There were certain notable differences between male and female personnel managers in relation to their emotion-handling strategies and their logics of appropriateness. Some strategies – like empathy at a distance and Lelia's couch – were enacted exclusively by females, some were used by both males and females and one only by a male.[54] In other words, the strategies seem to be gender-related. The results further imply that the two logics of appropriateness are also segregated along the lines of gender: mothering was enacted by females and guide-following by males. Interestingly, there were a few men who at some points of the interview described certain aspects of their work in mothering terms. Still, they did not describe any *action* that would have been related to mothering, only used mothering-like terms in describing a certain aspect of their work. It is also noteworthy that there were no guide-following women; guide-following was solely enacted by male personnel managers. I wish to emphasise here that these findings do not indicate that females or males would be bound to use different logics. It is quite possible for a female personnel manager to engage in guide-following and a male personnel manager in mothering, even though this was not observed in the data of this study.

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[54] Regarding the masculinity of the withdrawal strategy see footnote 53.

The current study gives some answers to the need recognised by Fondas (1997) for further research on the extent to which 'feminised' management ideas have been put into practice by actual managers. Fondas especially stressed the importance of studying *how* managers do things rather than *what* they do, in order to be able to pinpoint feminine qualities in both men and women.

5.2 Implications of the results

5.2.1 Personnel management

Despite the claims of HRM theorists that personnel management is increasingly becoming a part of strategic management, the results of this study indicate that the work of personnel managers continues to have a practical and down-to-earth character – at least in times of crisis. The emotion-handling activities of personnel managers presented in this thesis bear more resemblance to the traditional activities of personnel management (PM) than of strategic HRM. It is argued that HRM does not concentrate so much on everyday negotiations with employees (cf. Hendry and Pettigrew, 1986), whereas the results of this study show that personnel managers are indeed clearly focused on such negotiations in the frame of their emotion-handling strategies.

Watson and Watson (1999) claim that one consequence of the strategisation of the HR function is that the practical problems of the personnel manager are not closely connected to the grassroot actors, and that a representative of the personnel function no longer enacts the traditional mediator role of middle management. This argument is not supported by the results of this study. Instead, it looks very much like the personnel department has retained a grassroot role, and it is not always clear that parallels could be drawn to strategic HRM. The results of this thesis further indicate that the mediating role of personnel managers continues to prevail. We may ask whether the de-layering of organisations and the disappearance of middle management might actually accentuate the personnel managers' role as mediators.

The current trend towards outsourcing of the personnel function can lead to unexpected consequences. In fact, it is most likely to be the emotional side of personnel management that would disappear with outsourcing. If, for instance, a consultant were to be responsible for an organisation's PM, it is difficult to imagine that such a person who is external to the company could possess the kind of information that is needed in handling the organisational members' emotions. Knowledge of the private lives of the employees or an understanding of the emotional climate of the organisation are aspects seldom communicated to an outsider in the same way as to the personnel manager of the company.

Personnel management as invisible work. At the very beginning of this research its purpose was defined as bringing to the surface such aspects of personnel work that have so far either been neglected or remained invisible. The emotional side of personnel management has not been included in the traditional descriptions of PM. The results of this study show that emotion handling is very much about relational work. It is this relational side – the relationship between the personnel manager and the employee – that has been the specific focus of the thesis. Fletcher (1999) argued that certain behaviours tend to 'get disappeared', not because they are ineffective, but because they get associated with the feminine, relational or 'softer' side of organisational practice. The implicit association with the feminine tends to code these behaviours as inappropriate at the workplace because they are out of line with some deeply held, gender-linked assumptions about 'good' workers and proper behaviour in organisations. The suppressed behaviours reflect a *relational logic of effectiveness* and require a number of skills like empathy, mutuality, reciprocity and a sensitivity to emotional contexts. It is intentional behaviour, motivated by the belief that this way of working is a more effective way of achieving goals and getting a job done. It is rooted in a relational or stereotypically feminine value system.

Relational practice 'gets disappeared' as work, and is constructed as something other than work (Fletcher, 1999). One of Fletcher's most significant findings is that misinterpreting the underlying motive in relational practice taints it as inappropriate and implicitly marks it as 'non-work'. In line with this reasoning, emotion handling could be labelled as non-work, as something not belonging to the realm of rational business life.

Sjöstrand (1997), in contrast, suggests that there are two equally valuable sides to management: the rational *and* the irrational. It is the irrational side – emotions and intuition, for instance – that is often devalued and considered as non-work. Sjöstrand thus proposes a model of 'Janusian rationality' that provides a way of integrating the simultaneous rationalities and irrationalities associated with managerial actions.

In line with Fletcher's argument, I think that the relational nature of emotion handling is one explanation for its invisibility. The description of the development of the personnel function in *Chapter 2* showed that emotions have not been regarded as a legitimate aspect in descriptions of personnel work. Emotions sound too 'soft,' anti-professional and inappropriate to be included in a job description. Relational competency, thus, remains invisible in an organisation.

5.2.2 Personnel managers

The personnel managers in this study all engaged in *emotion work* (Hochschild, 1983), but they also felt that they had sometimes engaged in *emotional labour* (ibid). Yet they seemed to be well aware of the pitfalls inherent in emotional labour. The empathetic strategy, for instance, was constructed accompanied by the attribute of acting 'at a distance', not getting too deeply involved in the problems of the employees. This study gives empirical support to the findings that not only employees in lower-level service roles but managerial-level professionals as well engage in emotional labour. The results further show that the personnel managers also tended to recognise and handle their own emotions related to emotional labour.

The concept of *bounded emotionality* (Mumby and Putnam, 1992; Martin et al., 1998) refers to an alternative mode of organising in which nurturance, caring, community, supportiveness and interrelatedness are fused with individual responsibility to shape organisational experiences. According to bounded emotionality, no one set of organisational values should take precedence over the others – not even the conventional one that gives organisational priority to profit seeking. Thus, bounded emotionality argues for a heterarchy of goals and values. The findings of this study

clearly demonstrate that what the personnel managers were actually constructing in enacting their emotion-handling strategies was a heterarchy of values. The value drivers for these strategies were of the kind that gave consideration also to other values besides business values or profit seeking. Indeed, the strategic aim constructed by personnel managers in emotion handling was to negotiate value.

The negotiation-like character of emotion handling is worth emphasising as it describes the manner in which the personnel managers described their actions in emotional crisis situations. Their role in that context was to negotiate *emotional* value as contrasted to *material* value. This has consequences for subsequent interaction in the organisation. A personnel manager's failure to handle emotions may destroy trust and co-operational intentions and result in a deteriorated emotional climate. On the other hand, if the personnel manager succeeds in emotion handling, emotional value in the organisation is likely to grow and the emotional climate can be restored or ameliorated. Thus, the similarity of emotion handling to negotiation tactics is central as it also reflects the concerns of personnel managers in the negotiation situation.

The results indicate that the ambivalence of their role (Watson, 1977) guarantees personnel managers a position that is beneficial in a time of crisis. This ambivalence could be seen in the way the personnel managers reflected on who it actually was that they were representing in a crisis situation. Their descriptions show that they often experienced their role as a shifting one, at times more on the employees' side, at others more on the employer's. The ambivalent position turned out to be useful, for instance, in a 'dead-end' situation which could be resolved by shifting this position towards the employee. According to some studies (Peltonen, 2001; Berglund, 2002) personnel managers have difficulties in positioning themselves as a part of the management. They experience feelings of inadequacy and fail to connect themselves with strategic top management. However, even if personnel managers feel frustrated with their ambivalent role, this study shows that that they can also make use of it in times of crisis. The personnel managers of this study shifted their role intentionally between the employer and the employees in the frame of their emotion-handling strategies.

5.2.3   Crisis, non-crisis and emotions

In this study the term 'crisis' is understood to cover a range of difficult situations of a type that raises emotions. Indeed, if work organisations fulfil an ontological function – provide a 'raison d'être', a reason for being – then any changes or 'difficult' situations can touch some of the most enduring concerns of the organisational members (cf. Fineman, 1993d:220). The five strategies presented in the current study show how the interviewed personnel managers handled emotions in various crisis situations. Correspondingly, we might ask what the implications of these findings would be for *non-crisis* situations. In any case, the results make it possible to argue that emotions certainly have a role to play in an organisational context. This is echoed by the current understanding in emotion research that emotions are an integral part of organisational life. Despite this, emotion handling appears to be largely viewed as a special competency – which, in the context of this study, belongs in the area of personnel management. As some of the personnel managers expressed it, line managers tend to 'sweep emotions under the rug'. The phenomenon most probably reflects the traditional understanding of business life as void of emotions: emotions are not appropriate in a business context.

It must be noted that although the current study did not set out to focus on *negative* emotions, the emphasis moved in that direction once the choice was made to concentrate on crisis situations. The question arises: if negative emotions are swept under the rug and over to the personnel department, whatever happens to *positive* emotions? Are they easier to handle? If an organisation manages to cope with negative emotions, it could be anticipated that this makes it easier for positive emotions to emerge.

5.3   Chosen approach and focus

A choice that was consequential for the interpretations in this study was the adoption of an abductive approach. Simultaneous data gathering, data analysis and theory development allowed the frame of understanding to evolve during the entire course of

the study. The cumulative data gathering process called for modifications in the theoretical framework, and, reciprocally, the theoretical framework acted as a source of inspiration for data gathering. The emotion-handling strategies kept evolving and taking shape in my mind as dissimilarities and contrasts emerged in the interviews. When the various differences observed in the interviews were mirrored against each other, it became evident that certain issues were extensively negotiated in a specific context but excluded in another.

The data were gathered by interviewing personnel managers and asking them to tell about crisis situations. As an alternative to the chosen data gathering method, it might have been possible, for instance, to 'shadow' personnel managers in their work and thereby collect data on crisis situations through observation. There would have been certain advantages to this type of method – for example, the emotions of the counterpart(s) in the negotiation would most likely have become visible. However, it might have been difficult, if not impossible, to get access to observe some of the emotional episodes described by the personnel managers in the interviews of this study. A lay-off situation with an alcoholic or a discussion between a personnel manager enacting the 'Lelia' strategy in relation to her superior are examples of episodes in which the presence of a researcher would hardly have been possible.

One advantage of not mentioning emotions as the focus of the study to the interviewees was that I, as researcher, did not force an emotion frame of reference on them. In practice this meant that when the personnel managers described situations of crisis they themselves were the ones to choose to focus on and tell about emotions. This proves that they did feel that emotions played a crucial role in the crises they recounted. Had I used the opposite data collection strategy and informed the interviewees about my interest in emotions, they might have felt an urge to include emotions in their descriptions. It that case the withdrawal strategy, for example, might have been left undetected. On the other hand, informing *ex ante* about the specific focus on emotions might have resulted in more nuanced information on the character of the emotions that had surfaced in the described episodes. However, it must be emphasised that this study is not interested in the constructions of emotions but in the constructions of emotion-handling strategies.

The gathering of data for this study was initiated in an inductive manner. There were no explicit hypotheses guiding the data collection process. Instead, the idea of studying emotion-handling strategies evolved gradually during the data collection phase. Had I used a deductive approach to data gathering, it is unlikely that I would have gained the idea to concentrate specifically on strategies of emotion handling. Hypotheses derived from existing research would have steered my focus to other aspects in the data.

5.4   Practical implications

As noted by Sjöstrand (1997), for example, there is still a significant gap between management theories and organisational realities. The present study illustrates a practical organisational reality and shows how the actors, in this case personnel managers, deal with and construct that reality. More explicitly, it offers a description of how personnel managers work in times of crisis and how they handle emotions. This, what Sjöstrand calls the 'irrational' side of management – in other words, the side that contains emotions – has been far less commonly addressed in management theories than its 'rational' side. Most research efforts which aim at helping managers to improve organisational or individual performance still concentrate on refining the existing rational managerial tools (ibid:5). I trust that the in-depth knowledge gained through the current study opens up new possibilities to reflect on issues that are central in practical personnel work, although they do not figure in textbooks on personnel or human resource management. I also believe that this study highlights aspects of personnel work that can have relevance in practice. The results can form a basis on which to develop practical principles for handling crisis situations in organisations from the viewpoint of personnel managers.

The accumulation of knowledge of what personnel managers, or any other managers, actually do in organisations can be used to develop management education. A first step would be to utilise such knowledge in classroom discussions and case studies; the next step could be to integrate corresponding material into textbooks on personnel or human resource management.

5.5   Future research

During the past decade, researchers in the field of management and organisation have started to integrate emotions into their research perspectives. The findings of the present study suggest that a similar development would benefit the research on personnel management. We need to understand more about the practice of personnel managers.

This study was conducted in a Finnish business context in large or very large organisations, and it is possible that this context was consequential for the used and proposed concepts. The choice of interviewees was obviously influenced by the size of the organisation: small or medium-sized companies seldom employ personnel managers. Whether the conceptual framework offered here is representative in this particular context only or whether it can apply to all types of organisations is a question that cannot be answered on the basis of this study. It would certainly be interesting to apply the same framework to middle managers other than personnel managers. The literature suggests that middle management often functions in a mediating role in organisations, which could be assumed to have similarities with the roles and strategies enacted by the personnel managers in the present study. As organisations are being streamlined, the fact that the number of middle managers is constantly diminishing may have unanticipated consequences for the way emotions are handled in organisations.

This study is explorative and makes no claims of presenting a complete repertoire of existing emotion-handling strategies among personnel managers. It would therefore be appropriate to gather additional emotional episodes and explore whether the descriptions of strategies could be enriched and refined. There may well be additional strategies apart from the five enacted by the interviewees of this study. Moreover, there are several possibilities for enriching the descriptions of the emotion-handling strategies proposed here. The actual context of emotion handling could be described in more detail. We may also ask why emotion handling should be explicitly descriptive of the work of personnel managers. Should it not be descriptive of any managerial work, thereby enhancing employee well-being? Thus, the findings of this study can be relevant in a broader management context as well.

The adopted focus on personnel managers and their stories about crisis situations is an obvious limitation of the current study. Incorporating the perspective of the other pertinent negotiation parties – that is to say, employees and managers – would enrich and deepen the picture of emotion handling. In my view it would be particularly important to include the perspective of the employees in future studies.

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APPENDIX 1.

Advertisement for searching personnel managers who would have kept diary during the recession years

Appeared in HENRY's (the Finnish Association for Human Resource Management) newsletter 2/1998, dated 4.2.1998.

LAMA 1990 HENKILÖSTÖPÄÄLLIKÖN NÄKÖKULMASTA – PIDITKÖ PÄIVÄKIRJAA?

Tutkija Minna Hiillos Svenska handelshögskolanin Johtamisen laitokselta tekee väitöskirjaa henkilöstöosaston roolista laman aikana ja on erityisen kiinnostunut henkilöstöpäälliköiden omista kokemuksista tänä aikana. Hän etsii henkilöä/henkilöitä, jotka olisivat pitäneet päiväkirjaa omista kokemuksistaan laman aikana. Jos olet hänen etsimänsä henkilö ja haluaisit ehdottoman luottamuksellisesti jakaa kokemuksiasi hänen kanssaan, ota yhteyttä tutkija Minna Hiillokseen, Svenska handelshögskolan, Johtamisen laitos, PL 479, 00101 HELSINKI, puh. (09) 43133 276 tai (xx) xxxx xxx koti.

A free translation to English:

THE RECESSION OF THE 1990'S FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF PERSONNEL MANAGERS – DID YOU KEEP DIARY?

Researher Minna Hiillos from the department of Management and organisation at the Swedish School of Economics is preparing a doctoral dissertation on the role of the personnel department during the recession. She is specifically interested in the experiences of personnel managers during this period. She is searching for a person/persons who would have kept diary on their own experiences during the recession. If you are the person she is searching for and would like to share your experiences strictly confidentially, please contact researcher Minna Hiillos, Swedish School of Economics, department of Management and organisation, P.O.Box 479, 00101 HELSINKI, tel. (09) 43133 276 or (xx) xxxx xxx home.

APPENDIX 2.

The Interview Questions Guiding the Interviews with Personnel Managers

The researcher was prepared for the interviews with a couple *general questions* which asked the personnel manager to tell about his/her work and crisis situations. The general questions were always pursued by additional *interview-specific questions* which accounted for a major part of the talk in all the interviews. Some *more specific general questions* were also asked during the interview. In the end, some *check-up questions* were posed in order to specifically raise the issue of emotions and gender. It is to be emphasised that the interview questions were very much adapted to the interview situation at hand. For instance, interesting themes raised up by the interviewees were pursued by the interviewer with *additional questions*.

The *general questions* were the following (translated from Finnish by the author):

- Could you please describe what the work of a personnel manager is like? Could you give an example of a typical day in your work?

- Could you please tell me about a difficult/crisis situation in you work? You can either choose one difficult/crisis situation or tell about several difficult situations.

More specific general questions

- How does the area of industry you are representing influence your work?

- Does your experience in personnel work influence how you are working?

- Where would you place yourself on a continuum between the management and the employees?

Check-up questions, asked in the very end of the interview

- Do you think your work is laden with emotions? In other words, do you often handle emotions (your own emotions, others' emotions) in your work?

- What is your opinion of working with/handling emotions? Would you rather prefer not to consider emotions in your work?

- Nearly 60 % of all the personnel managers and directors are female. Has this had an impact on the character of personnel work? Is personnel work feminine or masculine to its nature? Would a man/woman take care of your duties in a different manner than you do?

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