'Methodological considerations in a research project investigating emotional self-management and well-being in service work'

Conor Sheehan

Senior Lecturer in International Hospitality Management,
School of Service Management,
University of Brighton

Contact author: Conor Sheehan
Email address: c.sheehan@brighton.ac.uk

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Conor Sheehan
Senior Lecturer in International Hospitality Management,
School of Service Management,
University of Brighton

Contact author: Conor Sheehan
Email address: c.sheehan@brighton.ac.uk

Originality/value: *Proposes how research into some underemphasized aspects of service agents' emotion management might be conducted using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a relatively new method in sociologically based service research.*

Abstract:

Customer facing roles in hospitality and other service domains have long been associated with emotional challenge and the need for deployment of interpersonal skills in varied and often complex situations. The daily uplifts and 'hassles' experienced as a consequence of social exchange have been reported to engage and repel respectively those who work in the service sector, determining individuals' immediate behavioural outcomes and shaping their attitudes that influence their longer term commitment and well-being. Over the last three decades, an expanding body of literature has emerged relating to the concept of service agents' 'emotional self-management' in the workplace, its dynamic complexity and its relationship with occupational health and well-being.

This article reports on the development of a research project proposal which intends to further investigate the significance of emotional self-management for well-being in service work. It initially outlines the aims of the research, which relate to the development of understanding of individuals' perspectives on their emotional self-management and the personal resources they may deploy to meet the varying social demands inherent in service work. This is accompanied by a brief review of relevant literature which supports the study's rationale. It then reflects upon the relevance of the interpretative phenomenological paradigm to the proposed methodology. It is also suggests how interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) might assist in the understanding of respondents' subjective experiences of emotional self-management and their well-being in increasingly complex and unpredictable workplaces. Later the rationale for the selection of respondents from 'cross–sectoral' service backgrounds is discussed in terms of their potential contribution to the depth and roundedness of the findings. A brief commentary is then offered on some ethical aspects relating the protection of vulnerable respondents. The article concludes with a summary of the key methodological issues that will need on-going monitoring.

The Project

Researchers in the fields of psychology and emotion have become increasingly concerned with individual differences and the impacts of these upon service agents' abilities to self-manage their feelings and emotions more autonomously whilst still complying with organizational norms (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, Doef and Maes, 1999, Hodson, 2001, Bakker and Demerouti, 2006, Gray, 2009, Hede, 2010). This project will explore the 'intra-person', 'between-person' and 'interpersonal' aspects of emotion as defined in Ashkanasy's (2003) 'five level model of emotion in organizations'. It is particularly concerned with service agents' perceptions of how such aspects relate to their emotional self-management, social exchanges and ultimately their sense of well-being. In Ashkanasy's (2003) model, the 'first level' of analysis is interested in 'intraperson' ('within-person') considerations which relate to momentary or temporal changes within one individual in the way they experience and manage emotions. Cropanzano et al. (2004) suggest that the 'within-person' experiences of emotion are often contingent upon 'affective events' and therefore the study of these are important to our understanding of emotion. 'Level 2' analysis ('between-person' emotional variation), however, relates to the comparison of traits and emotional intelligence in two or more individuals. 'Level 3' analysis relates to 'interpersonal differences' which Ashkanasy and Humphrey (2011) explain relate to the actual dyadic exchanges between individuals such as service agents and customers. 'Level 4' analysis is concerned with the group dynamic aspects of emotion, for example such as those affecting small work groups. Finally, 'Level 5' of Ashkanasy's emotion model concerns the 'whole organization' perspective and the understanding of the organization's 'emotional climate' and how is influenced. This study is focused particularly on the 'intra-person' dimension which Ashkanasy and Humphrey (2011:220) assert is an under-researched aspect in the contemporary study of emotions. They argue for a renewed focus on the development of insights relating to individuals' motivations and the personal resources they employ to self-regulate and self-manage their social exchanges at work.

The study is also interested in further investigating the phenomenon of affective behaviour influenced by *customers'* empowerment or disempowerment of service workers (Sheehan, 2012:109,113) in service environments increasingly influenced by the phenomenon of 'consumer sovereignty' (Chon and Olsen, 1991:4). Young et al (2003:163) define disempowerment as:

> 'any form of diminished employee performance or productivity that results from
> some interfering force or influence...(which) ... can be in the form of
> disempowering behaviour enacted by someone in the workplace
> (e.g., supervisor, colleague, customer, subordinate).'

Young et al claim that 'disempowering acts' whether intentional or unintentional are often interpreted by the employee as hostile and demeaning and can thus threaten their inherent dignity and self-respect. One of the key concerns of this research will be to focus on the consequences of customers' disempowering acts or 'toxic events' (Kiefer and Barclay, 2012) upon service agents' negative affect. Its principal aim, however, relates to the understanding of how the *agent* experiences emotional self-management and how this may affect wellbeing in service work.

Thus, the objectives of this project, based on the relevant definitions of emotional phenomena in the extant literature (Hochschild, 1983, Bolton and Boyd, 2003, Ashkanasy and Humphrey, 2011, Stets, 2012) are as follows:

i. To explore historical and contemporary conceptualizations of emotional self-management and their applicability to the changing nature of the service worker's role.

ii. To investigate the relationships between emotional self-management and emotional well-being in service agents' practice.

iii. To explore the significance of emotional 'reciprocity' and 'toxicity' for service workers' well-being in agent-customer relationships.

iv. To enhance understanding of how customer facing employees may determine their emotional self-management in different service environments (i.e. hospitality, travel and healthcare sectors).

The intention is to gather qualitative data from agents in two 'service related' occupations; airline cabin crew ('flight attendants') and general nursing. Whilst this is not intended as a directly comparative study, it is hoped that this approach will enable the gathering of perceptions from a more diverse pool of individuals performing emotion effort than those more traditionally associated with conventional 'service' work. The rationale for this choice is discussed later in this paper under 'methodological issues'.

Workplace emotions, social exchange and well-being: Conceptualizations and themes from the literature

Workplace emotions

Hopfl's (1991) respondent's words (below) appear to convey deep concerns as to the corporate 'emotion management' agenda and the organization's intent to manage and manipulate their workers' emotions (Hochschild, 1983/2012, Driver, 2003):

> *'You try saying hello to 300 people and sound as though you mean it towards the end. Most of us make a game of it. Someone – probably a manager- said 'This business is all about interpersonal transactions'. He was wrong. It's all about bullshit. If life is a cabaret, this is a bloody circus'*

(Words of UK flight attendant in Hopfl, H. (1991:5-6), *'Nice jumper Jim!: dissonance and emotional labour in management development programmes,* 5th European Congress of the Psychology of Work and Organizations, Rouen (in Fineman, S. (2003:38), *'Understanding emotions at work'*, London, Sage)

Hochschild's (1983) seminal work, '*The Managed Heart*', on how airline cabin crew were expected to perform 'emotional' as well as 'physical' labour as part of their job, proposed that their 'emotion management skills' had become a saleable commodity commonly referred to as 'emotional labour'. Hochschild's core concern related to her perception of a shift of the control of emotion from the private to the public realm and the potential negative impact this might have upon the individual worker's private identity and well-being. Whilst Hochschild's research also related to service agents' management of their *own* emotions, the emphasis was upon the understanding of how agents developed emotion 'skills' and 'coping strategies' from organizationally prescribed techniques and 'feeling rules'.

In contrast with many larger scale commercial sector studies (Hochschild, 1983, Bolton and Boyd, 2003, Heuven and Bakker, 2003) which explore organization's roles in prescribing and managing their workers' feelings, this research is concerned with the development of understanding of *how* emotions are self-managed by individual service agents and how this affects their well-being. The research will focus on the emotion levels previously mentioned ('intra-person', 'between-person' and 'interpersonal') from individualized, 'micro' and idiographic perspectives. Curley and Royle (2013) share Bolton's (2007) and Ashkanasy and Humphrey's (2011) interest in the development of understanding of individual human agency and how this affects the deployment of emotion effort at work. Their findings indicate that altruism, philanthropy, pride and professionalism represent powerful forces amongst service workers which may vigorously deflect management attempts to control or degrade service work through deskilling and low cost interventions. Scott and Barnes (2011) also point to the need for more micro level research on the relationships between emotion effort (specifically 'surface' and 'deep' acting) and their effects upon work withdrawal and well-being. They propose the need to devote scholarly attention to emotional effort across different 'cultures and (occupational) contexts' in order to further understand the contingent variables affecting the service agent's perceptions, feelings and engagement with the work environment. Korczynski (2009:958) also provides a strong rationale for the further exploration of agent-customer relationships dynamics *across* different service sectors. For example, he contrasts marked differences between commercial direct sales agents' rigid classifications of their human contacts (i.e. 'prospect', 'distributor', 'customer' and 'loser') and healthcare assistants' 'touching' human accounts of emotional connections between care staff and patients.

Social Exchange and 'emotional reciprocity'

'Emotional reciprocity' relates to social exchange theory (Stafford, 2008) and refers to dyadic social interaction where actors exchange valuable emotional resources in order to obtain an emotional advantage or benefit. Individuals 'feel good' when rewards exceed costs and investments and 'feel bad' when they do not. Kiefer and Barclay's (2012: 600) research explored certain negative ('toxic') workplace emotions (such as anger or frustration) across three categorized dimensions (and reported feelings) : *'Psychologically reoccurring'* ('not again'), *'Disconnecting'* ('heart sank'), *'Draining'* ('felt isolated'). Their findings suggest that 'toxic emotional experiences ('TEES') have a marked propensity to generate longer term adverse psychological, attitudinal and performative outcomes amongst service agents. They suggest a 'three pronged' managerial approach to deal with employees' likely to encounter ' TEES' namely: 'prevention', 'intervention' and 'restoration/recovery'. Their recommendations, however, appear to focus mainly upon management's agency and intervention as opposed to employees' own emotional self-management capabilities.

Significantly, they assert that little is still known about why 'TEEs' may have such negative consequences for both individual and organizational outcomes. This suggests a need for further understanding of *how* 'toxic' emotions are experienced at work and also which types of 'TEEs' are more or less likely to generate longer term adverse outcomes. Wang et al (2012:80) also document the contrasting effects of customers' 'affiliative' and 'dominant' styles upon service agents and, in the case of the former style, they assert that 'liking begets liking with positive emotions being contagious or echoed back'. This study will investigate such assertions and the more fundamental questions they raise concerning service agents' perceptions of their own ability to determine positive social exchange outcomes with customers.

Well-being

'Well-being' has ostensibly moved to the forefront of government and corporate agendas where a new sense of urgency prevails to measure and monitor well-being and 'happiness' on individual, community and national levels. Whilst the UK Office for National Statistics report on the 'measurement of national well-being' (Matheson, 2011) indicates that the 'instrument of measurement' has yet to be refined, Michaelson et al (2009:21) have previously proposed that the indicating criteria for well-being relate to 'emotional stability', 'vitality', 'resilience', 'optimism', 'happiness', 'self-esteem' and 'engagement'. While 'well-being' has been defined and conceptualized from different perspectives (Pugliesi, 1999, Bakker & Demerouti, 2006, Gray, 2009, Wharton, 2011, Seligman, 2011, Erdogan et al., 2012, Groth & Grandy, 2012) the term essentially relates to how people view the quality of their lives as a consequence of their emotional reactions and cognitive judgments. The concept relates to a combination of life satisfaction and the relative frequency of positive and negative affect in peoples' lives i.e. how often they feel happy, sad or 'in-between'. Seligman (2011) distinguishes 'happiness' from 'well-being' arguing that 'happiness' relates chiefly to three aspects: 'positive emotion', 'engagement', and 'meaning'. He perceives well-being as encompassing two more measurable elements; namely 'positive relationships' and 'accomplishment'. He posits that well-being cannot simply exist 'just in your own head' and that it is a combination of feeling good as well as 'actually having meaning'; hence his suggestion of these additional criteria in his conceptualization of 'well-being'. The inference is that the path to well-being will be determined by how all five of these elements are optimized by individuals and the social and economic environment within which they exist. Seligman's critical delineation between 'well-being' and 'happiness' is particularly convincing. It resonates with the view that 'happiness' is primarily a subjective state directly associated with 'feelings' whether they are transient, long-term, spontaneous or induced. 'Positive relationships' and 'accomplishments', the critical differentiators between simply 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' however are not simply gauged subjectively by the individual but also by those they interact with. Thus the 'engagement' and 'meaning' elements associated with happiness are validated by the 'real' external perceptions of others. Essentially 'happiness' can exist without 'well-being' however the reverse is unlikely to be true. In the context of this study, 'well-being' will be considered a combination of an individual's self-reported affective state over time and the two 'external' perceptions to which Seligman refers.

Erdogan et al. (2012) in their comprehensive review of the 'life satisfaction' literature, suggest that 'life satisfaction' is a key indicator of 'subjective' well-being which is in turn a term used by scholars to indicate happiness. Their review makes a number of significant observations in relation to areas of research in the field of 'well-being' that are underdeveloped. They claim that management research generally has little to offer, as yet, in terms of insights on how the experience of work contributes to the more holistic state of happiness in the form of 'whole life' satisfaction. Equally, they argue that the life satisfaction literature has tended to ignore the influences of the work domain upon happiness where instead the social sciences' findings on life satisfaction has been drawn from data collected from non-working populations. Thus, this very limited attention paid to the concept of life satisfaction in the field of work represents a critical research gap which this study will aim to address.

Research philosophy & approach:
Descriptive Phenomenology (DP) or Interpretative Phenomenology (IP)?

Phenomenology is associated with inductive qualitative research methods which aim to reveal insights into how individuals, in a given context, makes sense of a particular phenomenon; their 'emotional self-management' in the case of this project. The research design will be underpinned by such an inductive approach which Bryman (2008) asserts does not endeavour to prove theory but rather to add knowledge to theory with the data collected. It is suggested that deductive approaches would be incongruent with this project's research aims as the data generated would be unlikely to capture the complexity of the respondents' lived experiences and feelings. In this project, I plan to adopt an interpretivist phenomenological approach in my analysis as opposed to a more descriptive alternative. This relates to how IP fits with my own perceptions of the researcher's role and the study's aim which chiefly concerns the 'idiographic' aspects of emotional experiences and the subjective realities of the social actors that I hope to encounter

The interpretivist phenomenological (IP) research paradigm has its theoretical origins in philosophy, phenomenology and hermeneutics (Shinebourne, 2011). IP itself is, strictly speaking, a philosophical approach as opposed to a research methodology (Smith et al, 2009:40). It draws upon the political economist and sociologist Max Weber's (1864-1920) concept of '*verstehen'* (Weber, 1958, 1962, 1968, Elwell, 1996) and on key ideas from the philosophers Husserl (1936/1970) his pupil, Heidegger (1927/1996) and later Giorgi (1975) and Gadamer (1976). Parkin (2002: 19) proposes that Weber believed that the gathering of social actors' subjective meanings represented the true starting point of a social enquiry aimed at understanding the actions and motives of a subject. Thus *'verstehen'* essentially relates to 'empathetic understanding' and the 'interpretive or participatory examination of social phenomena'. Martin (2000:7) argues that the understanding of the term '*verstehen'* has evolved in a way that emphasized social phenomena needed to be understood more 'from within' the perspective of the social actor and that causal explanations should be 'subjectively meaningful'.

As just mentioned, a key question for the methodological design of this project relates to the perception of my role in this research study. Barbour (in Pringle et al., 2011) suggest that descriptive phenomenology (DP) limits the researcher's role to that of 'witness' as opposed to that of 'analyst and interpreter' of lived experiences. DP involves the process of 'bracketing' which Osborne (1994) defines as the identification of one's presuppositions about the nature of a phenomenon under study and then setting them aside to see the phenomenon as it actually is. Laverty (2003) proposes that Husserl believed that bracketing was necessary for the suspension of individual biases and judgments which in turn would lead to an understanding the 'essence' of human experiences. Heidegger's beliefs on the development of understanding were informed by Husserl's and later diverged significantly from these. The point of difference related to Heidegger's belief that we are not capable of separating and 'parking' our pre-understandings some distance away from the phenomenon being investigated.

Laverty (2003) suggests that Heidegger claimed that nothing could be observed or explained without reference to our background understandings because they are already 'part of us' and provide the essential tools of interpretation in research. Laverty (2003:17) further asserts that, in an IP context, 'the researcher is called, on an on-going basis to give considerable thought to their own experience and to explicitly claim the ways in which their position or experience relates to the issues being researched'. Thus, IP has evolved to indicate the systematic interpretive process where an external researcher succeeds in relating and interpreting the words and actions of a culture or sub-cultural group from their own standpoints as opposed to merely conceptualizing these through his or her social or cultural lens. It is important, as a researcher, to acknowledge one's own background (i.e. assumptions, preferences and beliefs) when defending a chosen methodological approach. The IP perspective legitimizes such acknowledgment and accepts the researcher's background as a key contributor to the co-production of understanding. This contrasts with descriptive phenomenology (DP) which stipulates the 'bracketing' of such potentially 'subjective' influences. This is an important reason why the selection of an IP perspective would fit with my preferred approach as it would enable me to engage with research participants and to develop a relationship based on mutual understanding and collaboration.

The case for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methods in emotion research

It has been suggested that Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is considered as a particularly appropriate method for researchers who are trying to make sense of the personal experiences of respondents (Smith, 2004 in Pringle et al., 2011). It is proposed that the adoption of an IPA approach in this study will facilitate an exploration of *who* the service agents are and what an 'idiographic' research emphasis might contribute to our understanding of individuals' emotional self-management and its influence upon their sense of well-being. IPA endeavors to link such interpretations directly back to participants' own direct accounts and 'lifeworlds' (Van Manen, 1997, Moran, 2001, McAuley, 2004). This approach is congruent with this study's aim where the meaningful interpretation of respondents' testimonies will be key to its credibility (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Smith (2009 in Pringle et al., 2011:21) suggests that:

> 'IPA accounts 'privilege' the individual and so offer a different perspective from approaches such as grounded theory which tend to use larger sample numbers to substantiate theory'

Like other studies which may adopt an IPA approach, this one seeks to understand and interpret how individuals make sense of their lived experiences. The 'lifeworld' concept was first introduced by Husserl and later developed by Heidegger (1927/1996) and Habermas (1987). It essentially relates to the "background" environment of competences, practices, and attitudes representable in terms of a cognitive horizon within a person's subjectively experienced world. . The 'lifeworld', however, is not, an unchangeable backdrop to but a dynamic shifting horizon which alters as individuals navigate their way through their lived experiences. Law (2004:2-6) supports the concept of the 'lifeworld' and argues that there is a growing dissatisfaction with the boundaries of traditional methodological rules. He argues that there is an increasing acceptance of methods which 'no longer seek the definite, the repeatable, the more or less stable' but instead imagine the world as 'vague, diffuse or unspecific, slippery, emotional, ephemeral, elusive or indistinct'. Petty et al. (2012:268) argue that qualitative research is suitable for understanding situations where problems are ill-defined and cannot be solved using 'technical rationality'. They use Schon's (1983:42) analogy of qualitative research as a 'swampy lowland' territory and explain its distinctive outputs as socially "constructed, negotiated and value laden knowledge' produced in order to address 'soft' problems that cannot be solved using technical rationality.

Rolfe and Gardner (2005: 297) assert the need for a 'science of the unique' in qualitative research which is 'concerned with 'persons' rather than 'people'' where the individual practice encounter is the site of reflexive research and the emphasis is upon the collection of 'wet' rather than 'dry' data in such 'swampy lowlands'. They suggest that social exchanges in service environments could still be perceived as 'a series of individual and unique encounters (and not as) a science of large numbers' Thus, I propose that IPA is a suitable method if searching for possible meanings of subjective phenomena such as emotions and well-being in complex and unpredictable workplaces.

Application of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in Emotion Research

Since Smith's (1996) development of the IPA research approach, it is being increasingly applied with effect in emotion research studies both in the social and medical sciences. For example Eatough and Smith's (2006) psychological study applied IPA in their study of emotion-related phenomena focusing upon the role of an individual's feelings during emotional experiences using just a single person case study. They collected rich data on the participant's experiences of anger, the defining characteristics of anger episodes, and how the typical pattern of these episodes was disrupted by life-changes. In the field of health sciences, Petty et al. (2012) cite Osborn and Smith's (1998) application of phenomenology to explore the personal experience of women with chronic low back pain. Data collection involved individual interviews with nine participants and the findings identified four themes: 'seeking an explanation', 'comparing this self with other selves', 'not being believed' and 'withdrawing from others'. This study concluded that understanding the impact of chronic low back pain on people's lives underpins patient-centred care by health professionals. Osborn and Smith's (1998) study provides a particularly interesting illustration of a 'phenomenological' approach which yielded useful and practical insights on possible improvements in patient care in an area of knowledge more traditionally associated with positivism and 'hard science'.

Shaw (2001:50) asserts that, in common with the 'grounded theory' method, 'researchers can investigate phenomena from a new perspective by learning from those who are experiencing it, rather from theories that may be many years old'. She asserts that, in cases where the research focus is upon the quality of the research participants' lives, the focus will be upon the uniqueness of each person's experiences and how these are made meaningful. Shaw (2001: 48) also suggests that these experiences may reveal valuable insights about many cultural roles participants may occupy such as 'flight attendant', 'nurse', 'mother', 'sister', 'partner', 'friend' or 'volunteer'.

IPA and qualitative research analysis more broadly, however, remain less evident within service and business management research. Sandiford and Seymour's (2002, 2005) own ethnographic works on emotional labour and emotional self-management in the licensed retail sector form part of a comparatively small but developing qualitative research literature. In a more general context, Sandiford and Seymour (2007) observed that qualitative research was less frequently reported upon in 'Hospitality' journals and that when such research did appear, the processes of qualitative data analysis seldom received rigorous attention. The IPA approach has, however, been applied to gendered research studies in business, such as Fitzgerald and Howe-Walsh's (2008) study on the experiences of professional female self-initiated expatriates in the Cayman Islands. This study presents insights on individual women's' self-perceptions, international career choices and living experiences and the local and global contexts within which they evolve. The approach is also evident within transport and tourism research as illustrated by Mann and Abraham's (2006) study on the role of individual UK commuters' feelings in their choices of travel mode. Here IPA was used in making sense of car users' feelings as related to their decisions to drive or use public transport to get to work. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 car users employed at a medium-sized UK university. The findings identified four affect (feeling) themes which were: 'journey-based affect', personal space, autonomy and identity.

It can be seen from the few illustrations of the application of IPA to emotion research that its application and utility is potentially very broad and appropriate in many contexts. Thus it is not the specific nature of the research questions that necessarily determines whether IPA as opposed to other form of qualitative research is a suitable approach. Instead what is distinctive about all of the above examples is that they focus upon the understanding and interpretation of the uniqueness of an individual's experience (Smith and Osborn, 2003). They each strive to enable sense-making between respondent and researcher which can only be achieved if the researcher employs the same mental and personal skills as the participant. Smith et al. (2009) argue that IPA methods are distinctive in that each case (subject) must be explored and perceived in its own right. Idiographic complexity is acknowledged even if the study later explores the similarities and differences of further cases, progressing around the 'hermeneutic circle' (Smith et al. (2009:11) in order to gain insight on the meaning of the 'part' in the context of the 'whole'.

Hochschild (1983) did not include IPA as a method in her ground-breaking emotion research as it was not even an established approach at the time. One could wonder, however, how differently her research would have progressed been had she done so. Her research employed one of the principal instruments associated with IPA (30 open-ended interviews of 3-5 hours each with individual flight attendants) combined with non-participant observation. Thus the investment of time with each respondent was even greater than what would normally be expected in IPA research. Whilst her seminal contribution remains undisputed, it has already been seen that she has a number of critics of her work and approach. Bolton and Boyd (2003) intimated her depiction of respondents' failed to convey an authentic, individual 'sense of self'. IPA, however, in its claim to privilege the individual, may capture and interpret respondents' lived experiences in a different way. Hochschild's more recent work (as critiqued by Wharton, 2011) is more phenomenological in nature and now reveals a core concern with the nature of human relationships and the networks of obligation, emotion and care that bind people together. Wharton (2011) argues that Hochschild's works since '*The Managed Heart'* have increasingly moved away from a view of workers as 'hapless victims of institutional manipulation' towards a conceptualization of private autonomous individuals with personal identities, families, children and a 'life' that runs in parallel to their work. One could ask therefore whether Hochschild's more recent research has been enriched by the adoption of a more phenomenological perspective.

Methodological considerations and issues:

Determination of target respondent groups

This study's 'intraperson' focus on emotion effort will gather data from respondents from two related, yet in many respects, very different, occupational backgrounds. It is acknowledged that the care sectors are not always perceived in the same way as commercial service domains and that there that could be some debate as to the appropriateness of comparing healthcare workers' experiences and perceptions of emotion effort with those of airline service agents.

There are three particular reasons for this study's proposed focus upon respondents' perceptions from the two occupational domains of nursing and airline service:

1. To gather perceptions from a more diverse pool of individuals performing emotion effort than those more traditionally associated with conventional 'service' work. Escolme-Schmidt, (2009) documents the 'between the wars' (1930s) historical connection between the development of nursing and airline cabin crew work. She reports that first airline stewardesses were all registered nurses and also asserts that this legacy of nursing being the most suitable profession for recruitment has remained to some extent within some major airlines to this day. Whilst the two roles may continue to share common attributes (e.g. care and 'responsibility for the person'), it is also true that they have evolved in distinctly different ways in term of role demands, constraints, complexity and purpose. It is proposed that a respondent from both of these occupations, which share elements of common 'legacy', could add depth and roundedness to the data collected on agents' perspectives on their emotional self-management

2. There has been considerable research conducted relating to emotion work performed by nursing practitioners (James, 1992, Bolton, 2001, Smith and Gray, 2001, Mann, 2005, Rolfe and Gardner, 2005, Lopez, 2006, Gray, 2009,) and airline cabin crew (Hochschild, 1983, Bolton and Boyd, 2003, Heuven and Bakker, 2003, Bolton, 2009). Many of these studies focus upon one specific occupational group but draw less frequently from data gathered from two or more work contexts. Nonetheless there is a growing literature in the emotion management field (Hochschild, 1983, Henderson, 2001, Mann, 2004, Bolton, 2005, Mann, 2005, Lopez, 2006, Hunyh et al., 2008, Theodosius, 2008, Gray, 2009) which suggests that there are common emotion work themes running in parallel between nursing and commercial service research. Theodosius' (2008) work which compares the emotional labour of airline service agents with nursing professionals provides a rationale for the further comparison across, in addition to within, sectors where face-to-face social exchange represents a critical element in the agent's work. In addition, there have been recent calls within sector-specific sociology literature (Hunyh et al., 2008, Korczynski, 2009, Scott and Barnes, 2011) for emotion research that transcends occupational boundaries and focuses more directly upon 'individual' perceptions of the relationships between emotion effort and work withdrawal. Interestingly, there are considerably fewer cross-sectoral studies which actually examine the phenomenon of emotion work from an *individual's* viewpoint where the occupational context remains relevant, but secondary to, that one person's unique perspective.

3. To explore and challenge some of the current perceptions represented in the literature which position emotion effort on a *'continuum of complexity'* according to the specific occupational context; in this case nursing or airline customer service. For example, Lopez (2006) infers that 'emotional care' is located within the confines of a nurse's role and argues that such organized care is largely irrelevant to other forms of service work where the performance of 'emotional labour' suffices. Gray (2009:350) suggests signposts for further research on the interrelationships between emotional labour, emotional engagement and empathy and argues that an 'important gap in understanding surrounds the centrality and therapeutic value of emotional labour in the lives and wellbeing of patients'. It is believed that this study could equally constructively explore Gray's concern with 'therapeutic value' in the context 'service agents' themselves. Gray (2009: 352) also asserts that 'intimacy, informal relations and emotional labour are acknowledged as 'important' by nurse and patient and yet such interactions are 'tacit' and thus go unrecognized in records (of patient care). Hochschild (2012:xii) refers to the invisibility of emotional labour and reports the words of a 21st century nurse who observes that the 'human, caring' aspect of her work efforts is seldom officially acknowledged or rewarded ('if something is'nt on the on the chart, *'it did'nt happen')*

In a commercial context however, the more formal assessments of service (e.g. mystery shopper) for such intangible attributes as 'courtesy', personality' 'friendliness' and warmth' may provide crude indicators of the presence or absence of emotional labour. This 'tacitness' and 'transparency' of emotional labour respectively provide an illustration of how emotion work in one occupational context may be better understood if one can refer to lived experiences in other areas of work.

Subsequent respondent recruitment and selection

The preliminary phase of the research will consist of the recruitment and selection of a purposive, non-random, non-probability respondent sample. Symon and Cassell (2012:39) assert that such a selection approach is congruent with research aims which seek to collect rich understandings within relatively small samples. They further explain that prescriptive rules concerning actual sample size are difficult to establish in the case of such forms of qualitative research although they do suggest certain minimum non-probability sample sizes which differ according to the precise nature of the study. It is proposed to select 12 interview respondents in total, as this number would represent a 'best-compromise' with their range of recommendations for 'phenomenological' studies focusing upon a largely homogenous population. The quota numbers of respondents from the two key occupational groups will not be predetermined however; the proportion of participants from each will be decided as data collection progresses according to contingent factors (e.g. emergent themes and participant availability) and the identification of a point in time where sensible meanings, free from inner contradiction have been extracted and interpreted (Kvale, 1996). A 'snowball sampling' word-of mouth technique is proposed where there will be two principal 'gatekeepers' for recruitment comprising of:

1. Social contacts who currently occupy nursing or air cabin crew roles and those who have connections with the nursing or air cabin crew professionals
2. Academic and professional contacts whose work is related to either occupational area.

In consideration of bias issues and the potential validity and reliability of the data, it is proposed that individuals known socially to me already will be excluded as potential respondents. This would also avoid the danger of 'coercion through friendship'. Following the recruitment phase, it will be important to ensure that potential respondents will be likely to assist with the achievement of the overall research aims. Careful consideration will need to be given to the 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' criteria relating to the eventual choice of participants. Inclusion criteria will relate to factors such as high interest levels, clear willingness to participate, high responsiveness, good communications ability and, ideally in service for a minimum of 5 years. The principal exclusion criteria would be the reverse of the inclusion criteria in addition to evidence of the potential vulnerability of a volunteer respondent (based upon researcher's assessment or other relevant feedback). It will also be important to avoid over-selection of respondents with very similar profiles (e.g. age, professional seniority). Thus, informal conversations by phone or face-to-face with all individuals who respond to the recruitment call will be necessary to reach selection decisions.

Data Collection Method

The proposed method of data collection will be in-depth, loosely structured interviews with purposively selected respondents. This phase of research would involve two rounds of face to face interviews with respondents over a 4-8 week timeframe. All interviews will be conducted away the respondent's workplace. In addition to collecting objective 'facts', this method will provide opportunities to gather sufficient data to more fully understand the possible meanings of subjective phenomena in the respondents' assessments of their emotional demands at work.

The intention would be to explore how respondents feel about their work with the aim of collecting authentic idiographic accounts of service workers' attitudes, beliefs and workplace behaviour. These interviews would focus particularly upon the subject of the emotional demands, challenges and constraints of participants' work and their perceptions of the factors affecting their emotional self-management and self-perceptions. In addition, elements of the 'storytelling' (ref. Gabriel, 2000) and 'visual representation' methods (Sweeney, 2008) may be applied during the second interview to prompt respondents' recollections and expression of their experiences. Gabriel (2000: 2) argues that 'stories open valuable windows into the emotional, political and symbolic lives of organizations (and naturally those who work within them). He further asserts that stories, in themselves, offer an interpretation of events, 'infusing them with meaning through distortions, omissions, embellishments, ..without however obliterating the facts'. Morgan and Dennehy (1997:494). concur that 'storytelling' enables the researcher to better understand respondents' feelings as a consequence of being 'pulled into the scene and feel(ing) the emotions the characters feel' Antoniadou (2010:2) incorporated the storytelling approach with effect in her study of Cypriot flight attendants' accounts of their work. She argued that 'there is still relatively little known about all the everyday emotions people feel at work in terms of their subjective meaning' and that such an approach would be fruitful in order to gain further understanding of such emotions . She encouraged her respondents to recall critical incidents in order to articulate specific emotions 'felt in the moment'. Antoniadou infers that this approach not only enabled her respondents to more readily connect with their feelings but also her own ability as a researcher to empathize and understand the less obvious social demands of such service work.

Data Analysis

The research findings would be recorded in the words of the participants, using their precise choice of language. A holistic perspective would be adopted in the hope that the researcher would become progressively became more aware of some of the potential interconnections between respondents' expressed thoughts and the multiplicity of factors affecting their situations and circumstances. Lugosi (2006) and Halkier (2010) each argue that this is critical to the interpretation of the content of what participants express, and the researcher needs to be aware of the influence of the social context (Taylor, 2011) within which the data is gathered. Lugosi (2006) suggests that such contexts can obscure the divide between a social encounter and a sociologically useful one and 'what data is and what data is not'. Therefore there will be a need to differentiate between testimony that respondents intend to offer as part of their negotiated participation in this project and other information they impart that is 'off limits'. Subsequent analysis of the data will include a system of progressive and summative member checking to confirm with respondents that the data gathered accurately reflects their testimonies.

Data will be subsequently analyzed using the 'IPA' approach (Smith et al., 2009) which will involve initial open analysis, and subsequent identification of thematic, clustered and hierarchical relationships. A detailed account of the IPA method lies beyond the scope of this paper and, at first glance, it may appear similar to that adopted in 'grounded theory'. IPA, however, is underpinned by some key considerations: firstly the need to privilege and foreground individual respondents ' accounts (Smith et al., 2009) which may add knowledge to theory as opposed to specifically focusing upon its generation or substantiation (Bryman, 2008). Secondly IPA acknowledges the researcher's background, beliefs and judgments as an influence in the generation of understanding. Thus the key differences between IPA and other qualitative approaches relate mainly to the subtleties of the researcher's administration of methods and how closely they address these considerations.

Protection of respondents and ethical considerations

Interviews will be conducted on a confidential/ anonymous basis with assurance being provided to respondents that fictionalized identities will be used. This will be critical to gaining respondents' cooperation particularly in cases where workplace tensions exist. Pringle et al. (2011:21) claim that IPA allows for the collection of idiographic data where 'the focus is on individuals' cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being'. The gathering of data of this nature will be essential to understanding how service agents perceive they are affected by social exchanges at work. Pringle et al. (2011:23) present a convincing argument for 'open interpretation methods' such as IPA suggesting that they enable us (i.e. researchers) to adopt:

> 'an open, adaptable approach that we can truly reach, hear, understand and access our participants' experiences, particularly of those who may be in greatest need of our support'

Therefore, the interview experience may provide therapeutic opportunities which allow respondents 'to reflect on, reorder and give new meaning to past, difficult experiences' (Birch and Miller, 2000:190). Conversely they may result in 'unleashing' rather than 'collecting' respondents' experiences thus placing the interviewer in the precarious position of unqualified therapist that might cause more harm than good to the interviewee. Thus, a critical issue for this study will be to reconcile the importance of 'hearing deeply personal and private testimonies' (Birch and Miller, 2000 :189) with the need to protect respondents from an 'untrained' interviewer-therapist offering advice that might be unwanted or inappropriate. It may be necessary to identify contingency measures for protecting and supporting vulnerable participants. These cases could include dealing with a respondent's unanticipated distress during or immediately after an interview or unanticipated issues relating to disclosure and tensions between my 'common moral values' and promises of confidentiality.

Conclusion

It has been argued that the proposed methodological approach, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), is congruent with this study's aim which is the development of further understanding of emotion management and well-being in service work. The approaches to research design and application discussed will require ongoing close monitoring and consideration during the key stages of the project. Some methodological considerations such as the potential reflexivity, credibility and transferability of findings have not been reported on as these lie beyond this article's scope. It has been suggested, however, that IPA requires the researcher to sensitively juggle the roles of 'witness', 'interpreter' and 'analyst'. This ability to maintain a careful balance between subjective interpretation and the understanding of respondents' own 'life worlds' as they perceive them, will be key to the study's credibility.

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Contributor details

Conor Sheehan lectures in International Hospitality Management subjects at the University of Brighton. His particular teaching and research interests include human resource management, emotions at work, organizational behaviour and pedagogy. Conor has presented research papers on the influences of organizational culture upon service agents' emotional self-management and occupational health at the CHME, BAM and Psychosocial Studies Network annual conferences. His research on the changing emotional demands in the work of airline cabin crew was published in *Hospitality and Society* journal last autumn. He is currently undertaking Ph.D. research which explores the relationships between emotional effort and occupational well-being in the care and service sectors. He has also published work relating to the development of work-based learning programmes in higher education.