Facilitating emotion management: organisational and individual strategies in the theatre

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Abstract: Detailed analysis of two theatre productions shows that the concept of bounded emotionality can be used to tease out aspects of emotion management that would not otherwise have been detectable. Non-instrumental ways to manage emotions – to facilitate emotion work – are used in situations where the goal is to produce quality performances, not to promote well-being as such. The rehearsal period consists of phases that require different emotion management strategies. In an initial phase, a secure working climate is established to deal with feelings of insecurity and shame. A creative phase allows for role-related emotions, and a crisis phase calls for a balance between frontstage and backstage regions. In a final phase, the ensemble closes its ranks and prepares to meet the audience. The director is expected to 'manipulate with finesse', transforming his/her leadership role during the rehearsal process from that of boss to coach. Private, role-related and situation-related emotions are differentiated, showing how emotions are seized, channelled and divided in order to direct emotional energy in effective ways. Finally, we discuss implications for organisations outside the theatrical domain.

Keywords: bounded emotionality; creativity; emotional climate; emotion management; shame; stage actors; theatre.

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1   Introduction

The concept of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) centres upon how social structure and organisational requirements influence our inclination to experience and express emotions in accord with explicit and implicit demands in work life (Wharton, 2009). An instrumental use of emotion emphasises control of employee emotion and a distinct separation of private and work emotion. There is abundant research on emotional labour in diverse occupations, from service (Abiala, 1999) and nursing (Gray, 2009) to teaching (Constanti and Gibbs, 2004) and law (Roach Anleu and Mack, 2005). However, even though employees often resist the demands made by their management (Bolton and Boyd, 2003), get social support from their peers (McGuire, 2007) or form 'communities of coping' (Korczynski, 2003; Lewis, 2005), the overall focus has been on how organisations restrain workers' ability to manage emotions (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010; Leidner, 1993; Tracy and Trethewey, 2005). Less interest has been invested in how an organisation can facilitate emotion management.

The aim of this article is to show how the production of a play in a large theatre is organised to facilitate emotion work, as well as how the individual actors in a production deal with emotions that arise from working professionally with a role.

2   Bounded emotions

To facilitate emotion management, a perspective is required that acknowledges emotional processes as well as situational perspectives (Grant et al., 2009; Lopez, 2006). In an effort to identify more encompassing emotion management strategies, Mumby and Putnam (1992, 1993) coined the concept of 'bounded emotionality', implying a more comprehensive view on emotions that integrates a private sense of self with an occupational identity, allowing room for divergent and ambiguous emotions within an organisation. In this view, the focus is not on controlling emotions; instead, emotions are bounded in order to 'incorporate the intersubjective limitations or constraints that individuals must exercise in a community' [Mumby and Putnam, (1992), p.474]. Bounded emotionality has been used as a tool to critically investigate organisations' use of alternative ways to deal with emotions at work (Martin et al., 1998, 2000; Morgen, 1994; Ashcraft, 2000; Huy, 2002).

Martin et al. (1998, p.436) developed the concept of bounded emotionality by identifying six characteristics: intersubjective limitations, emergent feelings, tolerance of ambiguity, heterarchy of goals and values, integrated self-identity and community building. *Intersubjective limitations* was described above, showing how emotions are controlled for relational rather than instrumental purposes. An example from work life could be the airline cabin crew member who, when a passenger vomits, controls her feelings of disgust and is able to calm the person down and restore dignity [Bolton and Boyd, (2003), p.299]. *Emergent feelings* implies that work-related emotions should be able to surface spontaneously and open up for discussions aiming to foster community. Even though the focus is on shared experiences, the result may coincide with instrumental goals. For example, a study on hairstylists found that customers' talk about private matters was a source of enjoyment for the hairstylist and satisfaction for the customers, who were then more likely to return (Cohen and Sutton, 1995 in Martin et al., 2000). *Tolerance of ambiguity* acknowledges that emotions seldom come in neat

packages but can be both complex and inconsistent (Flam, 1990). *Heterarchy of goals and values* implies that individual preferences should be recognised and allowed; *integrated self-identity* describes an effort to bridge the separation of private and public presentations; and finally, *community building* is linked to the building of integrated self-identities, which presupposes a building of connectedness between the members of the organisation.

These characteristics identify different aspects of the management of emotions in organisations, but they all share a relational rather than an instrumental view on work emotions. Nevertheless, Mumby and Putnam (1998, 2000) argue that in an empirical setting it could be hard to distinguish bounded emotionality from emotional labour. This implies that non-instrumental management of emotions and profit seeking can go hand in hand, a proposition that was tested by Martin et al. (2000) in a study on a large company, The Body Shop. In The Body Shop, bounded emotionality was seen as an ideal that was practised side by side with emotional labour practices. However, the study showed that the intention to allow for *heterarchy of goals and values* undermined *community building*, thus making the company aim for conformity in both subtle and more formal ways [Martin et al., (2000), p.131]. When a conflict surfaced between organisational and individual interests, the instrumental goals were prioritised, turning the aims of bounded emotionality into 'emotional exploitation' [Martin et al., (2000), p.134]. In another study (Morgen, 1994), a women's health clinic favoured community at the expense of organisational goals. Morgen studied several feminist organisations and found that differences in power and status both fostered and damaged community when the heterarchy of feelings occurred across boundaries. The problem of combining heterarchy with community can be understood in light of Collins' (2004) analysis of the creation of group solidarity and emotional energy, which require bodily co-presence, a barrier to outsiders, a mutual focus of attention, and a shared mood. On a general or ideological level, community building and heterarchy might go hand in hand, but as a situational accomplishment they tend to be opposites.

In its original form, as well as in its empirical applications, bounded emotionality has prominently been used as a model to study feminist organisations with alternative goals. However, the concept may be of better analytical use when understood as a sensitising concept (Glaser, 1978), putting the focus on non-instrumental aspects of organisational work that are left unnoticed without tools that make them visible. Mumby and Putnam's argument that non-instrumental ways to manage emotions can still serve profit-seeking goals implies that organisations can practise alternative emotion management strategies without striving for employee well-being as a goal in itself. In a study on nursing homes, Lopez (2006) proposes that the concept of emotional labour, denoting organisations' efforts to control emotions, needs to be complemented by a notion of 'organised emotional care' that supports employers' ability to use a wider spectrum of emotions in their work. It refers to caring occupations in particular, but is nevertheless an example of how an organisation facilitates emotion management by forming routines and strategies to 'support emotional honesty and authentic relationship building' [Lopez, (2006), p.157], without changing organisational goals.

Another example could be organisations that serve artistic goals and therefore need to avoid instrumental emotion management. A theatre organises work in a way that cultivates the stage actors' emotions and thus furthers relational emotion management, whilst the goal is not to promote well-being per se, but quality performance.

3   Emotion management in the theatre

As will be argued below, organisations can learn about emotion management from the way actors work with emotions in theatre productions. Indeed, one of the most influential theories on emotion management builds on actors' emotion work (cf. Hochschild, 1983), and the metaphoric use of the theatre to understand everyday life is the basis for dramaturgical theory (Goffman, 1959, 1961, 1974). Erving Goffman's theatre analogy highlights the difference between our prefabricated expectations about how we should act in particular situations and how we actually act. By separating the *role*, the typical response; the *person*, a subject's individual biography; and the *character*, the individual staged performance [Goffman, (1974), p.129], Goffman pinpoints the everyday struggle to keep performances coherent in relation both to our sense of self and to our role expectations. Dramaturgical theory also stresses the importance of understanding how different regions (Goffman, 1959) or frames (Goffman, 1974) use different logics to induce ways of feeling and acting. These different arenas are intertwined; if we perform *frontstage*, we need a *backstage* where we can rehearse and relax in between performances. In terms of bounded emotions, these distinctions supply analytical tools to investigate the relation between individual and organisational expectations, and between private and professional roles.

Recent research that uses the theatre to understand everyday life has generated studies on how stage actors reproduce existing cultural representations (Bandelj, 2003), how acting styles can serve as critical examples for leadership (Biehl-Missal, 2010), and how stage actors professionalise emotions yet stay convincing (Bergman Blix, 2010). However, this research focuses on stage actors' work with their roles, and does not connect this work to the theatre as an organisation (for an exeption see Goodman and Goodman, 1972, 1976).

One goal of a theatre is to deliver quality performances, which puts stage actors at the centre of the organisation. The emotion work that is involved in creating a role for the stage is therefore pivotal. Thus the theatre deliberately aims to facilitate stage actors' emotion work, and the actors can in many ways be considered 'privileged emotion managers' (Orzechowicz, 2008). The theatre as an organisation differs in many ways from other work organisations, and the question arises as to whether it can be used to understand work organisations outside the artistic sphere. A comparison seems worthwhile for several reasons. The limited time span of rehearsing a play (the theatre in this study is situated in Sweden, and its rehearsal process is typically two months long) can be paralleled to that of temporary work teams: 'a set of diversely skilled people working together on a complex task over a limited period of time' [Goodman and Goodman, (1976), p.494] in other organisations.

Furthermore, the intentional use of often passionate emotions in the theatre is interesting in two ways: it makes the emotion work visible in general, and it deals with foreground emotions (Barbalet, 1998) in particular, since drama entails conflicting emotions and, as we will see, role work involves feelings of insecurity and shame. Emotion management is thus at the centre of the organisation. Hence, the theatre can be studied as an extreme case of an organisation working with emotions (Orzechowicz, 2008).

Goodman and Goodman (1976) use the example of the theatre to argue that an effective and creative temporary work team should be construed in two phases, the first with blurred roles to enhance creativity, and the second with clear role definitions to

enhance the performance of instrumental tasks. The phases described by Goodman and Goodman focus on organisational creativity and effectiveness. Expanding on Goodman and Goodman's process perspective, we have identified four phases to constitute the rehearsal process (Bergman Blix, 2010): the start-up phase of building a working climate; the creative phase, characterised by relaxation as well as strong emotions; the crisis phase, where the transition from the fooling around of the rehearsal period to the seriousness of the forthcoming performance period takes place; and the final phase, with an almost-ready performance, where the ensemble closes its ranks and prepares to meet the audience. As will be shown below, the four phases require different strategies, both on the organisational and the individual level, in order to facilitate the emotion work that is needed to inhabit a new role.

The aim of this article is not to promote the theatre as an ideal workplace, but as an organisation that handles emotions in deliberate yet non-instrumental ways. The importance of analytically differentiating between private emotions, role-related emotions and situation-related emotions is emphasised, implying that bounded emotionality in the theatre involves a separation depending on the cause of an emotion rather than emotions per se; for instance, an emotion such as anger can be expected frontstage if it is role related but not if it is situation related. Emotions are seized, channelled and divided in order to direct emotional energy in effective ways.

4   Method

The data presented here were collected for a more comprehensive study on the emotion work of stage actors (Bergman Blix, 2007, 2009, 2010). The overall study was performed as an intrinsic case study (Stake, 2005), with five months of fieldwork, covering two productions at one theatre (Creswell, 1998). The theatre is typical of large theatres in Sweden. The field studies were carried out between 2005 and 2007 and included observations of rehearsals and informal talks and interviews with stage actors during the rehearsal period and the first weeks of performance. I attended almost all rehearsals for both productions. Rehearsals are generally closed to outsiders, but my previous work as a director's assistant helped me to gain access to the field and also gave me insights into how to behave and also to some extent what to look for. It is difficult to know how the presence of an observer affects people's behaviour, but one can assume that the daily presence of an observer at least eventually becomes routine and that my appearance much resembled that of a director's assistant taking notes during rehearsals.

Interviews were conducted at various stages of the rehearsals and at the beginning of the performance period, all in direct relation to rehearsals in order to come closer to actual practice. The interviews ranged from one to two hours long. Altogether, 38 interviews with 25 actors – 15 men and 10 women – were analysed. Furthermore, interviews with surrounding personnel, such as the costume designer, prompter, and make-up artist, and casual conversations with stage managers, crew and executives, took place throughout the fieldwork. The theatre has a permanent group of actors, but it also employs many of its actors on contract, either on a one to two-year basis or for particular projects. Professional acting experience ranged from one year to more than 60 years, with a median of 20 years. Actors' employment is described as falling into one of three categories: freelance, permanent, and retired/freelance. Some freelance actors had been

hired for a specific project, and others were working on short-term (one- or two-year) contracts; actors in the permanent category were full-time employees of the theatre company; and finally, retired/freelance actors had had (in every case but one) a permanent position at the theatre before retirement.[1] The interviews and observation notes were coded in a combination of inductive themes that emerged out of reading the text and being in the field and more deductive codes, such as 'emotional climate', that originated from the theoretical framework (codes and themes are italicised in the text below). These themes were then read several times to find patterns and recurrent points, after which they were analysed with a more consistent theoretical approach, both in relation to the intersubjective structures of meaning that could be deduced from the data and in relation to how the data fitted with emotion theory and could be interpreted in congruence with previous research.

The names used in this article are altered in order to protect the actors' anonymity, and the quotations have been cleaned of some spoken language repetitions and stuttering. I have merged the observations into one narrative.

5   Community building and the integration of self-identity

The actors' professionalism involves a paradoxical requirement of doing poorly at the beginning of a new rehearsal period (Roach, 1993): having to perform in front of others knowing that the performance is deficient, letting it be so in order to find one's way past clichés and through to an original presentation. Several actors joked about the insecurity they felt at the start of a new production: "As an actor I'm used to being ashamed and all that. You are always a bit ashamed. You do a lot of bad stuff. And I think that is the way it should be; you need to be bad in order to try things out" (Ingmar, 35 years' experience, permanent).

Bodily reactions are fundamentally important in the acting profession, and the actors talked about courage in relation to being present in their own bodies, and being able to follow the impulses that come out of rehearsing and to trust what the body does in encountering the text and the co-actors on the floor. "I believe that the body intuitively goes in the right direction. One can feel it, and I can feel that the director uses it. He uses the intuitive stuff" (Lisa, 20 years' experience, freelance). The actors need to be able to relax physically in order to open themselves up to bodily intuition and body memories that are used in making a character come alive. The *emergent feelings* that surface in the rehearsals are work related. However, they are often built on private experiences. This need to use unguarded private qualities in a professional setting can be interpreted in relation to an *integration of self-identity*. The actor brings private experiences into the work persona, but the goal is not to foster well-being but to create an original character presentation. In line with Mumby and Putnam's argument that community building is important for the maintenance of an integration of self-identity, this phase in the rehearsal is concentrated on getting the group together. 'Care-giving acts' [Ozcelik et al., (2008), p.188], such as giving positive feedback to establish a positive emotional climate, were frequent in the start-up phase. In the observed productions, the director pointed out the importance of each individual actor for the staging of the play. The director encouraged questions, and every time an actor rehearsed for the first time the director talked with her/him separately after the rehearsal.

The dependence on private emotional experiences and intuition demands trust, and during the community-building phase, which lasted around two weeks, a *mental incubator* was built, within which the actors and the director could work protected from outside scrutiny (Collins, 2004). Supporting personnel were either silent participants inside the incubator or they were shut out, so as not to disturb the fragile bonding process. The director played the role of gatekeeper. Inside the incubator, feelings of insecurity and shame permeated this phase as indispensible parts of the rehearsal process (Bergman Blix, 2007, 2010). The prompter described the sensitivity inside the incubator: "The way you breathe is important. You can't have someone in the room that isn't present; someone you feel is somewhere else, not breathing with the others. It doesn't work. In here, that [the climate] is everything." In agreement with this observation, Orzechowicz (2008; cf. Kemper, 2002) differentiates between two types of emotion management: actors' 'primary feeling management', focusing on their own emotions, and 'secondary feeling management', which is done by supporting personnel when handling others' emotions, creating an emotional buffer behind which the actors can work. However, as we will see in the next phase, after the group has come together there is a need to disrupt these procedures to foster creativity.

6 Heterarchy of goals and values – within limits

When community was established in the acting group, there was a shift in the rehearsal process. In everyday life, interaction rituals are the basis for routine activities (Collins, 1981), but in the second phase, there is a need for disruption. At this point, the climate is set and the barriers do not have to be as strict; silent personnel begin to interact more fully with the actors, the focus varies with the room; the loosening up of boundaries increases creativity (Goodman and Goodman, 1976).

The director walked a fine line, promoting the cast members' creative inputs yet staying in charge, practising firm leadership and at the same time opening up for creativity and emotions in an open dialogue. On the one hand, the actors needed to feel confidence and trust in order to dare to open up for their character work; on the other hand, this openness and trust made the leadership, as well as other aspects of the work process, open to questioning and query. In Martin's (1998) study on bounded emotionality in The Body Shop, *heterarchy of goals* was the first criterion to be cut by the company, both by employing a homogeneous workforce and by giving instrumental goals the final say. The theatre, in contrast, depends on heterarchal ideas to live up to artistic goals. The director depended on the actors' creativity and thus allowed a variety of interpretations. During the community-building phase, the group had established a good camaraderie; there was lots of laughter and a clear group bond. The relaxed working climate also made it possible for private expressions to leak into the rehearsals. The actors forgot to turn off their mobiles, and many actors yawned during talks or when they were not the focus of attention. The scenes started to take form and the actors had fun working with them; the seriousness of performance was still weeks away.

Nevertheless, the director needed to stay in charge and thus used all kinds of tricks to avoid losing status in this creative phase of the rehearsals. The actors all suspected that the director had ulterior motives when giving feedback, which led to continual

interpretations about the director's underlying intentions; the actors expected to be subject to manipulation:

> "Take a director that says: 'That was good.' Does he say that because he means it or does he say it to encourage me? Is it a manipulation or a grade? /// In that manipulative way, one handles actors. And one can feel it, an interest hovering in the room and at the same time an attempt to provoke me. It demands a hell of finesse by the director. Many directors do have that." (Georg, 65 years' experience, freelance).

Several of the strategies the directors used dealt with using or disallowing actors' ideas about the staging of the play while staying in command. These strategies can be interpreted in terms of role distance (Goffman, 1961). Goffman pinpointed how we use role distance in order to handle insecurity about what our roles can and cannot do; we show other people that a certain expression is not part of our overall role presentation. Role distance does not imply that the person denies the role itself, but the situated self that is implied in a situation. In situations where the participants have different rankings, role distance can be used by superiors to give reprimands or handle situations without making the subordinate lose face. To illustrate, when the director was working with one of the actors and another actor started to interfere, the director told him to go 'back to sleep', which was what his character was doing before the scene was interrupted. Everyone giggled and the director had shown who was in charge without embarrassing the actor [Goffman, (1961), p.122]. Another strategy used by the director was to use the actor's suggestion but change it a bit or move it to another line and thereby get her way but in a way that made it seem that she had adopted the actor's suggestion. The director got what she wanted and the actor felt respected. The role distance used here is a way for directors to tell the actors that they have crossed the line or that the director does not want input in the moment, without making the actors lose face. For the actors themselves, role distance is another affair completely.

6.1   Emergent feelings – dealing with embarrassment and emotion spill

Expressions of role distance to cover up insecurity about role presentations are part and parcel of our daily social interactions and are often well integrated in our overall spectra of expressions; indeed, it is difficult *not* to express them. A rehearsing actor, however, has to keep these expressions of role distance in check. It is counterproductive to use energy showing everyone that your presentation is less than perfect while trying to inhabit a role. However, since role distance is a way to avoid embarrassment, the actors instead need to let the embarrassment out. Individual strategies as well as a work atmosphere that allows for *emergent feeling*, prominently embarrassment, come into play.

   In one scene the director suggested that one of the actors should look significantly at the other actor's groin. Both actors started to giggle each time they repeated that sequence. After a few repetitions they were able to do it without giggling. One production that I observed was a tragedy with several disastrous life stories. During the rehearsal of this play, laughter was abundant. Several actors told me that this is common when playing tragedies; they need the laughter to be able to go into 'all the darkness'. They made silly entrances and laughed when the characters were cruel to each other. When they had finished laughing, they did the scene again, 'running' the emotions without having to distance themselves by laughing. Considering the function of role distance in this situation, we realise that the example of tragedy rather implies a distance from the

uneasiness of having to experience unpleasant emotions, rather than, as in the example of embarrassment, creating a distance from making a fool of oneself.

Another aspect of acknowledging *emergent feelings* in relation to the role was the handling of *emotion spill*. In the creative phase, the actors started to do the scenes without the manuscripts, and physical gestures and emotional expressions were stronger and more clear-cut. When the actors tried on full-blown emotions for the first time, the expressions were not exact and they often spilled over to adjacent situations. Crying, in particular, cannot be switched off abruptly, so when an actor was working with scenes that involved crying, the expression was still present during the short intermissions when the scenes were discussed. The crying actor talked with a thick voice, glassy eyes and sometimes remaining tears running down the cheeks. These expressions were not regarded as inappropriate yet they were never attended to; no one tried to comfort the crying actor; it was evident that the sad expression was work related, and by treating it as such, the boundaries around private emotions were maintained.

One could speculate that the acknowledgement of these ensuing emotions, shame in particular, prevents the appearance of additional negative emotions, such as a shame spiral, and thus promotes emotional well-being (Scheff, 2006).

7 Tolerance of ambiguity – in separate regions

During the last phases of the rehearsal process the facilitating of emotion management largely revolves around keeping role-related and situation-related emotions separated and preparing the cast to take over responsibility for the performance. In the frontstage region of the rehearsals, the director has to prevent insecurity and frustration from becoming shared experiences. This is made possible by organising emotional outlets in the backstage region, both by means of gossip and rumours and by employing managers who are not directly involved in the project to handle frustration.

> "Theatre is collective work. I don't think there is another such collective occupation. And that always entails conflicts. Things happen, and two weeks before the opening night you don't believe that it will come together. Yet, you remember that last time it felt the same, and it turned out to be a success. You always doubt it beforehand." (Dan 38 years' experience, permanent)

At some point there has to be a transition from the safe rehearsal period, when nothing is set and mistakes can be made, to the time when the ensemble presents the performance to a live audience. When the transition approaches, some form of crisis inevitably arises; the reasons and scenarios vary, but it seems necessary to endure a crisis to get through the transition. Bruch and Ghoshal (2003) argue that a crisis can unleash emotional energy, given that subsequent emotions are firmly channelled and guided by leaders, but that the resulting outcome is seldom creative. However, as we have seen, the crisis in this phase succeeds a creative period and thus primarily functions as an injection of energy to make it through the more technical phase (Kordsmeier, 2006; Goodman and Goodman, 1976) and into the reality of performance.

During the final two weeks of rehearsal, the climate was tense. Characters' emotions were paired with and to some extent also fuelled emotions relating to the upcoming performance. These *ambiguous feelings* were expected. The actors did not necessarily suppress their individual experience of frustration so much as they 'parked it out of the

way' so as not to interfere with the work or with the climate of the whole group. Thus, the emotional climate was upheld through the whole ensemble's effort to maintain its focus on the upcoming performance: 'In a temporary group, people often act *as if* trust were in place' [Meyerson et al., (1996), p.186].

7.1   *Keeping conflicts backstage*

An important element of the transition from crisis to performance is a change in the director's role. The director is responsible for maintaining a collective identity (Collins, 2004) within the ensemble. Consequently, when the director steps back from being the leader and becomes more of a coach, the actors' vulnerabilities come to the fore. The directors in this study dealt with this climate of vulnerability by focusing strictly on work and displaying confidence in the production (cf. Huy, 2002), providing the stamina required to see the rehearsals through in moments of slowness and frustration. During this phase, the directors tended to take credit for all suggestions. The transforming of the leadership role is coupled with a need to avoid abdicating the leadership prematurely.

The director also needs to work actively on keeping conflicts about the production out of the frontstage region, that is, out of the rehearsal room. In contrast to the former creative phase, a common strategy to deal with questioning was to let questions pass unnoticed. When the actors on occasion saw more problems than solutions and the air was thick with challenge, both directors solved it by diligently continuing to work, not defending themselves; they just carried on and eventually moved past the slowness and the questioning. On one occasion when an actor openly showed her frustration, the director did not become angry; instead, he became condescending. At last, the actor blamed her anger on her embarrassment about doing poorly. The open conflict was denied and faded. The director used an emotional power device to save the group climate at the expense of the individual actor [cf. de Rivera and Paez, (2007), p.234].

When talking to actors in between rehearsals during this phase, I was often surprised by the level of frustration that they expressed, frustration that had not been apparent during the previous rehearsal. At one rehearsal the director changed the blocking, and the concerned actor did as he was told, quietly suggesting an alternative change. When I talked to the actor after the rehearsal he was furious:

> "And sometimes you can fall into the hands of a director that wants you to sit with your back to the audience for a long time. And all of me, all my professional knowledge, I have been working for 28 years now, says: 'NO, IT IS WRONG!" (Lars, 27 years' experience, freelance)

The director's strategy of relentlessly working through presumably eased some of the actors' temporary lack of confidence but the director also had backstage discussions with actors in between rehearsals. The actors in turn used the director or other supporting personnel as messengers or mediators to avoid conflicts within the cast (Kordsmeier, 2006), and the directors often had someone in the cast or the surrounding personnel who could give them continual updates on the climate so that they had insights about the overall climate as well as individual attitudes.

Apart from talking to the director and supporting personnel outside of the rehearsals, actors transferred conflicts to personnel not immediately involved in the rehearsals and let off steam by means of gossip backstage (Goodman and Ben-Ze'ev, 1994); rumours

about crises were vivid in the canteen, dressing rooms, etc. This way of separating the outlets for emotional expressions can be paralleled to Poder's (2004, p.215) concept of 'segmented emotion work', implying that different emotions are expressed in different settings, although in the present context it is not the emotions per se, but rather their cause that constitutes the basis for segmentation.

Mumby and Putnam (1992) argue that *tolerance of ambiguity* can be facilitated by organisational structures. In the theatre, the producer and the ensemble manager are highly ranked persons whom actors approach to state their complaints and to let off steam before opening nights. Experienced actors with high status also use the theatre executive for this purpose. Common complaints to these outside managers are that the actors feel coerced, abused, and unnoticed, and that they want to resign. The managers are well aware of the actors' emotional distress in the crisis phase and function as 'toxic handlers' (Frost, 2003) who need to cope with employee frustration. It has been argued that middle managers are the most adept handlers since they are familiar with the day-to-day work (Huy, 2002). Nevertheless, the outside handlers can also be effective precisely because they are not involved in the day-to-day work. All three positions – producer, ensemble manager and theatre executive – are long-term positions, whereas directors are contracted for specific productions. The permanent actors have a continuous relationship with these three people, while they may work with a particular director only once or occasionally, with several years between encounters. On the other hand, conflicts with a director were forgotten if the play turned out to be a success, while the persons that the actors talked about most negatively behind their backs were those in the long-term positions; their outside position made them suitable for solving conflicts, yet they were denied credit if the production was a success.

During the last phase of the rehearsal period, the actors start to take on responsibility for the performance. At the first public run-throughs of the productions I observed, several of the actors asked people from the outside to come and watch and give feedback. At this point the actors' insecurities were different from the insecurities of the start-up phase. They knew how to present their characters, but they needed to make sure that their performances were good enough. In a study on conductors, Atik (1994) describes a 'transformational stage' where the players sometimes develop the music themselves, yet stay attuned to the conductor's intentions. In an orchestra, the conductor is always present, but in the theatre this transformation is unavoidable. Whether it succeeds or not largely depends on the collaboration in the creative phase that can 'function as fuel for the whole performance period' (Alice, 12 years' experience, freelance).

In the last days before the opening night, the actors found their way back into the ensemble again and the joking and closeness reappeared. The climate became focused and there was none of the relaxation of the second phase or open disputes of the crisis phase. When the opening night arrived, peace prevailed. There was nervousness in the air, but the fear in the crisis phase had been succeeded by determination and group solidarity.

8 Conclusions

This article has used the example of a theatre production to apply bounded emotionality as a sensitising concept to tease out aspects of emotion management that would not

otherwise have been detectable. The intention was to shed light on non-instrumental ways to manage emotions – to facilitate emotion work – in situations where the goal is to produce quality performances, not to promote well-being as such.

Five of the six criteria by which bounded emotionality is defined were used to analyse the different phases in the rehearsal process. The sixth criteria, *intersubjective limitations*, will be discussed here. First, some qualifications will be made about the first five. Applying bounded emotionality to the production process makes it clear that the different aspects are interrelated and need to be understood in relation to both time and space. In relation to time, tolerance for *heterarchy of goals and values* depends on an established *community*. As described by Martin et al. (2000), these two criteria clashed in their study on The Body Shop. In the theatre, the first phase focused entirely on community, and only thereafter were diverse opinions promoted to foster creativity. This sequence in time would be hard to implement inclusively in large companies, but could work in temporary work teams. Concerning the issue of space, the separation of emotions into separate regions in the crisis phase can be understood as a way to endorse *ambiguity of feelings* without losing effectiveness. If individual frustration were to dominate the rehearsals it would impair the group climate as well as the actors' confidence in the production.

Another aspect of separation of emotions in space is the balance between private and professional emotions. In Mumby and Putnam's definition, *emergent feelings* arise in relation to a work task; they give the example of a nurse crying when a patient dies. Even though the situation is work related, the emotions do not make that distinction. Our experience of emotions is perceived in scenes, and our memory of previous scenes is continuously co-assembled when we face new scenes [Tomkins, (2008), p.668ff]. A work-related situation can thus open up for private vulnerabilities. Yet, the crying nurse needs to have the patient in focus, when adhering to the *intersubjective limitations* of the situation. It is interesting to note that the theatre has a strong culture of not letting private emotions into the rehearsals; doing so is regarded as unprofessional. Role-related emotions, however, even though they can be built on private experiences, are expected. One can speculate that, in the observed productions, the culture of treating emotional expressions as work related also kept the actors within the role sphere, not giving space for private vulnerabilities to be disclosed. Compared to other occupations, actors used humour in the same way (cf. Martin, 1999; Bolton, 2000), the difference being that it was a more deliberate and open strategy. When managing embarrassment, the actors seldom needed to hide behind a joke; the emotion was acknowledged and giggled at straight out. The strict boundary of only acknowledging role-related emotions can also be a clue to the interpretation of the situation as professional yet with room for *emotion spill*. If private and role-related emotions are separated, a nurse can deliver emotionally committed care, and even cry, yet stay professional, if the emotions are related to the work situation. *Integration of self-identity* would then imply a possibility for *emergent feelings*, but the focus on *intersubjective limitations* would maintain the interpretive frame in the work situation.

In terms of bounded emotionality, the differentiation of private, role-related and situation-related emotions explains how emotions can be bounded without turning them into instrumental products. Focusing on the climate and the sensitiveness of the group, the bounding of emotions varies depending on the phase. In the first phase, the climate is at the centre and the artists, as well as the supporting crew, are tightly focused on community. In the second phase, community is established and the boundaries are fuzzier, promoting creativity. In the third phase, the actors' sensitiveness is highlighted

and the climate-related work largely deals with keeping role-related and situation-related emotions separate. In the last phase, the actors have taken over responsibility and the climate is focused. In summary, the group climate requires careful attention in all phases. Further, the actors' heightened sensitiveness that emanates both from working with dramatic emotions and from the performance aspect of the work is vital for generating role-related emotions. At the same time, the heightened sensitiveness, particularly in the crisis phase, also lowers the threshold for situation-related emotions, which are taken care of backstage.

Using the theatre to shed light on other work organisations, particularly temporary work teams, some issues come to the fore. Collective work in temporary systems makes the climate of the group of primary interest frontstage, implying a corresponding need to manage individual emotions backstage, a separation that implies an organisational structure that allows for 'toxic handlers' (Frost, 2003), since temporary teams with tight deadlines are inclined to evoke situation-related emotions.

Creativity in a work group demands a loosening of boundaries and openness to heterarchy. For this to work without impinging on the emotional climate, community needs to be established first. In contrast to previous studies on bounded emotionality in feminist organisations where 'loving the organisation' is common [Morgen, (1994), p.670], the actors in this study loved their work, but since most of them are freelance they do not particularly care about the organisation as such, which makes the community-building phase vital. One can speculate that the manager also has to establish a secure status position (Kemper, 1990) in the community before feeling safe to allow leeway for alternative interpretations.

To sum up, collective aspects of emotion work, such as emotional climate, and individual aspects, such as situation-related frustration, often clash, and thus need to be attended to separately. In the theatre this is done by keeping role-related and situation-related emotions separate, yet the boundaries between the two constitute vulnerable points where tension tends to arise because of the differences in status of the parties involved.

The results discussed here are based on a study of one theatre. The actors, as well as the researcher involved, have worked in several theatres, which increase the validity of their experiences, although they are limited to Swedish conditions and thus not representative of theatres in an international perspective. Nevertheless, the resulting analytical themes can be expected to be useful as sensitising concepts to investigate the bounding of emotions in other organisations, and in some respects also as inspiration for organisational efforts to facilitate emotion management.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1   In Sweden, actors have the right to retire at the age of 59 and must retire at the age of 67. However, many work as freelance actors long after their retirement.