Introduction. Emotion and aesthetics: organisational space, embodiment and materiality

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The six papers in this special issue arose out of a stream at the Gender, Work and Organisation Conference at Keele University, United Kingdom in 2010 on 'Emotion and Aesthetics: Organisational Space, Embodiment and Materiality'. This itself was part of an ongoing commitment to developing research on these concepts, with a previous stream at the Gender, Work and Organisation Conference in 2007 and a special issue of *IJWOE* in 2008. The aim of both the stream in 2010 and the subsequent call for papers was to further explore the relationship between emotions and aesthetics in organisational life, recognising that the interface between the two continues to remain relatively neglected in empirical and theoretical analyses of gender and organisation. The intention of this special issue is to consider some of the conceptual, methodological, empirical and theoretical aspects of this interface and, in so doing, to contribute to the development of a more in-depth and focused understanding of gender, aesthetics and emotion in a number of important areas, particularly organisational space, embodiment and materiality.

At first glance the papers in this special issue cover a diverse range of subjects and approaches. Varda Wasserman's opening paper discusses an empirical study of the gendering of workspace conducted at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whilst Lucy Taska's paper provides an historical study of the nicknaming of a company nurse in the New South Wales Eveleigh Railway workshops between 1947 and 1968. Amrita Mukhopadhyay's paper re-examines the notion of gendered 'feeling rules' by looking at the way that these are negotiated by a female business owner from the Kesarwani community in India. In the fourth paper, Sara Falcão Casaca challenges assumptions about the nature of emotional labour in the interactive service sector, by comparing the work of supermarket checkout operators and call centre workers. Warhurst, van den Broek, Hall and Nickson in our fifth paper, similarly seek to provide more nuance to our debates about interactive service work, with their study of data from the Australian State of Victoria regarding 'lookism' – discrimination based upon appearance. Finally, Thanem

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and Knights explore the embodied lived experience of gender and how this relates to forms of academic work which are often disembodied and abstracted.

Yet within this diversity a number of themes can be discerned which together contribute to the debates on gendering as a social, aesthetic, emotional and material process which is intimately related to organisational life. First, throughout these papers there is embedded a perspective on aesthetics as embodied and emotional, linked to social processes within the organisation, rather than as an abstract approach to art and beauty. Here aesthetics is not neutral and neutered, but gendered and gendering: that is, productive of gender identities and relations. Aesthetics is emphatically not simply visual, but is a lived, embodied, and emotional experience. This is powerfully conveyed in Thanem and Knights' paper which brings the emotional and embodied experiences of masculinities into dialogue with academic labour. Second, this has important connections with the growing recognition of the significance of place, space and materiality within organisation studies. The spaces and places of organisational life have predominantly been overlooked, the assumption being that they are inert and empty containers within which active social relations take place (Lefevbre 1991). A recognition that these spaces and places interact with and shape those social relations has had a longer history in other fields of the social sciences than in organisation theory (e.g. Buttimer and Seamon 1980; Crang and Thrift 2000; Hall 1966). Within work organisations themselves there has been a recognition of the possibility of organisational space as an active 'agent of change' (e.g. Duffy, 13th November 1996; www.vnunet.com/articles/print/2076131) with a movement towards the deliberate restructuring of organisational spaces in order to achieve particular managerial outcomes such as teamworking, commitment, creativity and innovation. Often these workspaces are explicitly aimed at the production of certain organisationally-oriented identities and identifications, but there has been little consideration of how these spaces are mediated by gendered responses and experiences. Wasserman's paper specifically addresses this gap. This recognition of space and place also relates to understanding the significance of lived embodiment, for as Lefebvre comments: "The whole of (social) space proceeds from the body, even though it so metamorphoses the body that it may forget it altogether" (1991: 405). Third, in relation to aesthetics, materiality and emotions, the perspective of gender brings out a more nuanced approach to these, further helping us to recognise the situated and complex interweaving of social categories and lived experience. We can see this, for example, in Mukhopadhyay's discussion of the specificity of 'emotional labour' and 'feeling rules' in relation to caste and gender in the Kesarwani community. Finally, all of the papers in this special issue, through exploring the interface of emotion, aesthetics, embodiment and materiality, provide a richer understanding of the social processes of exclusion and inclusion relating to gender.

In the first two papers, Wasserman's study of female clerical apostrophe workers experience of new office space in the Israeli Foreign Office and Taska's historical study of the nicknaming of the company nurse in the New South Wales Eveleigh Railway workshops, there is a development of the analysis of the interface between aesthetics, embodiment and the creation of gendered spaces of work. Wasserman deals with this directly, in her insightful exploration of the emotional effects of space on gender and the way that the gendered body is subordinated to an organisational aesthetic regime. Through her research on the experiences of those who work in these spaces, she questions the open plan office design, arguing that *despite* the apparent neutrality of the design and its architectural intentions, the new workspace provoked strong emotional responses which were closely linked to the perceived gendered nature of these spaces. What we see in Wasserman's thought-provoking case is the phenomenological and embodied experience of living through the designed aesthetics of others. For example,

'organisational space is perceived as monolithic, standardized and suited to an apparently homogeneous body placed in the open-plan workspace…. This requirement for physiological uniformity represents a form of bio-power, since it exercises power over the body, imposing on it practices adopted for a single, neutral collective. The body of the middle-aged woman becomes visible in this uniform space and creates a sense of discomfort both for her and for those around her'.

In the second paper, the gendering of the workplace is achieved through the discursive means of nicknaming. Taska argues that nicknaming is a form of communication which reflects emotional reactions to bodies and gender relations, often showing connections between the gendered, emotional and symbolic aspects of work. This is explored through a historical study of the New South Wales Eveleigh Railway workshops. In particular Taska sheds light on the offensive and masculine nickname of the 'beast of Belsen' used of one of the industrial nurses, Mary Lions, between 1947 and 1968. She shows how this reflects gendered assumptions about bodily appearance and demeanour, where Lions was perceived to be deviant, and furthermore is an expression of the embodied emotions of fear and hostility where masculine bodies and identities felt under threat. It enabled the male workers to respond to the 'intrusion' of a woman into their culture and maintain the masculine identity of their workspace. It provided the male workers with a way of attacking her attempts to assert her nursing professionalism and expertise over their injuries, which contravened their traditional ways of dealing with the dangerous working conditions through concealing their bodily vulnerability and fear within a masculine solidarity. Taska discusses an intriguing ambiguity in the men's gendered sense-making, whereby they simultaneously construct Lions as an outsider by emphasising aspects of her appearance and behaviour which do not fit with female norms, and yet in some ways include her in their emotional community through the masculine form of the nickname.

In both of these papers, emotions are not seen as somehow secondary responses to social interaction and identity construction, but as integral to them. As Taska says, emotions mediate the physical and cognitive aspects of our social being and relationships. 'Emotional communities' are both gendered and embodied. This is also the case in our third and fourth papers. The papers by Mukhopadhyay and Casaco both provide more nuanced approaches to understanding the gendering of 'emotional labour' (Hochschild 1983). In their writings they demonstrate the importance of recognising that emotional labour needs to be understood within specific social structures and relations, in the case of these papers in relation to place, caste and organisation. Mukhopadhyay adds nuance to our understanding of the cultural context of emotional labour by examining the case of a female business owner from the Kesarwani community in India. In doing this, she draws on the concept of 'feeling rules' (Hochschild 1979; Fineman 2010: 27): the social prescriptions as to which emotions and their expression are appropriate within a particular setting or group. Hochschild comments that these rules are shared, although often latent (1979: 564), and that they "reflect patterns of social membership" (1979: 566). They relate to how we 'should' feel in certain situations and therefore we often perform 'emotion work' on ourselves, sometimes with others, in order to fit in with these feeling rules, because when we do fit in with the emotions of a social community, we find ourselves in "a zone within which one has permission to be free of worry, guilt, or shame with regard to the situated feeling" (1979: 565).

As well as providing a situated reading of 'feeling rules' in relation to the intersection of gender, caste and ethnicity, Mukhopadhyay's work points to the limits of a western assumption about the nature of commodified 'emotional labour' as being a feature of the supposed 'separate sphere' of paid employment, juxtaposed to the non-commodified emotional life of the private, domestic sphere. In this paper, the worlds of commodity

labour and domestic labour are much more intertwined, and thus suggest that more sensitivity is needed in understanding the interplay of emotional labour and gender in these overlapping spaces. In Mukhopadhyay's study where the gendered 'feeling rules' of the community prohibit women from working 'outside' the home, the exchange of labour for payment has to be brought within the home, but emotionally managed in such a way so as not to transgress the 'feeling rules' of the community, membership of which women depend on for both social and economic survival.

Casaco helps to further this understanding of the specificity of emotional labour by examining in more detail the relation of emotional labour to the fast-growing interactive service sector in Portugal. Within the interactive service-based economy certain jobs have become defined as the 'emotional proletariat'(Macdonald and Sirianni 1996: 3), expressing the particular routinized forms of emotional interaction which are required in these low paid, low status occupations. Casaco calls for a more nuanced look at the emotional labour involved in these forms of working and especially to its social and spatial embeddedness. The paper challenges an assumption that face-to-face service work necessarily requires greater emotional labour and is more tightly managed than the more spatially distant call centre voice-to-voice work. Drawing from case studies of six organisations, she shows how management of emotional labour is greater in the call centres, where the work requires longer and more involved interaction to solve problems, than in the supermarkets where interaction is more scripted and shorter. Even where the 'new Taylorism' is clearly apparent in service work, the demands of emotional labour differ.

Although it is true to say that all the papers in this Special Issue have something to say about how differences and inequalities are produced and reproduced which are never very far from studies of gender relations, the final two papers, in different ways, challenge us to extend our understanding about the interconnections of gendered inclusions and exclusions with emotions and aesthetics. As with Casaco's research, Warhurst et al's paper asks us to question the assumptions we have about the interactive service sector. In examining in detail the data about formal complaints of 'lookism' made in Victoria, Australia, they remind us that gendering processes are closely related to assumptions about the aesthetics of the body, and that this applies to both women and men.

They show the increasing relevance of lookism through the gradual increase in enquiries to the Commission about possible claims on the basis of lookism. Although there were more complaints about lookism from female employees, there was a significant number from men, with the relative proportion from men increasing. The other interesting feature about the data is the distribution of cases across a much wider range of industries than might be expected. Qualitative studies of emotional and aesthetic labour have concentrated on interactive service work. The quantitative data for cases taken in Victoria, Australia, show that although service work did indeed show a high proportion of cases of lookism, the manufacturing sector had the most cases overall.

Female cases are most prevalent in feminised industries and male complaints in male dominated industries. Here we might suppose that dominant norms of gendered appearance prevail and will be used as a marker around which employees are expected to fit themselves. However, there are also complaints from under-represented members in sex-segregated industries, especially of women in masculinised industries such as manufacturing. This fits with long-standing work which shows that for example harassment is prevalent as a form of power and exclusion where members of a minority are found (Stanko 1988) and with work which shows that those who are in a minority will be socially defined and marked by their difference and seen in terms of their group membership rather than as individuals (Kanter 1977). There are connections between

these findings and the processes of categorisation and exclusion based on appearance and operationalized through nicknaming that Taska describes in here paper.

The gendered aesthetics of embodiment is also a theme through the final paper by Thanem and Knights. They also explore the effects of assumptions about the typical gendered body and its aesthetics. Through a series of personal vignettes, they bring out the lived experience of the aesthetics of an embodiment that does not ‘fit’ in with normalised views of masculinity.

This final paper in the special issue brings the experience of gendered emotional embodiment back home. Thanem and Knights provide an insight into how we might literally incorporate our gendered, emotional embodiment into our academic lives. They discuss how academic work even that which specifically pays attention to embodiment, emotions and gender, retains a rationalising distance from the visceral experiences it analyses. One of the important aspects which this alerts us to is the multiplicity of gendered experience, as they put it: ‘acknowledging the diverse ways in which different women and men – as well as the same women and men – experience and express female and male embodiment’.

Thanem and Knights aim to ‘Develop a more fleshed out approach to doing and writing up research in organisation studies by writing our own viscerally embodied experiences from academic work into our theoretical discussion of lived gendered embodiment’ – this shows the interconnections of emotions, embodiment and gender – treatment of the body without regard for its gendering, emotions and aesthetics is to objectify it, and whilst lived experience of the body includes that of objectification, this is always contextualised and specific. They challenge us, as readers, to bring our own gendered emotions and embodiment into our academic work, so that our scholarship does not become an abstract, conceptual exercise.

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