

Affective Influences on Judgments and Behavior in Organizations: An Information Processing Perspective

Joseph P. Forgas

University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

and

Jennifer M. George

School of Management, Rice University

This article reviews and integrates recent research in experimental social psychology and organizational behavior demonstrating the pervasive influence that affective states or moods have on judgments, decision making, and behavior in organizations. An information processing theory, the Affect Infusion Model (AIM) is described that can account for many of the empirical findings and also provides a promising theoretical base for future research in this area. The article reviews a range of experimental and applied studies consistent with the predictions of this model, demonstrating the role of information processing strategies in moderating affective influences on organizational behavior. Specifically, we discuss the influence of affect on such work-related behaviors as worker motivation, creativity and performance, interpersonal judgments and communication, performance appraisal judgments and selection interviews, organizational spontaneity, employee flexibility and helpfulness, absenteeism, and bargaining and negotiation behaviors. The implications of the information processing approach for understanding the influence of affect on organizational behaviors are

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Address correspondence and reprint requests to Joseph P. Forgas, School of Psychology, University of New South Wales, Sydney 2052, Australia, or Jennifer M. George, Mary Gibbs Jones Professor of Management, Jesse H. Jones Graduate School of Management, Rice University, 6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005-1892. E-mail: jp.forgas@unsw.edu.au or jgeorge@rice.edu.

discussed, and we argue for the greater integration of affect into contemporary theorizing and research in organizational settings. © 2001 Academic Press

It is a bright sunny day, the radio is playing a catchy tune as you drive to work, and you arrive in an excellent mood. Your first job for the day is to chair a selection committee. Does the mood you happen to be in influence the way you interact with your colleagues, the way you select and interpret complex information about the candidates, and ultimately, the decisions you make? More generally, what is the role of affect in work-related cognition and behavior? Positive and negative affect accompanies us throughout our daily lives. As a result of extensive theorizing and research during the past 20 years, it is now increasingly recognized that feelings—moods and emotions—constitute an essential component of social life in general and behavior in organizations in particular (e.g., Forgas, 1995a, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000, 2001; George, 1989, 1996a; George & Brief, 1992, 1996; George & Jones, 1996, 1997).

Anecdotal evidence for the pervasive role of affect in understanding behavior in organizations is all around us. Positive or negative moods often seem to influence our attitudes and values, the judgments we form about colleagues and tasks, the way we speak and respond to messages, the way we plan and execute negotiations, and even the way we relate to well-known others (e.g., Forgas, 1995a, 1998a, 1999a, 1999b, 2000; George & Jones, 1997; George, Jones, & Gonzalez, 1998). But how and why should changes in affective states influence organizational behaviors? What are the cognitive mechanisms that are responsible for the often subtle role that affect plays in social judgments and behaviors in organizations? In this article, we discuss recent theory and research illustrating the importance of affect in organizational settings and review a range of studies which suggests that how people feel at work can have profound effects on their thought processes, judgments, decision making, and behaviors.

We begin by proposing a comprehensive multiprocess theory, the Affect Infusion Model (AIM; Forgas, 1995a, in press) that can account for and integrate much of the available empirical evidence and can provide a promising theoretical base for future research in this area. The AIM asserts that the influence of affective states on our judgments and behaviors depends on the kind of information processing strategies people adopt in a particular situation. Tasks that require elaborate, substantive processing are most likely to be influenced by affect, as mood will selectively prime affect-related thoughts and memories to be used when constructing a response. In contrast, tasks that can be solved using more simple and directed processing strategies should show little or no affect infusion. In other words, our thesis is that affect impacts on organizational behavior because it influences both *what* people think (the content of cognition) and *how* people think (the process of cognition). After the initial outline of the theoretical framework, we review extensive empirical evidence

from the organizational literature, as well as from experimental social psychology, in support of such a model. Our objective is to link basic experimental research in social psychology with more applied investigations in organizational behavior in order to gain a more complete view of the role of affect in organizational settings.

Our primary concern in this article is with the effects of low-intensity moods on thought processes and behaviors in organizations. The kinds of moods of interest to us are similar to the mild, nonspecific experiences of feeling “good” or feeling “bad” that are a permanent feature of everyday life. The precise definition of these terms remains somewhat controversial in the literature (Fiedler & Forgas, 1988; Forgas, 1992a, 1995a, 1999c). In this article, the term *affect* will be used as a generic label to refer to both *moods* and *emotions*. Moods in turn will be defined as “low-intensity, diffuse and relatively enduring affective states without a salient antecedent cause and therefore little cognitive content (e.g., feeling good or feeling bad).” In contrast, emotions “are more intense, short-lived and usually have a definite cause and clear cognitive content” (Forgas, 1992a, p. 230). Moods thus differ from emotions in that they arise and disappear more gradually, are considerably less intense at their peak, are more enduring, and usually do not have a salient immediate antecedent cause.

There are several reasons why moods may be of particular importance in organizational behavior. Moods are more common, longer lasting, and less noticeable than are other kinds of affective states. Moods thus provide the underlying affective context for most of our ongoing thought processes and behaviors. Enduring mood states may be triggered by such fleeting cues as a passing smile, the weather, a pleasant room, a tone of voice, or a nonverbal gesture (cf. Forgas, 1985, 2001). Indeed, mild, nonspecific moods often have a more subtle and insidious influence on organizational behavior precisely because they lack elaborate cognitive content and thus often escape conscious scrutiny (Fiedler, 1991; Forgas, 1992a, 1992b, 1995a, 1995b, 1998a, 1998b; Mayer, 1986; Sedikides, 1992). Within an organizational perspective, George and Jones (1996, 1997) specifically argued that moods play a crucial role in work settings. Their VAM (values, attitudes, and moods) model suggested that in addition to values and attitudes, moods constitute the third key dimension of the work experience. In order to understand how people experience and behave in their jobs, all three variables must be assessed (George & Jones, 1996, 1997).

The article unfolds as follows. First, we outline a social-cognitive approach to the study of affect in work-related behaviors, emphasizing the role that different information processing strategies play in moderating the effects of affect on thinking, judgments, and behaviors. Next, we discuss contemporary research in the organizational behavior literature that demonstrates the far-reaching effects of affect in understanding how people think and behave in organizations. Finally, we describe specific empirical evidence that supports the multiprocess Affect Infusion Model, discuss how these findings apply to

work environments, and consider how future research may benefit from integrating the information processing perspective with applied research on the role of affect in organizational behavior. We conclude with an outline of some of the important practical implications of our analysis.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE ROLE OF AFFECT IN UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

The influence of affect on human reasoning and behavior represents one of those enduring questions that has fascinated philosophers, writers, and artists since antiquity. It is all the more surprising then that for most of their brief history, neither organizational psychology nor social psychology have shown much interest in affective phenomena. Hilgard (1980) suggested that the neglect of affect in psychological research may be traced all the way to the 18th century, when faculty psychology first separated the three fundamental faculties of the human mind: affect, cognition, and conation. The resulting tripartite classification of psychology's subject matter is still with us today, with affect remaining the most neglected "faculty" until the last quarter of the 20th century.

For most of its early history, scientific psychology has been dominated by a behaviorist paradigm, followed by the cognitive orientation that has been in ascendancy for some decades now (Hilgard, 1980; Ilgen & Klein, 1989). However, neither the behaviorist nor the recent cognitive paradigms have devoted sufficient attention to the study of affective phenomena. With the advent of the cognitive orientation in organizational research, much current work focuses on understanding the thought processes that underlie behavior in organizations, such as employee motivation and performance and managerial decision making. Early cognitive theories have typically neglected to consider the highly interdependent nature of affect and cognition (George & Brief, 1992, 1996). The past few years brought a profound shift, however. It is now explicitly acknowledged that affect is an essential element of experience in organizations; thinking and behavior do not take place in an affective void but rather are intimately connected to how members of an organization feel (e.g., George & Jones, 1996, 1997). Indeed, it now appears that affect is one of the primary dimensions of organizational behavior, and few if any work-related behaviors can be fully understood without taking affect into account (Zajonc, 2000).

In effect, most of what we now know about the role of affect in human thinking and behavior has only been discovered during the past 20 years or so. What caused this explosion of interest in affective phenomena? One key influence has been the development of the kind of cognitive, information processing theories that for the first time explicitly incorporated affect in their models of human thinking (Bower, 1981, 1991; Eich et al., 2000; Bower & Forgas, 2001; Forgas, Bower, & Krantz, 1984). A related development was the growing recognition by researchers that "cognition is not as logical as it was once thought, and emotions are not always so illogical" (LeDoux, 1996, p. 35). Indeed, psychologists such as Zajonc (2000) went further and argued that affect,

not cognition, should in fact be considered the primary medium of interpersonal (and therefore also organizational) behavior.

Recent neuropsychological research with brain-damaged patients provides a particularly telling demonstration of the central role of feelings in human affairs. Numerous studies show that affect is an *essential* component of normal, adaptive decision making and behavior in a variety of real-life contexts (Adolphs & Damasio, 2001). Individuals who suffer localized damage to their ventromedial prefrontal cortex that interferes with their normal affective reactions were found to have a consistent history of making very poor social decisions and judgments in their interactions with others, even though their rational, logical problem solving skills were unimpaired (Adolphs & Damasio, 2001). Case studies and convergent experimental evidence now show that affect is not necessarily a threatening, disruptive influence on decision making as has long been assumed. Rather, moods and affect are an essential input to managing complex social situations. In an affective void, rational reasoning alone, even if unimpaired, may lead to disastrously poor decisions and judgments. A clearer understanding of how affective states and cognitive processes interact thus represents one of the most promising avenues for explaining affective influences on organizational behavior.

Toward an Information Processing Perspective

In this article we emphasize the critical role of *cognitive* processes in moderating mood effects on organizational behaviors. This orientation is based on extensive recent evidence suggesting a close interdependence between feeling and thinking, affect and cognition (Forgas, 2000a, 2001). In fact, different information processing strategies can magnify, eliminate, or even reverse the effects of transient mood states on thinking and behavior (Forgas, 1995a, in press). Further, affective influences on attention, thinking, memory and judgment also lie at the root of mood effects on most complex behaviors (Forgas, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b). In other words, we suggest that it is through cognition that affect comes to influence organizational judgments and behaviors. Cognitive accounts are also better able to accommodate strong recent evidence indicating the considerable context and situation sensitivity of affective influences on social behaviors.

What is it about complex social judgments and behaviors—including organizational behaviors—that makes them potentially sensitive to affective influences? The key issue is that most social thinking and action takes place in inherently complex and ambiguous situations and demands the use of active, constructive information processing strategies. Dealing with complex social situations in organizations involves the use of high-level constructive and inferential processes that necessarily require actors to go beyond the information given (Heider, 1958; Kelly, 1955), allowing affect to influence what is retrieved and used from memory and how that information is processed.

Affect can critically influence judgments, decisions, and behaviors in organizations in at least two ways. First, moods may impact the *process* of thinking,

that is, *how* people deal with a given task (Forgas & Fiedler, 1996; Forgas, 1998b). There is now strong evidence that positive moods promote a more internally driven, top-down, flexible, and generative processing style, while negative moods facilitate a more externally oriented, bottom-up, and systematic thinking style (Bless, 2000; Fiedler, 2000). In this context, the terms top-down and bottom-up refer to the relative weight a person gives to preexisting schematic knowledge as against using new, situational information when constructing a response. Second, affect also influences the *content* of thinking, that is, *what* kind of information people recall, attend to, select, interpret, and learn as a function of their affective state when dealing with ambiguous social situations (Bower, 1991; Bower & Forgas, 2001; Fiedler, 1990; Forgas, 1994, 1998a, 1998b; Forgas & Bower, 1987; George & Jones, 1996, 1997). Perhaps not surprisingly, it was a memory-based model, the associative network model by Bower (1981, 1991; Bower & Forgas, 2001), that first incorporated mood in an integrated information processing theory.

Affect Priming

To the extent that life in organizations requires complex and constructive responses, affect may influence the availability of memories, constructs, and associations that people implicitly rely on to produce a reaction. Bower's (1981, 1991) network model suggested the simple but powerful idea that mood states may be directly linked to cognitions within a single associative network of mental representations. Affect may thus prime thoughts and cognitive constructs as it selectively activates memory structures to which it is connected (Bower, 1981; Bower & Forgas, 2001). This model has important consequences for cognition and behavior in organizations. For example, moods should selectively facilitate the *learning* of mood-congruent information. Numerous studies have found that people pay selective attention to and learn better mood-consistent details (Bower, 1981, 1991; Forgas & Bower, 1987) due to the greater availability of a primed mood-congruent associative base. Affect should also facilitate the *recall* of information encountered in a matching rather than a nonmatching mood state. Finally, there is also evidence for the preferential use of mood-congruent *associations* in the interpretation of ambiguous social information. Jointly, these processes may produce a persistent mood-consistent bias in organizational judgments and behaviors whenever an open, constructive information processing strategy is used. Consistent with this reasoning, many of the organizational studies described here support affect priming as a key theoretical mechanism for understanding the effects of moods on thought processes and behaviors (e.g., George, 1991, 1995; George & Brief, 1992, 1996).

However, despite strong cumulative empirical support for this model (Bower, 1991; Bower & Forgas, 2001; Forgas, 1990; 1998a; Mayer et al., 1990, 1992), experimental research shows that affect priming and mood congruence are not universal or context-independent phenomena. Sometimes, moods have either no effect on people's thoughts and behaviors or may have an incongruent effect (Mayer, 1986; Parrott & Sabini, 1990; Sedikides, 1994). More recent theories,

such as the Affect Infusion Model (AIM), seek to provide an integrated account for the presence or absence of affective influences in terms of the kinds of processing strategies people use.

THE AFFECT INFUSION MODEL

Affect infusion refers to the process whereby affectively loaded information exerts an influence on, and becomes incorporated into, a person's cognitive and behavioral processes, entering into their constructive deliberations and eventually coloring the outcome in a mood-congruent direction (Forgas, 1995a). Affect infusion occurs because planning and executing complex social (and organizational) behaviors usually requires constructive cognitive processes, as actors search their preexisting knowledge base, memories, and associations to construct an interpretation and a response. Mood can selectively influence the quality and valence of the information used when interpreting events or planning and executing a behavior (Fiedler, 1991). In other words, moods "will influence cognitive processes to the extent that the . . . task involves the active generation of new information as opposed to the passive conservation of information given" (Fiedler, 1990, pp. 2–3).

However, affect infusion is not an invariable phenomenon. Sometimes, moods have no influence on the content of cognition and action and may even have an inconsistent, mood-incongruent influence (Erber & Erber, 2001; Forgas, 1991; Parrott & Sabini, 1990; Sedikides, 1994). How can we explain these apparently contradictory findings? The Affect Infusion Model proposed by Forgas (1995a, in press) argues that the nature and extent of affect infusion critically depends on what kind of processing strategy a person adopts when approaching a particular task. Some social and organizational tasks such as performing routine, recurrent actions and duties may require little open, constructive thinking (Fiedler, 1991) and should thus be impervious to the infusion of affect. In contrast, complex strategic tasks that require open thinking and the interpretation of ambiguous or indeterminate information should require highly constructive and generative processing that should be readily influenced by affect (Eich et al., 2000; Forgas, 1995b; Forgas et al., 1984).

The AIM distinguishes between four alternative processing strategies people might use in organizational settings, each characterized by different affect infusion potentials. (1) The *direct access* of a preexisting response or (2) *motivated processing* in service of a preexisting goal both involve highly predetermined and directed information search patterns that require little generative, constructive processing, limiting the scope of mood infusion. In contrast, when the task requires a degree of constructive processing people may use either (3) a *heuristic*, simplified, or /a/ (4) a *substantive*, generative processing, strategy (Fig. 1). We may define as "substantive" those cognitive tasks that involve the active elaboration and transformation of the available stimulus information, require the activation and use of previous knowledge structures, and result in the creation of new knowledge from the combination of stored information and new stimulus details. Within a distributed parallel processing framework,

The Affect Infusion Model

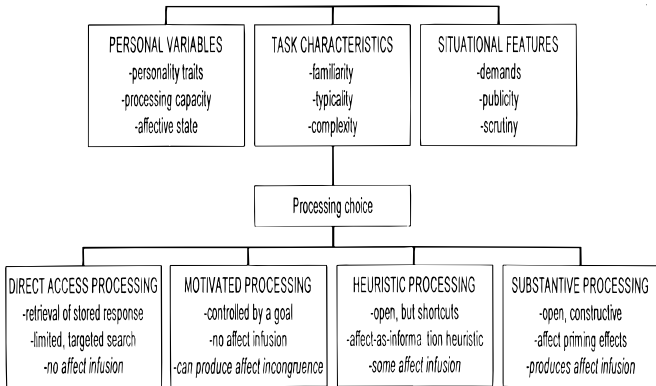


FIG. 1 Schematic outline of the multiprocess Affect Infusion Model (AIM): affect infusion into organizational cognition, judgments, and behavior depends on which of four alternative processing strategies is adopted. Processing choices are determined by personal, task, and situational characteristics. Direct access and motivated processing are low infusion strategies with little mood congruence in judgments, while heuristic and substantive processing are high infusion strategies which can produce marked mood congruence (after Forgas, 1995a).

substantive processing occurs when a connectionist network settles in creating a new and meaningful pattern or gestalt (Read, Vanman, & Miller, 1997). In terms of a symbolic reasoning approach, substantive processing involves relying on memory-based procedural rules and combining stored knowledge structures with new stimulus information in order to create a new response.

Both heuristic and substantive processing are high-infusion strategies that involve a degree of open, constructive thinking, where mood may either directly (Clore, Schwarz, & Conway, 1994) or indirectly, through primed associations in memory (Forgas & Bower, 1987), infuse the response. However, as heuristic processing is by definition a truncated, simplified processing style that only allows affect infusion through the use of the affect-as-information heuristic (Clore et al., 1994), we believe that it may play a somewhat limited role in complex organizational judgments and behaviors.

The AIM also proposes that processing choices are determined by three categories of variables associated with the *task*, the *person*, and the *situation*, respectively. Familiarity, typicality, and complexity are the main task features of interest. Person features include traits, personal relevance, motivational goals, cognitive capacity, and affective state. Finally, situational factors such as need for accuracy, degree of external control, and social norms and expectations may also influence processing choices. A complete description of the AIM and the evidence supporting it is presented elsewhere (Forgas, 1992a, 1995a, in press) and is not reviewed in detail here. The major relevance of the AIM is that it provides a comprehensive framework within which the presence or the absence of affect infusion into organizational judgments and behaviors can be explained within an integrated theoretical model.

The distinction between these four different processing styles in particular

should have considerable benefits for understanding mood effects on work-related behaviors. Thus, the direct access strategy assumes that people possess a rich repertoire of precomputed social moves and rely on these whenever more extensive processing is not necessary. Direct access is a low affect infusion strategy, requiring little on-line constructive processing. Direct access processing is similar to the single-step, unmediated automatic response production process also identified by Anderson (1987) and Logan (1988) in that it involves little or no cognitive elaboration and has little or no dependence on working memory. As direct access involves no open memory search processes, affectively primed ideas have no scope to color its outcome. For example, when organizational members' judgments and behaviors are governed by well-established habits, routines, and performance programs (March & Simon, 1958), little affect infusion should occur as behavior is guided in a somewhat automatic fashion by the invoked routine. As Quella et al. (1988) also note, many well-rehearsed, habitual routines in organizations are not mediated by analytic, substantive processing strategies.

Motivated processing occurs when employees adopt a highly targeted, selective thinking style that reduces the chances of relying on incidentally primed affective information. Indeed, one common goal driving motivated processing may be to achieve mood maintenance as well as mood repair, as several studies have now found (Erber & Erber, 2001; Forgas, 1989, 1991). Organizations can be highly formal and hierarchical environments, often imposing strong motivational imperatives on employees. For example, when employees are motivated to arrive at a certain decision or judgment or have predetermined motives to engage in certain behaviors, affect infusion is less likely as their preexisting goals will dominate their information-search strategies, judgments, and behaviors. This occurs because, as Marsh, Hicks, and Bink (1998) also note, forming intentions selectively activates intention-relevant information and inhibits competing (including affectively primed) information. Thus, to the extent that motivational goals also operate through associative memory structures, motivated processing necessarily reduces the role of affectively primed information in responses.

For example, research has found that positive mood sometimes promotes being helpful to others (Carlson, Charlin, & Miller, 1988). This finding has also been replicated in organizational settings (e.g., George, 1991), and cognitive mechanisms are often relied on to explain the effects. However, the AIM suggests that when organizational members have preexisting motives with regard to helping in a specific context, mood is less likely to have a simple mood-congruent influence on levels of helping. For instance, a subordinate may be motivated to make a good impression and stay in the good graces of his or her superior by being helpful especially when these motives are made salient (e.g., it is the time of year when decisions about promotions or raises are made). Under these circumstances, the subordinate's motivational goal of making a good impression will be the prime determinant of helping behavior and mood will be less likely to play a role. As another example, a decision maker who has a vested interest in pursuing a certain course of action because it will

increase the power and resources of his or her unit in an organization will be much less susceptible to mood effects while making the decision, as his or her motivational goals will be dominating information processing to the exclusion of incidental affect-priming effects.

Heuristic processing is adopted when people cannot simply retrieve a preexisting response and have no strong motivational goals to guide their actions. In this mode of thinking, people seek to produce a response with the least amount of effort, using whatever constructive shortcuts or simplifications are readily available. This strategy is common when the task is simple or typical or of low personal relevance, there is limited processing capacity, or the context does not call for greater elaboration (e.g., Forgas & Moylan, 1987). Organizational behaviors are sometimes guided by such simple heuristic cues. For example, when substantive processing is not required, responses may be based on heuristic cues such as what happens to be the most representative or most available information (representativeness or availability heuristic). People may also respond using the "how-do-I-feel-about-it?" heuristic, relying on their prevailing affective state to infer a positive or a negative judgment (cf. Clore et al., 1994). Thus, heuristic processing can occasionally produce affect infusion into organizational behavior, for example, when employees simply rely on their current mood to infer a simple evaluative response to day-to-day issues, judgments, or behaviors. The affect-as-information heuristic may be of less relevance in complex and important organizational decisions that require more than heuristic processing. However, positive and negative affective states may also function as heuristic cues signaling whether enough effort has been exerted to perform a task. Paradoxically, when no other yardstick is available, positive mood may produce suboptimal performance when people misread their good mood as indicating that they have done enough to perform a task; negative mood may signal that more effort is needed, eventually leading to better performance (George & Zhou, 2001).

Substantive processing is the most constructive and extended processing strategy that allows mood infusion to occur (Fig. 1). It is adopted when people need to select, learn, and interpret new information about a task and need to rely on their associative ideas and memories to accomplish this. Paradoxically, affect priming can account for significant affect infusion during substantive processing, as "activation of an emotion node also spreads activation throughout the memory structures to which it is connected" (Bower, 1981, p. 135). In fact, affect infusion may be enhanced when more extensive and constructive processing is employed, a counterintuitive prediction that has been confirmed in numerous experiments (Fiedler, 1991; Forgas, 1992b, 1994; Sedikides, 1995). This occurs because more extensive and elaborate processing also increases the likelihood that affectively primed information will be inadvertently incorporated into the judgmental and behavior planning process (Forgas, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1999a, 1999b).

In the next section we discuss several converging lines of evidence from the organizational literature as well as from controlled experimental studies demonstrating mood effects on a variety of workplace behaviors. We start by

considering four major areas of research on organizational behavior (work behaviors and performance, organizational judgments, group functioning, and withdrawal/absenteeism) that have explicitly demonstrated how the day-to-day moods that members of an organization experience can influence their cognitions and behaviors. Subsequently, we describe a series of controlled experimental studies based on the AIM that explore the cognitive processes that are responsible for affective influences on organizational behavior, investigating mood effects on social perception, behavior interpretation, judgments and decisions, attributions, and communication processes. Finally, we argue for a closer integration of applied organizational research and laboratory experiments as the best way to further understand the multifaceted influence of affect on work-related behaviors.

AFFECT IN ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

Work Motivation and Performance

What role does affect play in workers' motivation and performance? Traditionally, research on work motivation has been dominated by a cognitive perspective. Feelings were either ignored or viewed as the consequence of goal achievement and performance rather than their antecedents and determinants (see Carver & Scheier, 1999; and Forgas & Vargas, 1998, 1999 for recent discussions of this issue). This situation is beginning to change. For example, George and Brief (1996) proposed that positive mood plays a critically important role in work motivation, as it influences distal motivation and the choice of behaviors and effort levels by causing workers to have elevated expectancies, instrumentalities, and valences. These authors argued that, through the operation of mood-congruent judgment, mood-congruent recall, and mood effects on attributions, positive moods influence the cognitive processes underlying these judgments. More optimistic and ambitious perceptions and judgments, in turn, result in increased distal motivation. George and Brief (1996) also reasoned that positive moods should also promote proximal motivation, or ongoing motivation while tasks are actually being performed, by leading workers to strive for higher performance standards. Experimental studies, to be considered in more detail below, demonstrated just these kinds of mood effects on task-related thinking and motivation, for example, when people plan and execute a negotiating encounter (Forgas, 1998a)

George and Brief's (1996) theoretical arguments are closely rooted in social psychological research on the effects of moods on cognitive processes that are reviewed below. However, empirical organizationally based research also tends to support their basic predictions. In a longitudinal study of hospital and manufacturing employees, Staw, Sutton, and Pelled (1994) found that positive moods predicted supervisor ratings of employee performance. In a service setting, George (1991) found that salespeople's positive moods on the job were positively associated with the quality of the customer service they provided as rated by their supervisors.

Interestingly enough, while these studies were concerned with the effects of positive moods, preliminary research suggests that the absence or reduction of negative affect may also be beneficial for performance, at least in certain work contexts. For example, one study found that among a sample of office workers in a retail organization, the use of personal stereo headsets by employees who expressed an interest in doing so resulted in significantly increased performance. Consistent with our arguments here, the positive relationship between stereo headset use and performance was mediated by the affective state of relaxation linked to reduced levels of negative affect in these workers (Oldham, Cummings, Mischel, Schmidtke, & Zhou, 1995).

However, recall our assertion above that the effects of affect are context-dependent and thus can potentially reverse themselves. This suggests that, for example, negative moods may actually have positive motivation and/or performance implications under certain circumstances with the reverse being true for positive moods. Results of a recent study of creative behavior in a sample of employees holding a variety /of kinds/ of jobs in a new product development center reflect this line of reasoning. More specifically, George and Zhou (2001), relying on the mood-as-input model (Martin, Abend, Sedikides, & Green, 1997; Martin & Stoner, 1996) which focuses on heuristic processing, theorized that under certain conditions, negative moods might promote, and positive moods might hinder, creative performance. George and Zhou reasoned that when creative performance is an overall objective for employees but they are given little or no feedback concerning the adequacy of their creative efforts and they are high on clarity of feelings (a metamood process) (Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995), they will use their mood as input to determine the adequacy of their efforts to date. Positive moods may signal that everything is going well and additional effort is not needed while negative moods may signal that the current state of affairs is problematic, things are not going that well, and more effort is needed. Consistent with this reasoning, George and Zhou found that when employees perceived that creativity was an overall objective for them and they were high on clarity of feelings, negative mood was positively related to creative performance and positive mood was negatively related to creative performance. The context-dependent nature of mood effects suggests that, under other conditions, these results might reverse themselves, leading to a positive relationship being observed between positive mood and creativity (e.g., Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987).

Adopting a broader perspective, George and Jones (1996, 1997) argued that in order to understand important behaviors in work settings such as performance and social loafing, we must take into account the multifaceted, affective nature of the work experience. Their VAM model specifically suggests that moods, in addition to more frequently studied constructs such as work values and attitudes, constitute one of the key dimensions of the work experience. In order to understand the behavioral consequences of how people experience their jobs, all three dimensions, values, attitudes, *and* moods, must be taken

into account (George & Jones, 1997). When considered together, values, attitudes, and moods capture the fundamental ways in which work is experienced and varies along the dimensions of time, dynamism, and focus.

Recent research has also focused on how moods, and in particular positive moods, may influence the performance of extrarole behaviors such as organizational spontaneity (George & Brief, 1992). This phenomenon, first identified by Katz (1964) almost 4 decades ago, has been the subject of extensive contemporary research. Extrapolating from evidence from social psychological research demonstrating the effects of positive moods on the nature and flexibility of cognitive processes and behaviors (Eich et al., 2000; Forgas, in press; Forgas & Fiedler, 1996), George and Brief (1992) proposed that positive moods should also promote organizational spontaneity.

Thus, a positive mood should facilitate behaviors such as helping coworkers, protecting the organization, making constructive suggestions, engaging in self-development activities, and spreading goodwill. Consistent with this reasoning, George (1991) demonstrated that salespeople who experienced positive moods at work in a retail organization were more spontaneous and helpful toward their coworkers. The effect of good mood on promoting greater flexibility and spontaneity in work behaviors is entirely consistent with recent experimental evidence showing that positive moods facilitate a more generative, open, and flexible cognitive style in a variety of social situations (Bless, 2000; Fiedler, 2000; Forgas, 1999a, 1999b). Finally, moods are also likely to influence the performance of leaders and the effects they have on their followers (George & Bettenhausen, 1990; George, 1995, 2000).

Organizational Judgments

Research on the role of mood in organizational judgments has largely focused on three areas: (1) performance appraisal and reactions to feedback, (2) interviews, and (3) task perceptions and job satisfaction. In terms of *performance appraisal* and reactions to feedback, researchers have considered how mood states may influence the nature and accuracy of performance appraisals and the perceived accuracy of performance feedback. For example, extrapolating from recent research on mood congruency effects and mood effects on categorization (i.e., people in good moods tend to use broader categories), Sinclair (1988) predicted and found that people in good moods tend to recall more positive information from memory and appraise performance more positively than do individuals experiencing more neutral or negative moods. Additionally, Sinclair (1988) also showed that people in depressed moods formed the most accurate appraisals that were least subject to halo effects. These findings are again largely consistent with recent social psychological studies showing that positive moods often increase and negative moods decrease inferential judgmental errors, such as the incidence of the fundamental attribution error (Forgas, 1998c). In a recently completed Ph.D. thesis, Moylan (2000) also confirmed that in

most performance appraisal judgments, negative moods selectively facilitate the effective processing of ambiguous and complex performance information.

These mood effects may also impact how people respond to performance feedback. For example, Hammer and Stone-Romero (1996) found that performance feedback was perceived as more accurate when recipients' mood states were consistent with the favorability (or unfavorability) of the feedback provided. Recent experiments by Trope, Ferguson, and Ragunathan (2001) also showed that temporary positive moods often function as a psychological resource, helping people to deal more effectively with the negative feedback they receive from others. Thus, people in a good mood are better able to cope with initially upsetting, but ultimately useful, information about their performance deficiencies.

Somewhat similar findings have been reported for judgments in *interview* contexts. For example, Baron (1987) showed that people in positive moods formed more favorable impressions of interviewees and recalled more positive information from memory than did people in negative moods. These results are again broadly consistent with social psychological studies showing a robust pattern of mood-congruent effects in many kinds of social judgments (Forgas & Bower, 1987; Forgas, 1994, 1995b, 1999a, 1999b). As is common practice for research on performance appraisals and interviews, many of these studies have been conducted in laboratory contexts. However, the experimental tasks used are broadly representative of the kinds of human resource judgments that are routinely made in real-life organizations.

Mood congruency effects on judgments have also been demonstrated for judgments of *task characteristics and task satisfaction*. For example, Kraiger, Billings, and Isen (1989) reported that people induced to feel good had more favorable perceptions of task characteristics and reported higher levels of task satisfaction. Consistent with these findings, Brief, Butcher, and Roberson (1995) found that a positive mood induction also resulted in higher levels of job satisfaction among a sample of hospital workers. This pattern is again confirmed by recent experimental investigations showing that positive moods reliably generate a more optimistic, cooperative, and confident approach to interpersonal tasks, while negative moods promote a more pessimistic, competitive, and antagonistic approach (Forgas, 1998a; 1999a, 1999b). Additionally, moods are likely to influence judgments surrounding change initiatives and the nature of the change process in organizations (George & Jones, 2001).

Affective Influences on Group Functioning

Much of the research that has considered the role of moods in organizational behavior has focused on the individual level of analysis (for reviews, see Baron, 1993; Isen & Baron, 1991). In contrast, George (1990, 1995, 1996b, forthcoming) has argued that consistent or homogenous mood states within groups may be meaningfully viewed as autonomous group-level constructs with subsequent implications for group members' behavior. More specifically, she proposed that based on interactional psychology, socialization and social influence processes,

and research on common group tasks and outcomes, members of work groups may come to spontaneously experience and share similar mood states at work. This suggests that work groups may develop an identifiable *group affective tone*—a shared pattern of consistent or homogeneous affective reactions within a group. The existence of such a group affective tone may have several potential consequences for group functioning, such as on the development of team mental models and shared cognitive structures that group members use to make sense of and interpret their ongoing experience in the workplace (Klimoski & Mohammed, 1994). A shared group affective tone may also influence group decision making, prosocial behavior, withdrawal behaviors, and the general well-being of group members (George, 1996b). Finally, an enduring positive group affective tone is also likely to function as a useful resource, allowing the group to cope better with adverse information and aversive situations (Trope *et al.*, 2001).

Consistent with this reasoning, George (1990) found that in a sample of work groups in a retail organization, experiences of negative and positive moods tended to be consistent or homogenous in interacting groups. Further, the negative affective tone of the groups decreased the extent to which group members were helpful toward customers. In contrast, a positive affective tone was related to reduced absenteeism in these groups. In a different retail organization, George (1995) found that the experience of positive moods in groups of salespeople again tended to be consistent or homogenous. The positive affective tone of the groups was again positively related to group performance of customer service behaviors.

While group affective tone is one way in which shared moods experienced by group members may come to influence group functioning, there are other alternative and complementary mechanisms. For example, Barsade and Gibson (1998) suggest that both top-down and bottom-up processes are important to understanding affective phenomena in groups. As another example, Totterdell, Kellett, Teuchmann, and Briner (1998) demonstrated how the moods of individual team members at work were related to the collective mood of the other members of their team. As a final example, Jones and George (1998a) theorized that unconditional trust, a critical ingredient for interpersonal cooperation and teamwork in organizations, also hinges on the interaction of team members' values, attitudes, and moods. Experimental studies to be considered below are broadly consistent with these predictions. Laboratory evidence suggests that shared positive mood also tends to promote greater group confidence and positivity when making group decisions, more cooperative and helpful responses when dealing with others, and more cooperative and integrative bargaining strategies when dealing with another group (Forgas, 1990, 1998a, 1999a).

Affect and Withdrawal Behaviors

Mood at work has also been linked to the two major forms of withdrawal behavior in organizations: absenteeism and turnover. Regarding absenteeism, George (1989) found that employees' experience of positive moods at work was related to lower levels of absenteeism. This finding is theoretically consistent

with motivational theories of mood maintenance that suggest that thoughts and behaviors that promote positive affect and reduce negative affect are more likely to be spontaneously maintained (Forgas, in press). Experimental research also confirmed that positive affect is likely to function as a resource, helping employees to respond better to negative work events (Trope et al., 2001). In a further practical illustration of this effect, George and Jones (1996) showed that value attainment, job satisfaction, and positive mood interacted to predict turnover intentions among a sample of professionals and managers, as would be expected from the perspective of their VAM model.

This is a necessarily brief sampling of the variety of ways in which mood states have been linked to judgments and behaviors in organizations. These investigations (and many others not mentioned here; for reviews, see Baron, 1993, and Isen & Baron, 1991) are based on theories drawn from both the social psychology and organizational behavior literatures. Even though the evidence for mood effects on organizational behaviors is now substantial, perhaps not surprisingly, different studies tend to rely on or emphasize different and sometimes conflicting theoretical mechanisms for explaining the effects of moods on judgments and behaviors.

Interestingly, many of the same issues that interest organizational researchers have also been the focus of intensive research by experimental social psychologists. Social cognitive theories in particular turned out to be extremely useful in explaining how and why affect may influence social thinking and behavior in some circumstances and not in others. In the next section we briefly consider recent experimental research in social psychology on affective influences on thinking, judgments, and behaviors in social psychology. Most of these studies help to elucidate the cognitive mechanisms that facilitate or inhibit mood effects on organizational behavior and are consistent with the theoretical predictions of the Affect Infusion Model. We believe that such a unified information processing perspective may serve as an integrative framework for future theorizing and research on the role of mood states in understanding organizational behavior.

EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH ON AFFECT AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

We have seen above that affective states can have a critical influence on organizational behavior with potential implications for work motivation, creativity, job satisfaction, organizational judgments, performance appraisal judgments, selection interviews, and the like (e.g., George, 1989, 1991, 1995; George & Brief, 1992, 1996; George & Jones, 1996, 1997; George & Zhou, 2001). These effects occur because affective states have a pervasive and consistent influence on fundamental cognitive processes, such as how people select, learn, remember, and use information (Forgas, 2000, 2001). However, according to the AIM, the nature and extent of mood effects should critically depend on the kind of processing strategies adopted in a particular situation. In this section we review a range of experiments demonstrating specific instances of affect infusion in tasks that are directly relevant to organizational behavior.

Affect and Behavior Interpretation

Organizational membership and participation necessitates continuously perceiving and evaluating complex actions by others and by ourselves. In terms of the AIM, affect infusion is likely to influence even such basic behavior interpretation tasks to the extent that making sense of observed behaviors requires some degree of inferential, substantive thinking (Heider, 1958). This hypothesis was tested in one experiment where we asked happy or sad participants to view and judge videotaped interactions they themselves participated in on an earlier occasion (Forgas, Bower, & Krantz, 1984). A significant mood-congruent bias was found, *despite* the immediate availability of objective, videotaped evidence. Affect can influence behavior interpretations because the meaning of social acts is often ambiguous and subject to alternative interpretations. For example, the same smile that may be interpreted as friendly and cooperative by a person in a good mood could be seen as superior and condescending by another individual experiencing a bad mood. Just such a pattern was found here: the same encounters that were seen as skilled and poised by a person in a positive mood were judged to be awkward and unskilled while in a negative mood. These kinds of mood-based biases are even more likely to occur in organizations when objective, videotaped evidence is not available, for example, when people make personnel selection decisions (Baron, 1987) or evaluate the performance of an employee (Moylan, 2000).

Subsequent experiments established that it was indeed a substantive processing strategy that played a key role in producing mood effects on social judgments (Forgas, 1992b; Forgas & Bower, 1987). We found that mood effects on judgments are greater when the information is complex, unusual, or ambiguous and thus requires more extensive, substantive processing (Forgas, 1992b, 1994, 1995b). A detailed analysis of processing latencies also showed that people actually take longer reading and learning mood-congruent personal information about a person. The better learning and encoding of mood-congruent details subsequently leads happy people to make more positive judgments and sad people to be more critical based on exactly the same information. As predicted by the AIM, the analysis of reaction time data also showed that mood-congruent judgments take less time to make than inconsistent judgments, consistent with the superior learning and priming of mood-congruent information. These results directly confirm the significant role that information processing strategies play in moderating mood effects on social and organizational judgments.

Affect and Attributions

Several experiments also demonstrated the impact of moods on more complex, inferential judgments about the causes of doing well or doing badly on a competitive task. Such judgments are also of key importance in organizational settings and form the basis of many performance appraisal decisions (Moylan, 2000; Sinclair, 1988). Experimental results clearly confirmed that people in a negative mood tended to make more critical, self-deprecatory interpretations

and attributions for behaviors, while those in a positive mood selectively looked for and found lenient and optimistic explanations for identical outcomes (Forgas, Bower, & Moylan, 1990). Surprisingly, such mood-induced distortions on behavior interpretation can also influence evaluations of highly familiar interactions, such as the way people explain real-life conflict episodes with intimately known others (Forgas, 1994).

In these studies, participants in happy, sad, and neutral moods produced explanations for more or less serious interpersonal conflicts they experienced. Results again showed a significant mood-congruent bias. People in a positive mood selectively preferred lenient explanations, while negative moods produced more critical attributions. As predicted by the AIM, there was also a counterintuitive pattern of mood effects: mood had a greater influence on explanations for more complex and serious rather than simple, superficial conflicts, as these required more extensive and constructive processing to be adequately explained (Fig. 2). Consistent with the theories and research by George and colleagues (e.g., George, 2000; George & Brief, 1996; George & Jones 1997, 2001), these studies confirm that mood is likely to be an integral part of organizational judgments and decisions. According to the AIM, affect should infuse both simple judgments (such as the on-line monitoring of observed behaviors) and more elaborate inferences (such as attributions for performance and explanations of personal conflicts), as long as a substantive, constructive information processing strategy is used or a heuristic processing strategy is relied on (e.g., the “how-do-I-feel-about-it” heuristic; Clore et al., 1994).

Additionally, mood also has significant processing effects on *how* social judgments are computed. The kind of vigilant and systematic information processing involving attention to external details of the situation promoted by negative moods has been found to reduce or even eliminate many common judgmental biases such as the fundamental attribution error (Forgas, 1998c).

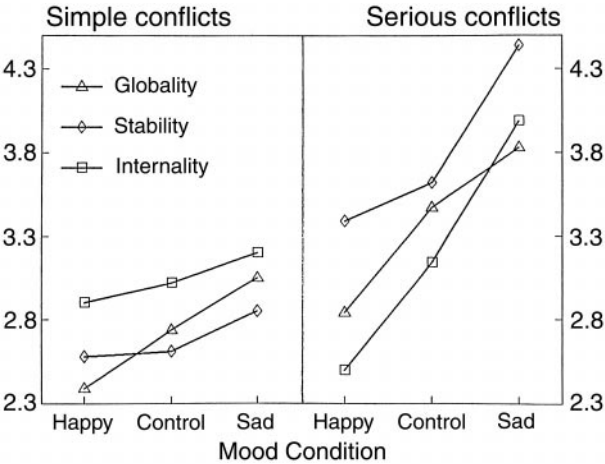


FIG. 2 The effects of happy, control, and sad mood on attributions to internal, stable, and global causes for simple and serious relationship conflicts; the effects of both positive and negative mood are significantly greater on attributions for serious rather than simple conflicts, as predicted by the AIM (after Forgas, 1994).

In these experiments, we asked happy or sad subjects to make inferences about the underlying attitudes of people who either freely chose or were coerced into advocating either popular or unpopular opinions. Results showed that happy people were far more likely to commit the fundamental attribution error and mistakenly infer internal causation based on coerced behaviors (Forgas, 1998c). In contrast, negative mood resulted in the elimination of the fundamental attribution error, consistent with the adoption of a more attentive, bottom-up, and externally focussed processing style often associated with dysphoria (Bless, 2000; Fiedler, 2000). These kinds of mood-induced attributional biases may have important practical implications in organizational settings as well as in the domain of marketing and consumer judgments (Ciarrochi & Forgas, 2000). For example, in several experiments looking at performance appraisal judgments, Moylan (2000) found that negative mood facilitated the balanced processing of complex, ambiguous performance information.

Affect and Communication

Verbal communication represents a key aspect of interpersonal behavior in organizations. When performing strategic moves such as making a request for information, permission, or action, employees need to formulate their messages to be sufficiently polite to avoid giving offence, but sufficiently direct to maximize compliance. To the extent that substantive processing is likely to be involved, mood should again significantly influence the kind of communication strategies people will adopt. In a series of experiments, we predicted that people should overestimate the likelihood of success and adopt a more confident, direct strategy when experiencing a positive mood due to the selective priming and greater accessibility of positive thoughts and associations (Forgas, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b). Further, these effects should be particularly strong when the situation is more complex and thus requires more substantive and elaborate processing.

In one study, participants were asked to select more or less polite requests they would use in an easy routine and a difficult, embarrassing interpersonal situation. Mood had a marked influence: happy participants preferred more direct, impolite and less elaborate requests, while sad persons used indirect, polite request alternatives in both situations. However, the effects of mood were much greater in the more difficult, demanding request situation that also required more extensive, substantive processing (Fig. 3). Very similar results were obtained in several follow-up experiments where participants formulated their own open-ended requests, which were subsequently rated for politeness by independent raters (Forgas, 1999a).

Using a different procedure, in a third series of experiments participants selected more or less polite request alternatives that they would use in a variety of different realistic situations (Forgas, 1999b). Mood effects were greatest when making decisions about unconventional, direct requests that were most likely to violate cultural conventions of politeness and thus recruited the most substantive, elaborate processing strategies. These findings suggest that mood

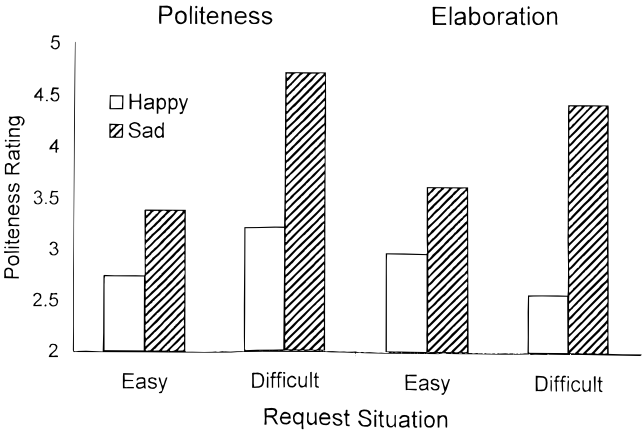


FIG. 3 The effects of happy, control, and sad mood on the politeness and elaboration of requests used in easy or difficult interpersonal situations. Positive mood produces more direct, less polite, and less elaborate requests, and these mood effects are significantly greater when the situation is difficult and requires more extensive processing (after Forgas, 1999a).

effects on spontaneous interpersonal communication strategies are also highly process-dependent. Paradoxically, affect infusion tends to be greatest when more elaborate, constructive processing is required to deal with a more difficult interpersonal task (Fiedler, 1991; Forgas, 1995a, in press).

These mood effects on communication strategies are certainly not limited to controlled laboratory environments. Similar effects were also obtained in a number of unobtrusive field experiments looking at naturally produced requests of the kind that also frequently occur in organizations (Forgas, 1999b). For example, in one experiment, participants who were feeling happy or sad after watching films were incidentally asked to get a file from a neighboring office. Their words in requesting the file were recorded by a concealed tape recorder and subsequently analyzed for politeness and other qualities. There was a significant mood effect on these naturally produced messages: sad people used more polite, friendly, and elaborate forms and happy people used more direct and less polite forms. Sad persons also delayed their requests longer and used more indirect and hedging forms, consistent with their more cautious, defensive behavioral strategies primed by their mood.

The subsequent analysis of recall of these requests showed that the size of mood effects on request production was directly related to how much substantive processing each request received, as indicated by the recall memory data. Difficult messages that received more substantive processing were remembered better and also showed greater mood effects than did less elaborately processed requests. These experimental studies provide clear evidence that impromptu natural verbal messages of the kind routinely exchanged in every organization are likely to show marked mood dependence as long as a degree of open, constructive processing is required. Clearly, such mood-induced shifts in interpersonal communication strategies can have considerable consequences in organizational exchanges.

Mood may not only influence the production, but also strategic responses to

verbal messages. Responding to a request is a common everyday task both in organizations as well as in our private lives requiring rapid and constructive processing. In several recent experiments (Forgas, 1998b), we investigated the role of temporary moods in how people evaluate and respond to more or less polite requests unexpectedly directed at them in public places. An unobtrusive strategy was used: Students entering a library found pictures or text placed on their desks designed to induce good or bad moods. A few minutes after exposing themselves to these mood induction materials, they were unexpectedly approached by another student (in fact, a confederate) who made a polite or impolite request for several sheets of paper. Their responses were noted. After the request episode a second confederate explained to participants that the request was staged and asked them to complete a brief questionnaire indicating their perception and recall of the request and the requester.

Responses showed a clear mood-congruent pattern. People in a negative mood formed a more critical, negative view of the requests and the requester and were less inclined to comply than were positive mood participants. In contrast, positive mood resulted in greater compliance and a more generous evaluation of the request and the requester. This is precisely the same mood-congruent pattern in responses that was also demonstrated by George (1991) in her study of affective influences on organizational behaviors. These results are also consistent with research by Trope et al. (2001), who showed that positive mood is an important resource in how people respond to difficult situations.

Particularly interesting was the fact that the effects of mood were significantly greater when people responded to impolite, unconventional requests that violated expectations and thus required more substantive processing. Conventional, polite requests that can be processed quickly and more automatically were less influenced by mood and were also recalled less well later on. These results clearly show that moods do have a strong mood-congruent influence on how people respond to impromptu everyday requests. However, these mood effects are again significantly moderated by the kind of processing strategy people employ, as predicted by the AIM. We now know that such mood effects on responding to interpersonal situations play an important role in many organizational encounters, for example, in service and sales encounters (George, 1991).

Affect and Group Judgments

Many organizational decisions are made by groups, often assumed to be effective in eliminating the kind of affective biases that may frequently distort individual judgments. However, research by George (1990, 1996b, forthcoming) and others suggests that organizational groups often develop and share a consistent and enduring affective tone. How do such "group moods" impact on judgments and decisions? Several experimental studies have compared the effects of mood on individual as opposed to group judgments. For example, Forgas (1990) asked the same people to form judgments about various target

groups first as individuals and then 2 weeks later as a group after discussing their judgments with each other. A happy, neutral, or sad affective state was induced before each session. Individual judgments showed the usual mood congruent bias: The target groups were judged more positively in a happy mood and more negatively in a sad mood, as predicted by affect-priming models.

However, group discussion had an interesting effect: Positive mood effects were further enhanced, but negative mood effects were reduced as a result of the group discussion. It seems that group discussion led to a more controlled, motivated processing strategy that reduced the negativity of judgments. As predicted by the AIM, a motivated processing style is incompatible with affect infusion. These results also show, however, that positive mood effects are less likely to be inhibited by group discussion. Indeed, group discussion may even accentuate the effects of positive mood on judgments, an issue that may have important practical implications for organizational decision making.

The Limits of Affect Infusion

The studies reviewed so far clearly show that affect is likely to infuse interpersonal judgments and behaviors in organizations as long as some degree of substantive processing is required to produce a reaction, allowing affect priming to influence the response, or heuristic processing to take place. However, the AIM also predicts that affect infusion can be inhibited or reversed whenever direct access, or motivated processing rather than substantive or heuristic processing, is used. For example, when a task is highly relevant personally, or involves open group interaction, motivated processing may be triggered and affect infusion reduced (Forgas, 1990, 1991). Several recent experiments also investigated the role of motivated processing in spontaneously reversing affect infusion. In these studies, happy or sad subjects were asked to engage in constructive, associative tasks—they generated a series of person descriptions, or self-descriptions. Forgas and Ciarrochi (2001) found that with the passage of time, initially negative mood-congruent thoughts spontaneously became positive. In fact, high-self-esteem individuals were much faster to switch from mood-congruent to -incongruent thinking. These findings suggest that over time, people seem to spontaneously overcome mood-congruent biases in their thoughts by automatically engaging in more motivated, mood-incongruent thinking, consistent with the operation of a homeostatic mood management mechanism (Forgas, Johnson, & Ciarrochi, 1999).

Simply becoming aware of a mood is likely to hasten this process further. Berkowitz, Jaffee, Jo, and Troccoli (2000), for example, asked subjects to listen to a job applicant talk about herself while they were either feeling good and comfortable (their extended arm rested on a table) or feeling bad and uncomfortable (their arm was unsupported for several minutes). Half of the subjects were asked questions that made them more aware of their affective states. Immediately afterward, their judgments of the job applicant showed a significant mood-congruent bias, but only when people were not made aware of their feelings. For subjects who were made aware of their feelings, the worse they

felt, the more *positive* their judgments became. As Berkowitz et al. (2000) put it, it was as if aware subjects leaned over backward to avoid letting their bad feelings affect their judgments, in a clear display of motivated processing. Motivated processing may also be used to overcome the influence of not only negative but also positive mood states. Such a tendency to control positive moods was described by Erber and Erber (2001), who found that euphoric subjects who expected a demanding interaction preferred to read depressing articles, as if they were trying to tone down their positive mood in preparation for a difficult encounter.

Affective Influences on Bargaining and Negotiation

We have seen from the experimental evidence reviewed here that even mild mood states can have a powerful influence on the way people interpret social behaviors, the way they respond to unexpected situations, and the way they communicate. The same kinds of mood effects should also influence the planning and execution of complex, elaborate social encounters in organizations, such as negotiating and bargaining encounters. A recent series of experiments demonstrated just such a pattern of affective influences on negotiation (Forgas, 1998a). We asked happy, neutral, and sad participants to engage in an informal, interpersonal, and a formal, inter group, negotiating task with another team in what they believed was a separate, unrelated experiment.

Results consistently showed that participants in a positive mood set higher and more ambitious goals for themselves, formed more ambitious expectations about the forthcoming encounter, and also formulated action plans that were more cooperative and integrative and less competitive than did neutral or negative mood participants (Fig. 4). Furthermore, these individuals actually behaved more cooperatively and were more willing to make and reciprocate deals than were those in a negative mood. Even more surprising was the finding that positive mood actually produced more successful negotiating outcomes, as has also been theorized in other domains of organizational behavior (George & Brief, 1996). These results provide clear evidence that, consistent with the AIM, even slight changes in mood can bias action plans and subsequent organizational behaviors.

These experimental results are also consistent with a recent analysis of the role of affect in cross-cultural negotiations. George et al. (1998) proposed that the affect negotiators experience during cross-cultural negotiations may come to influence the negotiation process and outcomes through substantive information processing. They reasoned that negotiators are likely to experience positive or negative affect during cross-cultural negotiations due to individual differences (affective disposition and experience in cross-cultural negotiations), cross-cultural differences (internalized cultural values and norms, emotional expression, and linguistic style), and the context of the negotiations (relationship between negotiating parties, levels of trust, and conditions surrounding the negotiation).

Through substantive processing, the affect negotiators experience will come

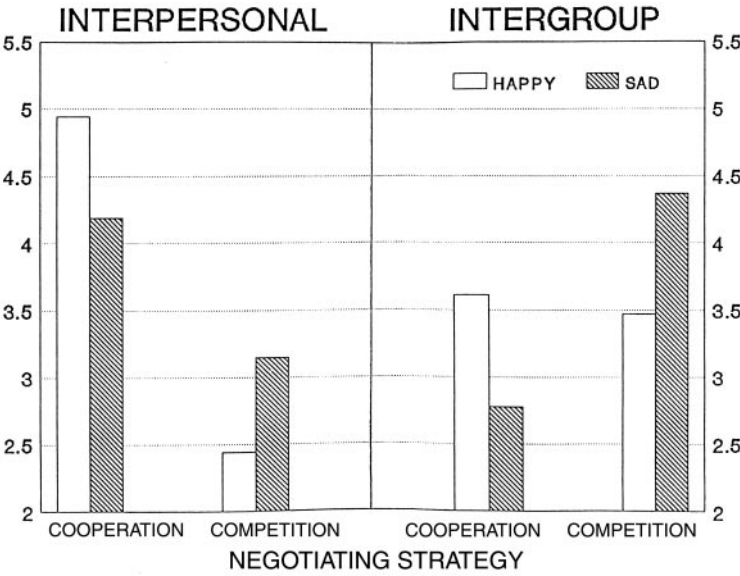


FIG. 4 Affective influences on behavior in strategic encounters: positive mood produces more cooperation and less competition both in interpersonal and in intergroup negotiating encounters (after Forgas, 1998a).

to influence their perceptions, judgments, and interpretations in a mood-congruent manner with the potential to generate negative or positive spirals of increasingly acrimonious or integrative interactions. However, negotiators may also break out of a negative spiral of increasingly acrimonious interactions to the extent that they are motivated to come to an integrative agreement. This tendency to rely on motivated processing to short-circuit affective distortions is very similar to the kind of motivated processing strategies designed to limit affect infusion also identified in recent experimental research (Forgas & Ciarrochi, 2001; Forgas, Johnson, & Ciarrochi, 1999).

In terms of the AIM, thinking about and planning a bargaining encounter is by definition a complex, indeterminate, and personally involving cognitive task where substantive processing is required. Positive mood should selectively prime more positive thoughts and associations, and should ultimately lead to the formulation of more optimistic and confident expectations and more cooperative bargaining strategies; hence, the increased likelihood of positive spirals. In contrast, negative mood should result in more pessimistic, negative thoughts and associations, leading to less ambitious goals and less cooperative and successful bargaining strategies, leading to negative spirals of increasingly acrimonious interactions.

However, we also found that mood effects on negotiating strategies may be reduced for individuals who approach the bargaining task from a more predetermined, motivated perspective (such as the desire to reach an amicable agreement). When negotiators approached the bargaining session with a predetermined goal, this served to limit the degree of open, constructive processing

they employed and thus reduced the effects of affect infusion on their behaviors (Forgas, 1998a).

Affect and Decision Making

Another example of how experimental findings on the role of affective states in cognition can be used to understand the important roles that affect may play in organizational behavior comes from Jones and George's (1998b) analysis of the role of affect in managerial information processing and decision making. They reasoned that the conditions under which important managerial decisions occur are the very conditions in which substantive processing is most likely: high complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty requiring extensive and constructive processing. Experimental studies on affect and judgments in turn suggest the paradoxical possibility that such managerial decisions may be most influenced by affect precisely when extended, substantive information processing is used to deal with a complex and intractable problem (Forgas, 1994, 1995b). Moreover, Jones and George (1998b) proposed that managers may differ in the extent to which they are aware of these mood effects. We have seen that increased awareness of internal states tends to reduce affect infusion (Berkowitz et al., 2000). In a similar way, managers may seek to limit affective biases, for example, by deliberately revisiting important judgments and decisions in differing affective states in order to be more flexible and gain a broader perspective (George, 2000).

Once again, experimental evidence suggests that such affect-infusion biases can be reduced when decision makers have reason to adopt a targeted, motivated processing style. In a series of studies looking at complex interpersonal decisions, Forgas (1991) found that affect infusion was eliminated when the decision had highly salient personal consequences, leading judges to adopt a motivated, self-serving judgmental strategy instead of the usual substantive, open processing style. Overall, the results of such experimental investigations demonstrate the key role of cognitive information processing strategies in amplifying or reducing affect infusion and contribute to our understanding of when and why mood effects do or do not occur in organizational settings. Our research suggests that such affect control strategies could well be incorporated in managerial training programs and form part of "emotional intelligence" in organizations (Ciarrochi, Forgas, & Mayer, in press; George, 2000; Mayer, 2001).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Judgment, decision making, communication, and interaction are key aspects of organizational life and the ability to perform these tasks effectively is a critical prerequisite for organizational success. Recent organizational research, as well evidence from experimental studies and from neuropsychological investigations, clearly show that affect is an essential and often adaptive component of social behavior, rather than merely a source of noise and disruption as

previously assumed (Adolphs & Damasio, 2001; Forgas, 1995a; George, 1991, 2000; Zajonc, 2000). This does not mean, however, that affect is *always* adaptive; through its multifaceted influence on both the content and the process of thinking, even mild affective states can have a significant and highly context-dependent influence on people's thoughts and behaviors in organizations. Theories such as the Affect Infusion Model can play a useful role in integrating the available evidence by specifying the circumstances and the processing strategies responsible for facilitating or inhibiting affect infusion.

Most of the evidence presented here pertains to the effects of low-intensity moods rather than the consequences of high-intensity emotions. As we emphasized in the introduction, moods are often more important than emotions in an organizational context because moods are normally subconscious and can influence people's thoughts and judgments in ways that they are not aware of. Emotions, in contrast, typically carry a great deal of cognitive baggage, and there is usually considerable focal awareness concerning their origins, causes, features, and planned responses (Forgas, 2001). The effects of emotions on organizational behavior, although important, can thus be as complex and varied as are people's cognitive construals of their emotional situations. Low-intensity moods, on the other hand, do tend to have subtle but consistent and predictable cognitive and behavioral consequences, as the evidence reviewed here suggests. Once people become consciously aware of their moods—as they always are of their emotions—their responses will very much come to depend on their particular motivational goals at the time (Berkowitz et al., 2000; Erber & Erber, 2001; Forgas, 1991).

The evidence we reviewed also shows that cognitive, affective, and motivational processes are inextricably linked in the way people perceive and respond to organizational environments. In a sense, psychology has suffered from the traditional separation of affect, cognition, and conation in research and the relative neglect of affective phenomena until recently (Hilgard, 1980). One of our objectives in this article was to argue for a comprehensive reintegration of affect and mood into our understanding of organizational behaviors, as done, for example in the VAM model (George & Jones, 1996, 1997). The need for such an integration is also illustrated by much of the experimental research reviewed here, documenting the key role that different information processing strategies play in mediating mood effects on the way people perceive and respond to social situations, the kinds of goals and plans they formulate, and the way they execute and regulate strategic social behaviors.

The cognitive, information processing approach we advocated here is based on impressive empirical evidence accumulated during the past 2 decades, showing mood congruent influences on learning, memory, associations, judgments, and interactive behaviors (Bower, 1981, 1991; Forgas, 1995a, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999). Explanations of these phenomena have evolved from earlier psychoanalytic and conditioning approaches to the more recent cognitive, information processing accounts. The affect priming hypothesis in particular (Bower, 1981, 1991; Bower & Forgas, 2001) offers a particularly simple and parsimonious account for a variety of mood-congruent phenomena in organizations, including

both judgmental and behavioral effects (Forgas, 2000, 2001; Forgas & Bower, 1987; Forgas et al., 1984; George & Jones, 1996, 1997). Subtle shifts in information processing style can, however, produce major changes in affect infusion, as the AIM suggests. We have seen that affect infusion into judgments and behaviors is most likely in the course of open, constructive processing, the very conditions under which many important decisions are made and behaviors performed in organizations (George & Jones, 2001).

A multiprocess theory such as the AIM (Forgas, 1992a, 1995b) can offer a simple and parsimonious explanation of when, how, and why affective states infuse organizational judgments and behaviors. Several counterintuitive results showed that the kind of more extensive, substantive processing required to deal with more complex, unusual problems enhanced rather than reduced mood congruity, providing especially strong support for the AIM (Forgas, 1992b, 1994, 1995b, 1998a, 1998b). Conversely, other studies show the disappearance of mood-congruity whenever people approach a cognitive task from a highly directed or motivated perspective (Forgas, 1989, 1991; Forgas & Fiedler, 1996; Sedikides, 1994, 1995). Indeed, the tendency to alternate between substantive and motivated processing strategies, producing affect infusion and affect control respectively, may be thought of as complementary components of an ongoing homeostatic strategy of controlled mood management (Forgas et al., 1998). For example, with the passage of time, prolonged negative mood congruence may be spontaneously reversed as people switch to targeted, motivated processing to control an aversive mood (Forgas & Ciarrochi, 2001).

Consistent with other contributions to this Special Issue, we hope that this discussion also demonstrates that there is considerable benefit to be gained by a closer integration between applied organizational research and experimental studies. We have described how mood can have a profound influence on the way people experience work (George & Jones, 1996, 1997), on their work performance and motivation (George, 1991; George & Brief, 1996; George & Zhou, 2001), on organizational judgments and decisions (Baron, 1987; Sinclair, 1988), on organizational spontaneity and flexibility, and the behavior and performance of groups (George, 1990, 1995, 1996b). The experimental studies discussed here offer a complementary insight into just how and why these effects occur. Thus, we have seen that transient mood states can affect organizational life because they influence how people think and evaluate social situations, how they perceive the behaviors and intentions of others, how they plan and execute strategic interpersonal tasks, and how they respond to social situations (Forgas et al., 1984; Forgas, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2001).

For example, studies found that employees are more helpful and satisfied and absenteeism is reduced when they experience a positive mood (George, 1989; George, 1991; Brief et al., 1995). Experimental studies help us to explain why this should be the case. We have seen that as long as substantive processing is used, positive moods will selectively prime mood-congruent thoughts and memories that employees rely on when interpreting and responding to inherently complex and ambiguous work situations (Forgas et al., 1984; Forgas,

1999a, 1999b). In a similar way, organizational research suggests that affective states may also play an important role in many negotiation episodes (George et al., 1998); experimental studies in turn can help to specify the precise nature and psychological mechanisms responsible for such mood effects on bargaining (Forgas, 1998a). Affect may play an important role in managerial information processing and decision making (George, 2000), and controlled experiments help to elucidate exactly how and why these effects might occur (Forgas, 1991).

This Special Issue bears testimony to the continuing importance of mood and affective phenomena for an adequate understanding of organizational behavior. We conclude by observing that organizational life is indeed a composite of affective, cognitive, and motivational processes and the relationship between them is complex and multiply determined. Subtle differences in information processing strategies play a key role in explaining whether moods will influence a particular organizational judgment or behavior and the kind of effect observed. We hope that by further clarifying the characteristics and conditions conducive to affect infusion into organizational behaviors, the present article will stimulate further interest in this rapidly growing research area.

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