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Doing Hard Labour: Gendered Emotional Labour in Academic Management

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STREAM: GENDER

Abstract

This paper explores, from the authors' experiences, emotional labour as gendered experience in the area of university management in Australia. University work (teaching and research) clearly involves high levels of emotional labour. Commitment, passion and curiosity in the self and created in others are keys to developing and transmitting knowledge. But what of the managerial roles within universities? To explore the gendered nature of managerial work in the university context, the authors related to each other three critical incidents associated with their work as senior managers. These narratives were explored to determine themes within our experiences. Some of the new forms of emotional labour found in our critical incidents suggest a need for further research and theorising. For example, our stories revealed a common theme of high levels of self-monitoring. We found that high levels of self-monitoring in this context entail endless self-questioning of how we might be doing the job, at least doubling the work requirements, time and energy invested. This self-monitoring often leads to self-punishment and self-deprecation and the conduct of 'repair work' when perceiving that one has behaved 'badly'. We found it also led to self-justification and deficits in credits or the let offs given for perceived transgressions. Other similar experiences are explored in the paper. We conclude by analysing these experiences as a part of the identity construction of women as managers and raise the inherent contradiction that this identity formation presents. A final discussion of our methodology raises issues of self-disclosure and authenticity and concludes by noting that many of the issues we have raised remain unresolved but are deeply embedded in our everyday experiences as women managers in academia.

Introduction

This paper began with three senior women academics (the authors) all working in management schools, discussing incidents which they had been involved in and seemed to them to involve gender issues. As we talked, joked and scribbled our ideas and thoughts on a

whiteboard, we began focusing in on the level of emotional labour we seemed to be investing as academic managers. We decided to research this subject in more detail and to write a paper on the theme of gender and emotional labour in university management. To begin our research we each wrote a story about an incident that had recently occurred in our roles as academic managers, and shared these stories with each other. These stories are not reproduced in full in the paper but parts of them are discussed by way of reflections of our experiences that we present as categories or themes of gendered aspects of emotional labour.

Before we move onto this however, we need to explore the context in which we find ourselves as academic managers in the Australian higher education industry. We will also briefly review the literature on emotional labour, particularly in management positions. Following the description of our experiences and the articulation of themes emerging in them, we will theorise the nature of emotional labour in management work. This theorising will provide an account which emphasises the gendered nature of emotional labour in academic management. We found that our stories reveal a common theme of high levels of self-monitoring, self-punishment and self-deprecation as well as the conduct of 'repair work' when perceiving that one has behaved 'badly'. We found it also led to self-justification and deficits in credits or the let offs given for perceived transgressions. We use the academic context to explore these aspects of emotional labour and conclude with a discussion of some of the inherent problems of doing research on this topic, such as the problem of self-disclosure.

Women Managers in Higher Education

I work close to the top of a male dominated bureaucracy [university] and I find that my management strategies are frequently misjudged by others more accustomed to male managers. Thus delegation is misconstrued as abdication and a nurturing approach to empowering staff is mistaken for weakness and lack of control. I stick with my management style because I have found, elsewhere, this to be effective in boosting morale and quality of work. Yet it is very difficult to introduce these strategies in an environment which is accustomed to blatantly authoritative demonstrations of power and control, and I find myself tempted from time-to-time to indulge in the crass exercise of authority just to show who's the boss. Elizabeth Dines, Acting Registrar, University of Adelaide, Australia, quoted in Maling, 1990, p.68.

Over the past ten to fifteen years in Australian higher education there has been an increase in management and managerialism. Changes in government policy (eg Dawkins, 1988) have increased accountability for funds (such as the three quality assurance rounds) and performance based funding has encouraged universities to create more management positions. As this has occurred it has created career opportunities for male and female academic staff. An 'administrative stream' with commensurate higher pay for administrative duties, has been created partly by the Award Restructuring Agreement settled in 1991 (O'Brien, 1992) and also by the creation of a 'senior executive cadre' of administrators of universities. Salaries for such senior administrators (Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Pro Vice Chancellors, Executive Deans) have increased beyond expectations ten years ago to include, cars, houses, entertainment allowances and salaries that are six to eight times those of a 'lecturer' in the same university. This should have created opportunities in senior management for men and women alike. However, as in other industries, we find women vastly under-represented in academic management in universities in Australia. Of the 37 public universities, five currently have a female Vice Chancellor (13.5%). Female

representation within the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Executive Dean level is limited, with some universities having one female in these four to six positions, but many having none at all. A broad 'middle management' stratum has also developed, comprising Deans and Heads of Schools, Departments or Centres but again, finding female representation is difficult. This derives partly from a selection criterion for these positions, being, in most universities, that the appointee be at Associate Professorial or Professorial level. Women are poorly represented in these senior academic ranks. In Australia in 2000, only 10% of the Associate Professors and Professors in universities were women and 90% were men. Of all academic women employed in Australian universities, 10% (also) are at the Associate Professorial or Professorial level in comparison to 28.4% of males. This figure has changed very little over the years 1993 to 2000 (for example, 6.2% and 23.9% respectively in 1993, 7.7% and 25.2% in 1996) (DETYA, 2001 and Burton, 1997).

In fact, clear figures of women's representation in academic management positions are hard to obtain in this country. This is because the numbers are so small that most studies reporting on trends in employment in universities collapse the categories to provide larger samples for analysis. Most Australian studies (eg Burton, 1991, 1997; Maling, 1990, Cass et al., 1983) refer to 'senior lecturer and above' as a category, rather than distinguishing Associate Professors, Professors, Pro Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors and Vice Chancellors. Even the Government collected statistics (DETYA), collapse 'above senior lecturer', as is demonstrated in the statistics presented above. While representation of women at senior levels in Australia is low, international comparison shows that other countries are performing in much the same way we are. Bacchi (1993) notes that with the exception of the USA, figures in other countries (eg, UK, Norway, West Germany, Sweden) look similar to those in Australia.

Research on why women's representation at more senior levels of university employment is low note some consistent factors. Their employment is characterised by later entry to an academic career, breaks in service and later (than men) acquisition of qualifications. They also tend to be concentrated in discipline areas that have come later to higher education (such as nursing, teaching, social work) where the 'culture' of activity related to the key academic performance indicators (research grants, publications) is less well established. All of these factors account to some extent for women's lesser career progress. However, they probably do not account for the full story. In a more general analysis of women's employment in the public sector in Australia, Burton (1991) refers to the fear men hold about women becoming a major group within their occupational category. She notes the tendency for men, once women enter an occupation, to leave it. This may be due to their desire to believe that the work they do cannot be performed by women. It may be because they fear economic consequences. Burton (1991) reports that studies have shown that the more women present in an occupation, the lower the level of wages for both men and women. Men may fear that an increasing number of women will be reflected in lower pay outcomes for themselves.

However, Burton (1991) notes another factor which is the preference we all seem to share for working with others like ourselves, called "homosociability" in the literature. Perhaps for this reason, or perhaps for the economic and status reasons noted in the previous paragraph, strategies of resistance referred to in the feminist literature as "masculinity-protection" strategies are invoked by men in organisations to stop women entering professions. The practices of equal employment opportunity or invocation of 'diversity management' do not seem to help counter these strategies. This is because 'merit' and 'competence', which are fundamental to selection and promotion practices in Universities, are defined by the broader

(male dominated) organisation. Their definition often disadvantages women and women's experience (eg breaks in service, working in teams, etc). Including women as one of the 'diversity' groups seems to encourage their needs being 'traded off' against other categories of disadvantage (eg race, disability) (Bacchi, 1993). In summary, Bacchi (1993), writing on Australian higher education, notes that:

it is also clear that [...] some common discourses are marshalled to maintain the sexual status quo. These include the language of equal opportunity, and a defence of gender neutrality as a guiding percept, together with the assumptions about the objectivity of appointments procedures and the measurement of ability or merit. Until these assumptions are challenged, little will change. (p. 38).

Castleman et al. (1995) also refer to "structural and systematic forms of discrimination involving institutionalised forms of male bias" (p.14) in Australian higher education and refers to a "hidden agenda" that excludes women (p. 20). Australia's experience in this regard is not different from other countries (Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Prichard, 1996; Whitehead, 1999)

In Australia, the last major review of management and management education by Karpin (1995) identified the failure of women to be included in management and management education as one of the five key challenges for education in Australia. Burton's (1995) work in Karpin's reports, indicated that while 50% of university students were women, only 15% of the senior teaching positions were held by women. Of the 42% of women employed in the Australian workforce, a very small number occupied management positions. Men accounted for 74% of all managers and 86% of general managers. Thus, the low number of women in management and the low number of women in management education could be seen as linked. To meet Australia's management needs, Karpin recommended that women be targeted in particular, that they should be placed on corporate boards, and encouraged within management education.

Hornby and Shaw (1996), reporting an experience in the UK, discuss the way in which the topic of 'women in management education' has been marginalised in the same way as women managers in organisations. They report on the introduction of a 'women in management' subject to the management curriculum and finds parallels between the management of organisations and the educational process. Men are viewed as the 'core' of the organisation, hence the 'product', the education degree, is protected from including feminist perspectives in case the 'customers' would not accept it. As a result the subject 'women in management' did not become core to the management degree curriculum.

Given the links between management education and management, it is of interest that the three of us undertaking this study are employed in the discipline of management as well as being university managers. A major impetus for writing this paper was in part the common frustrations we shared but also a deep visceral feeling that the 'cost' to us as women and as managers in this arena was much higher than we had originally thought. More importantly, we were concerned to explore the emotions that underpin these identifications and the efforts to maintain them. The topic of emotional labour was familiar to us but none of us had ever applied this literature to our own experiences except by way of gut feelings and hunches.

Emotional Labour and Management

What is the management task? Management as a job is seen to be about rational activities such as planning, monitoring, and leading. Extensive literature on strategic management exhorts managers to collect and scan relevant information, develop possible scenarios and chose rationally to follow one or another path of action. Managers are seen to be intentional (goal oriented), purposive and rational. Classically, the management job is described as an unemotional, impersonal, objective one. Men, as well as women, have to learn to control and suppress their emotions to fit this approach. The issue of emotion at work: its suppression, its management and its use within the job, is being increasingly discussed in the literature (eg Fineman, 2000)

A particular concept which has been used in describing emotion as part of work is that of 'emotional labour'. In work requiring emotional labour (not simply emotion) emotions are managed, not to suppress them, but to use them as part of the job requirements. Hochschild (1983), the author who established the concept, talks about jobs in which emotional tone is critical. She refers to the flight attendant who is told in her training session " Now girls, I want you to go out there are really *smile*. Your smile is your biggest *asset*. I want you to go out there and use it. Smile. *Really* smile. *Really lay it on*" (Hochschild, 1983, p.4). However the flight attendant finds that after a day at work she cannot wind down. Instead "Its as if I can't release myself from the artificially created elation that kept me 'up' on the trip" (Hochschild, 1983, p.4). It is noteworthy that the demand for emotional labour in the airline industry has continued even as the job title has changed to reflect "surface' notions of gender equity. "Air hostesses" have become "stewardesses" and more recently "flight attendants", but the smiling goes on. Police work has also been used to show how negative emotional responses need sometimes to be generated, this time in male workers. The emotion has to be real, as part of the job requirement. Such a work requirement is more often found in face-to-face or voice-to-voice work, especially between the employee and the public (ie, those not employed by the organisation such as customers, students or criminals). Emotional labour involves having to follow certain prescriptions or 'feeling rules' which are used both to manage the employee's emotion and to influence and control the emotions of others.

Hochschild's original work has been followed by many studies that expand, exemplify and critique her concept. Recent overviews have reinforced the view that both men and women engage in emotional labour in a range of jobs (Steinberg and Figart, 1999). Work has been conducted on the emotional consequences of this kind of work (burnout, stress) and has examined specific jobs such as hairdressing, nursing, engineers etc. However, part of the problem with much of this work is that it confuses 'emotion at work' for 'emotional management as a job requirement'. Most jobs involve interpersonal communication, the need to understand non-verbal signals, dealing with emotional customers, clients or co-workers and so on. In reviewing the literature, it is necessary to distinguish those articles that are discussing emotional labour rather than simply emotion at work.

University work (teaching and research) clearly involves high levels of emotional labour. Commitment, passion and curiosity in the self and created in others are keys to developing and transmitting knowledge. 'Performing' for students in the teaching environment is one aspect of teaching that lecturers often refer to. Being 'enthusiastic' about the subject material and the teaching materials and activity is said to be one of the key indicators of good quality teaching (see, for example, Ramsden, 1992). Bellas (1999) discusses the emotional labour involved in teaching and in research, and raises a number of issues that contribute to emotional labour in service work. In one aspect of the latter, committee work, Bellas notes that criteria for performance evaluation of the 'service' role include having a 'cooperative

attitude'. But what of the managerial roles within universities? Is the emotional labour in this area differentiated in terms of gender? While there has been research on the gendered dimensions of emotional labour in the workplace (Babin and Boles, 1998; Bellas, 1999; Steinberg and Figart, 1999), no literature appears to have examined the broad task of 'management' from the perspective of emotional labour. Is there an emotional dimension to management, and in particular to academic management?

While management is presented in many traditional mainstream management texts as a rational activity involving planning and leading, in fact, work on what really occurs in management find that managers spend much of their time talking, attending meetings, justifying actions, acting politically and building relationships (Fulop and Linstead, 1999). The effort to make these activities appear to be part of a rational and planned approach to tasks involves a clear measure of emotional management. Managers may be uncertain, confused, feeling compromised, overloaded by too much information that they cannot integrate, yet through all this, the rational mask cannot slip. Watson and Harris (1999), in a book on how to become a manager, talk of 'managing the self and fitting the part'. In this chapter they examine the development of an identification as a manager and encourage their readers to realise that they need to work at developing the identity required for the position. In later chapters they address 'managing the self and playing the part' and 'managing relationships and doing the right thing'. At no time do the authors invoke the concept of emotional labour, but they use examples which demonstrate clearly the management of emotion. For example, Watson and Harris quote a (male) manager who was disappointed in a decision:

So, it was very much a case then, of having to manage my instinctive emotional feelings. 'Oh bugger 'em, I'm really not bothered about this job any more, I'm feeling completely deflated, nobody's come to console me', and I was feeling pretty down in the dumps about it. But I made sure that I didn't let that shine through for the people who I'm managing, hopefully, fairly successfully (p.146).

Unfortunately, Watson and Harris, one of the few studies that addresses the management of emotion by managers, do not recognise a special problem for women managers. Indeed, in a short section addressing that issue, they refer only to the need for female role models, then turn to discuss the 'other side' of being a male in a predominantly female managerial group in residential social services. The gendering approach to management would lead us to believe that the gender of the individuals employed within the organisation is less important than the gendering of the task – the masculinity of management is shaped as much by discursive practices as anything else. For example, Brewis and Linstead (1999) have referred to 'gendering management' in order to critique management theory itself. They propose that both men and women and men can work to be masculine, that masculinity is a part of the discursive practices that inform much of management theory and that men as well as women alike are potentially threatened and alienated by masculinist constructions and practices. That is, management (as a theory and a practice) is seen as being masculine, yet it is not a form of masculinity that defines all the possibilities for men, let alone women. Brewis and Linstead (1999, p.71) note that one consequence of this is that women might be driven to adopt masculinist ways or strive to reach a balance between the two to succeed. But our statistics above reveal that whatever women are doing, their strategies are not working. For example, organisations urged to increase the number of senior women sometimes report that women simply do not apply for senior positions or for promotions to senior levels. Burton (1991)

notes that when provided with this information she often asks: “what are the conditions prevailing in the organisation that make it so?” (p.10). Her response is that:

many women are reluctant to take on positions which are so tightly ordered in hierarchical relationships that it would be a job in itself to change the system (...). But it also has to do with the belief of many women of the style of administrative practice(...). That is, they believe it to be a bit on the ugly side and they do not want to be part of an environment where decision-making seems more to do with point scoring and the protection of existing status differences than with reasonable policy-making and implementation (Burton, 1991, p10).

Watson and Harris’ analysis is one of the first to discuss (even without labelling it) emotional labour in management. However, since they are apparently oblivious to the masculine nature of management, even in female dominated industries such as social work and nursing, they do not help us in our exploration of the issue of emotional labour for female managers. It is this topic which is the focus of this paper.

Emotions and Reflections

The key task for us all is to make sense of our existence. One major way that we humans do this is to create narratives or stories (Sarup, 1993). The narrative is not merely a literary form but an epistemological category: a mechanism by which we know and make sense of the world. The sense can often be expressed within a story – articulated examples of which we used to discuss our experiences as three female university managers. Narratives are said to be ‘windows’ into organisational life (Frost et al., 2000). As an tool of sense-making they can reveal the emotions and feeling rules within the organisational context. Like Frost et al., we will report the emotions and experiences demonstrated in our narratives.

The three incidents we wrote for each other contained critical incidents associated with our work as senior managers. The stories involved dealing with:

- (i) change management: the creation of a research culture in a male oriented, high teaching load School, by a newly appointed female professor (Liz)
- (ii) simple day to day crises: the need for a female director of a program to persuade her colleagues to work above expectations and agreements (Mary), and
- (iii) major conflict and restructuring: a female Head of School attempts to manage the staff in her School and her colleagues and supervisor in a Faculty through a complex and highly political restructuring exercise (Linda)

We will consider issues dealing with the analysis of these stories in our concluding section. At this point, suffice to say that our preferred analytic approach was to search for themes in the stories. We were concerned to reflect on our own and each other’s experiences to try to determine in what ways we were engaged in emotional labour.

A number of themes emerged in the stories. These included:

Self Monitoring

Self monitoring is one of the hallmarks of emotional work. Self-monitoring (Abraham, 1999) has two dimensions: acting and other-directedness. Acting refers to adjusting behaviour to conform to norms. Other directedness, or social sensitivity and knowledge of established practises, leads to the internalisation of prescribed norms for emotional expression. Our stories contained several instances of reports of self monitoring, such as:

Even though I was a professor, I was made very conscious of having to manage my image in this change process and not attract unwelcome stereotypes. (Liz)

This pleasing stuff demanded an enormous investment in working out what was "safe" or permissible behaviour and being vigilant about not deviating from it. (Liz)

When I spoke to the staff in the School I tried, however, to report in a conciliatory and positive tone, feeling there was no point turning the School staff against the Dean or the University. This absorption of the tension from the process put me in a difficult position, but I felt that that was partly what I was being paid for. (Linda)

Finally [I felt] the academic culture made giving direct orders unusual, even counterproductive. (Mary)

Abraham (1999) notes that self monitoring can be positive if it derives from a genuine desire for reconciliation of displayed emotions with organisational dictates. By self-monitoring people may achieve a balance between their public and private selves. However, if it is used as a basis for creating a good impression or being what others want them to be, then this intensifies the debilitating effect of emotional dissonance. It would appear that we are describing the latter use in our stories.

Self Punishment and Repair Work

When self monitoring had failed, or demands were deemed to have been made, we noted in our stories an attempt to 'make good' our relations with others. This has not been something which has been commented on in the literature, but seems a consistent theme in our stories. In this way we attempt to 'fit in' again, after we have assessed that we have marginalised ourselves. For example,

At times I felt I ought to be apologizing for making demands on others and for not being sufficiently selfless, caring and understanding about these seeming impositions. (Liz)

I emailed staff pointing out the problems, and asking them to hold one or two 40-minute teleconferences. I arranged administrative assistance, provided written advice on how to do teleconferences, and further help during the sessions. (Mary)

The School staff were clear. The changes reduced the educational integrity of the degree massively. Staff in the School offered to demonstrate their resistance in whatever way could most help. However I indicated that I was getting support from other managers and would try to run the argument through the official channels at the Faculty Committee. I was failing in this task, however. (Linda)

'Making good' our perceived deficiencies meant that we engaged in more 'PR' work than we needed. Taking additional steps to do 'repair' work for the demands we were making on others and punishing ourselves by taking on the work when others could have, and should have, been helping because of guilt associated with making the requests in the first place, was a theme that emerged in our stories. We could not help noticing how much this seemed to be a reproduction of certain aspects of domesticated labour and the role of the mother with recalcitrant children so often played out in everyday life and glorified in the media as the sign of a good mother.

Self Justification

Our stories referred to justifying our actions quite explicitly. Linda in her story simply made the justificatory comments as part of her story line, as she justified herself in the story she was telling.

I indicated that I was getting support from other managers and would try to run the argument through the official channels at the Faculty Committee. I was failing in this task, however. [...] I left each meeting angry and confused by the lack of engagement of the other HOSs. I felt I was letting down the School but that I was also making myself vulnerable by continuing to oppose the changes so publicly. (Linda)

Liz commented on her need to specifically justify her actions, despite her judgement that these represented the most appropriate approach to the issues:

I felt an unwarranted pressure to justify my actions and seek approval for what and how I was doing things. (Liz)

Pleasing Behaviour

Being a 'good girl' or a 'nice girl' by trying very hard and by being socially sensitive was noted in the stories.

I believed then, and still do, that I had to engage in "pleasing women's behaviour" to get things done and people on side. (Liz)

Some, but not all, staff complied and I phoned or emailed the reluctant ones again, offering more help. I felt this was bargaining to create cooperation ("I'll go out of my way if you'll do something extra") rather filling a real expertise gap. (Mary)

A discussion of ethics and women and morality (Gilligan, 1987) reveals women's need to 'be nice' to be somewhat different to men. Socialised as women within the dominant paradigms of male headed households, women appreciate early on that 'being nice' and 'a good girl' leads to a simpler life. They learn to 'nurture' the males, in particular, in the household. As women take over in management roles then, the 'girl' and 'mother' role continues as women's 'ethic of care' expresses itself through 'being nice' to those within the social realm.

Credit Deficits

We all noted that we felt that to the extent that we were managing situations, that is, actively taking decisions and striving to have them implemented, someone was allowing us to do this. They had given us 'permission' to manage in this way. However, we were conscious of our 'credit limits' and just how far we could take such permission. For example,

I deliberately eschewed any behaviour that would remotely signal that I was pushy, directive, aggressive or would “kick ass” in getting things changed. I used consensus, devolution, feedback and corridor reality checks to smooth the way. Whether I believed in this approach or not matters little, as it was the only one I saw as being available to me. (Liz)

Credibility and power

An issue we all felt was the very fragile basis of our power. While Liz is a professor, and holds legitimate power because of that, she was new to the organisation and School and felt she needed to legitimise her power before it was genuinely credible. Linda, as a Head of School, had been invested with the University’s power, but as (only) a senior lecturer she was seen by some staff in the School as not really having the authority of that office. Mary’s situation was quite complex. As a senior lecturer she felt she had no credible authority, even with her title of “Director of MBA”. Whether this was merely her own belief, or an issue which the university would have agreed with her on, is immaterial: she behaved believing she did not have credible power. The stories reflect such comments:

In my heart of hearts I always feared that if I blundered there would be little room for forgiveness or for getting another shot at it. I know I had the support of my female Head of School and the goodwill of most staff and a number of senior managers, yet none of this alleviated the stress and unfairness I felt about having to perform the rites of pleasing behaviour. (Liz)

However, [when asking the staff to undertake the teleconferences] I was reluctant to rely on his [the Dean’s] authority, since he had said that he wanted me to “take the running of the MBA”. Lately he had acknowledged that I was doing this, but that it had taken time. To mention the Dean would suggest that he, and not I, was making the request. My junior status affected the issue. My job title, “Director of the MBA”, had been granted to facilitate overseas negotiations rather than formally, and my substantive academic level – Senior Lecturer – was not high. (Mary)

I tried meeting with other HOSs to determine whether they felt as bullied as I did. Some were supportive and got angry with the Dean. “He is trying to isolate us to get what he wants”, said one. (Linda)

The perceptions that we each had about our power and the limits of that power resulted in emotional labour being expended as we sought to justify or support our positions to others and even to ourselves. As noted by Burton (1991), this sort of support is readily available to men in the masculine management structure. That is by virtue of the masculinist construction of management as an activity, there is not the same need for men to justify to each other the fact that they have taken a decision, and have used overt forms of power to implement it. By the same token, however, since management as an activity is seen as masculine, the exercise of managerial authority requires real additional work from women managers.

Woing, Cajoling, Charming, and Coaxing

In approaching the management task, a clear theme was that as women we needed to use much less overt forms of power: persuasive rather than authoritative approaches. For example:

Implementing change was as much about wooing and winning over those who I wanted to influence as it was about having the skills to do it. (Liz)

To get the MBA going I had capitalised on my capacity to empathise with my colleagues, and mobilise their "pioneering spirit" in a new university. (Mary)

I felt that coaxing, charming, cajoling, pointing out the career benefits, might work, but giving orders was out – both as a junior academic and as a matter of personal preference. (Mary)

This was a strong and consistent theme in our stories. It has not been routinely discussed in the literature, but certainly appears in novels and the subtext in many references to sex in the workplace and the topic of desire (Hort, Barrett and Fulop, 2001; Lorber, 1979; Sedgewick, 1991)

Unable to 'win'

Not really being able to win - damned if you do and damned if you don't - emerged clearly in Liz' story. This theme reflects the broad issue of 'fitting in' which we will explore in the next section of the paper. Despite how we try to internalise the feeling rules, employ the norms of the organisation, and be what we need to be in the managerial role, we, as 'outsiders' are unable to be perceived in this way. Liz for example tells us:

I sought advice from senior male colleagues about how to best to proceed and was told by one that if I tried to drive the change I would be criticised as "having balls" or, if I didn't, I would be called a "pussy cat. (Liz)

Linda, feeling she had agreements from her male colleagues on the change she sought then found they were not honoured. This may have been because visible support for her was been construed by her (male) colleagues) as fitting badly:

In the Faculty Committee meetings others would sit without saying anything. The Dean would avoid the point by saying he would deal with it outside the meeting process. I left each meeting angry and confused by the lack of engagement of the other HOSs. I felt I was letting down the School but that I was also making myself vulnerable by continuing to oppose the changes so publicly. (Linda)

The notion of winning, competing and the power and politics this entails, suggests that the often noted lack of political astuteness of women is really because organisational politics is played in a broader organisational arena than women realise. Specifically, women managers may not know the extent to which winning – and being seen to win- in tasks which involve the overt use of organisational power may present additional costs because of their gender. In short, the emotional cost of political engagement and the perceived ambivalence might explain more than we realise about the dilemmas of women managers.

Cracks in the 'armour'

Becoming stressed, showing weakness or emotion was something that we judged as women was something that we could not do, or we would lose all credibility. This theme was reflected in our stories and seems to have a lot in common with the notion of losing face in many Eastern cultures:

I was so conscious of not losing composure and being an easy target for as yet another "typical female" – irrational and emotional! (Liz)

I was getting increasingly anxious about the process. My anxiety about my role in resisting the changes and upsetting the University hierarchy, my anxiety about failing to achieve what the School had asked for and my anxiety about getting the staff in the School to cooperate with putting the new structure in place were becoming too great. "I am going to back off", I thought. (Linda)

Fineman (1995) notes the contestability of the concept of stress. Who defines stress for whom becomes a particularly interesting question that can be asked within the power structures of organisations. Newton (1995) is particularly attuned to the gender implications of stress. She says:

If women express emotion in organisations, they may therefore both intrude on (male) rationality [where male emotional expression is underwritten by tight emotional control] and support the sexual splitting of emotion that allows men to deny emotions. At the same time, the emotional expression breaches the tacit codes of emotional constraint within organisations, and reinforces an image of women as problematic and as having a semi neurotic emotionality. As Parkin puts it, her feelings of distress in organisations are 'not just because of different structures, kinds of work, management styles, public and private but because of the problematised construction of men as an emotional, sexualised women (1993: 186)' (p. 145)

With an awareness of the implications of showing stress, in terms of identifying and marginalising ourselves as women, we worked emotionally and performed in particular ways to avoid these displays occurring.

Emotional Labour and Identity in University Management

The key argument in this paper has been that women managers in higher education are engaged in extensive emotional labour. The themes recorded above describe the many examples of ourselves as women managing our emotions or managing the emotions of others. What, we may ask, creates this additional labour for us as woman managers? The answer that we propose in this paper is that it is due to the need for women to redefine their identity in ways that are contradictory, confusing and self-defeating. Identity is the self-consciousness that we bring to bear to produce, organise and transform the social and natural world. This self-consciousness defines us as cultural, social and historical beings, as well as 'natural' ones. (Knights and Willmott, 1999). As noted by Weedon (1999), quoting Butler (1990), gender identity is not something given to us by our biology. It is a key construction which drives the way we act. These 'expressions' constitute our identity. They cover the sexual division of labour, the economic implications that derive from that, and the cultural definitions and inscriptions concerning masculinity and femininity (Bradley, 1999). In a management role, acquisition of organisational power (being aggressive, controlling) is seen to entail a fundamental loss of femininity (Gilligan, 1987). Women managers are trapped between their identity, organisational impact and effectiveness and the negative perceptions of their coworkers, and the discourses that give substance and meaning to management as an activity that is principally constructed in a masculinist way. The consequence of this is that those who judge women as women first and as managers second find them wanting as one, the other or both. Thus, emotional labour must be performed to forge an identity that is

habitually livable and workable if one is to do the hard labour of a woman academic manager.

There is, however, an argument in the literature that this is not in fact possible in higher education settings. For example, Swoboda and Vanderbosch (1986) address the issue of university management in a book on women in educational administration written in the United States. They note that:

The woman administrator in academe is an anomaly. [...] As misfits within the closely ordered and male-defined structure of the academy, a woman has had basically two options available to her: she could either live her womanliness up or she could live it down. In living it down, a woman attempts to 'neutralise' and to neutralise her gender in order to gain acceptance on the profession's terms: in living it up, she either integrates or emphasises her gender in order to gain respect on her own terms. [...] Both are mutually exclusive responses to the dilemma that faces every woman in administration: to fit or not to fit. "Fitting" may be the nub of the question, but it is hardly the entirety of the answer [...] Fitting implies dichotomising the public self and the private person and more than that implies that false (ie unnecessary) choices need to be made in order to maintain the split between a woman who is and who she is perceived to be (Swoboda and Vanderbosch, 1986, p. 1).

Burton (1991) considering higher education institutions, also refers to the question of how women cannot 'fit' the system. Her explanation is so well expressed that we will simply quote the entire section of her paper that addresses this. She says:

These ways of defining the work of people in authority are good ways of excluding women from it. While men on the whole perform this work, the issue of whether these are the most appropriate descriptions of what positions of authority entail remains clouded. Behind the scenes, among men, there is a great deal of support, facilitation, and collaboration, processes not formally acknowledge as essential ingredients for adequate performance in leadership positions. The 'public' presentation of this work is all that women have access to; the 'private' understandings of the nature of the work are not readily available to them (p.11).

And,

[I]f notions of femininity, womanhood and good motherhood are not to be disturbed, women will organise their occupational choices and then, once on the job, their preferences for certain kinds of experiences, around those activities which do not challenge these dominant views. At the same time, if they are career oriented, they may not have understood that these strategies have taken them in directions which do not lead to the sorts of opportunities they expected (p. 10).

Several of the themes we noted in our stories directly exemplify this analysis. For example, we all reported quite consciously monitoring what we were doing and saying in order to manage emotions, and reported high levels of emotional work in doing this. How could this be anything other than negative for women managers? Attempting to reconcile the public and the private selves indicates an attempt to 'fit in' to the masculinist management practice. As has been noted, however (Burton, 1991), as tempting as this might seem to be it is not something that women can successfully do. Condemned by our gender to be judged as

different, even our attempts to fit the norms will fail. The continuing efforts that we make in this direction will simply rebound as more attempts are required.

These efforts we demonstrated in our attempts to make repairs and to continue to be 'pleasing' in the situation. However, the credit deficits that were given to us were too limited to be able to be as effective as we wished. This problem of 'fit' was identified also in the earlier mentioned work of Hornby and Shaw (1996) looking at 'women in management' education subjects. In that context also, they referred to strategies that women use when they have succeeded in becoming managers 'in a world of male status and power'. That is, they either 'blend in' or conform with the prevailing expectations of male co-workers, or they 'take a rightful place' by accepting the organisational goals but with 'an articulated critique of male dominance'. They claim that management education needs to include gender issues in their curriculum as part of the centre and the core by providing the critique 'that will render the need for change to the mainstream irresistible'. The conclusion that we reach then is that women's emotional labour in academic management derived from their attempts (fated to be unsuccessful) at identification with the male roles in a masculine organisation.

A fuller explanation of this phenomenon is found in the work of Whitehead (2001). Whitehead has referred to the 'seductive ontology' of managerial work which, drawing on a feminist post-structural perspective (see also Weedon, 1999), describes the contingent nature of identity forming effects of managerial work. Whitehead (quoting Gherardi, 1995) does not discount the 'fact' that many organisations are sites in which gendered frameworks are constructed in which women are positioned as outsiders and as intruders, face multiple obstacles, sources of resistance and polarised landscapes where they must negotiate multiple public and private roles. However, this 'landscape' is not necessarily hostile to all women and hospitable to all men. Unlike the feminists such as Burton, Whitehead's notion of seductive ontology makes a fundamental claim about the commonalities between men and women, but also makes a particular claim about the seductive aspect of managerial work which is unique to women (2001, p.99).

As Whitehead notes (2001, p.101), as a part of identity work, the search for ontological security, is not of itself gendered since ontological security is a need of both men and women. What is gendered, however, is the application of these needs or wants in social and cultural networks. One possible way in which men negotiate the quest for ontological security, trust and group cohesion is to concentrate on their public roles as managers, co-workers and mates. For women there are no easy choices in this regard, because women exist, as Whitehead says, in gendered relationships in which being a gendered subject most often means having to juggle, trade off, and balance the ontological security of both public and private roles (Whitehead, 2001, p.101). As Burton (1991) has said, concepts of femininity, womanhood and motherhood are critical not only to society's understanding of gender but to women themselves. Whitehead notes that the discursive movement of women managers across contrasting subject positions (such as 'honorary male'; see also Ljungberg van Beinum 2000, p.95). It can evince high emotions, stress, anxiety and doubts in women about their competence. Whitehead (2000) also argues that in achieving ontological security through identity work and trying to come to some measure of self-worth, many women no longer search for this anchoring in what has been understood as the domain of females or the feminine, such as nurturing intimate relationships in the family and amongst friends. The ontology is seductive, therefore, since it looks possible for women to achieve their identity but in fact places them in an impossible position. For us as female managers, then, working in management schools in higher education, means we need to engage in emotional labour in

attempting to identify with our role and to simply do our job. In this paper our stories have demonstrated the extent to which we are doing this even as we write.

Conclusion

In conclusion we wish to raise some unresolved issues in this research and our account of it. These issues relate to the generalisability of the material, the need to take risks in self disclosure and the authenticity of the material which is used in studies of this type.

In questioning the role of emotional labour in university management, the place we chose to start was with stories about ourselves. The process of being both the researcher and the object of our own research places us in a complex position with relation to our material. There are few other senior female managers in the university whom we could have asked to provide stories for us. Even had there been more of them, however, the level of self disclosure we engaged in with each other, and the levels of trust that self disclosure required were not things that could have been automatically assumed from other senior women managers. Concerned that even within our own stories we were recording only women's experiences, we did approach three male managers with whom one of us had excellent interpersonal relationships. The three men did not reject the approach, and expressed interest in the idea of recording stories about their own management experiences. To help engender trust it was suggested that if they were to provide stories they could read our own in return so that mutual self-disclosure had occurred. While none of the male managers directly refused, no stories emerged and the few prompts that were issued resulted in continued avoidance of the task. The generalisability of our accounts can certainly, therefore, be questioned. How we go about continuing the research, with its attendant risks of self-disclosure, is an issue we continue to discuss.

The next issue emerged when we faced the task of producing the paper for this conference. Several issues about the reading of the material faced us. First, there was the problem of what theoretical position we should take. A textual analysis using first a feminist reading followed by a deconstruction was our first proposal. It was suggested however that a post-feminist reading would be more up to date in relation to the literature already circulating in this area. A further insight that a hermeneutical reading might establish better some of the meanings of the behaviour we have employed was considered. After attempting some of these analyses we remained uncertain about how to decide between the options, and a thematic solution was adopted.

A second issue was the problem of which one or more of us should be responsible for the reading made. That is, we needed to ask whose reading or interpretation of the story should take precedence. There was no basis on which one of our readings should be privileged, yet getting agreement to readings of the stories that were more complex than the themes which have been presented in the current paper was not possible. This caused us to reflect on the work of other researchers (eg Frost et al, 2000; Rhodes, 2000; Thompson 1997) who take material from their subjects and then present the readings and interpretations of their stories and their narratives. The issue of authenticity then arises, as these researchers do not report their own experiences but those of others. Authenticity requires additional emotional labour (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000) and causes us uncertainty which, in the present situation, we were unable to resolve. Disclosure to a wider audience through publication and presentation also created issues for us to discuss. Had we all disclosed equally, and were we prepared to disclose to unknown individuals rather than each other? Should we use pseudonyms to

partially hide our identities or even not disclose that the stories were written by us? With a view that our experiences can help explore this area we were prepared for an amount of disclosure, which is revealed in the paper. However we set limits on that and so some information that could have been presented has not been.

The paper therefore ends with our expression of these unresolved issues. To better understand the emotions and experiences of those working in organisations, including universities, these complex methodologies, which allow expression of these rich facets of our humanness, are required. But how then as researchers can we interpret, analyse, categorise or critique these approaches at the same time as we rely on them to explicate our situations? This paper has provided us not only with insights about women as managers in universities but about the research process in this difficult but critical field.

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