

Using Participatory Action Research and Photo Methods to Explore Higher Education Administration as an Emotional Endeavor

Leslie D. Gonzales

Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina USA

Rodolfo Rincones

University of Texas El Paso, El Paso, Texas USA

In this paper, we build on Wood's (2010, 2012) recent call to consider higher education as a work place that conjures emotion among constituents, particularly positional leaders, like department chairs. Using a participatory action research and photo-enhanced methodological approach, we illustrate the emotional labor that was poured into the work of one department chair. Consequently, our work yields three contributions. First, we counter the overly rationalistic depiction of organizational leadership research and thinking. Second, our work suggests that if we conceptualize and understand emotion and emotional labor as a form of labor compelled by organizational norms, rules, and relationships, it becomes possible to consider how institutions can and should better acknowledge this aspect of labor and how it can support individuals in these facets of work life (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Fisk & Friesen, 2012). Finally, we show how non-mainstream methodologies can help researchers explore multidimensional and understudied topics, like emotion and emotional labor, in studies of higher education. Keywords: Department Chairs, Emotional Labor, Participatory Action Research

Arlie Hochschild (1979, 1983) introduced the theory of “emotional labor” to describe how the display and containment of particular emotions, although unacknowledged, was part and parcel of one’s work expectations. Of this, Hochschild wrote “when the manager gives the company his enthusiastic faith, when the airline stewardess gives her passengers her psyched-up but quasi-genuine reassuring warmth, what is sold is an aspect of emotional labour power” (p. 569). Since Hochschild first introduced the theory, emotional labor in the work place has been solidified as a line of scholarly inquiry (Doughtery & Drumheller, 2006; Fineman, 2000), particularly among those who study large corporate and private industries (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Fisk & Friesen, 2012).

However, few scholars have considered universities as work places that involve emotional labor (Miller, 2001; Woods, 2010, 2012). This is particularly true in the scholarship that addresses higher education administration. A review of literature on higher education administration yields three overarching themes that describe higher education administrators and their practice: (a) an overly rational account of organizational life (Kezar & Carducci, 2007; Leathwood & Hey, 2009; Owens, 1991); (b) a heroic, andocentric depiction of administration (Bensimon, 1995; Kezar & Lester, 2009); and/or (c) a structural heaviness and managerial culture that bears down on leader actions (Davies & Bansel, 2005; Rhoades, 2001). Reference to emotion is almost entirely absent among the higher education administration literature. Yet, other studies illustrate that higher education administration, especially the role of department chairs, is fraught with tension (Benoit, 2005), which suggests that emotions are likely to be a part of their work experience (Fisk & Friesen, 2012).

To this end, the purpose of this paper is to highlight the importance and relevance of the consideration of emotion through a case study of one department chair at a doctoral granting university in the U.S. Because our research concerns lean heavily into subjective concerns, knowledge, and experiences, we utilized Participatory Action Research (PAR) and photo-elicitation methods (Guillemin & Drew, 2010; Harper, 2002; Metcalfe, 2012; Wang & Burris, 1997). To this point, Woods (2012) urged scholars to resist mainstream and/or positivistic approaches in studies of emotion in order to honor the complexities of the topic. According to Woods, emotion goes farther and deeper than affect, which is often studied with a psychological understanding of human life, where scholars control for life's many variables and isolate personal reports of satisfaction or stress.

In other words, studies of emotion and emotional labor assume that both are relational, contextual, and inherently social phenomena. Sieben and Wettergren (2010) explained that, "emotions do not 'happen' to people...but are part and parcel of the social and cultural world we live in" (p. 36). Thus, studies of emotion and emotional labor are not simply about rating one's personal sense of happiness, but they are intended to understand how such happiness is explicitly or implicitly expected via norms and conventions, leveraged by organizational peers/leaders and used for organizational purposes (Fisk & Friesen, 2012). To this point, most scholars of emotional labor argue that emotion and emotional labor are rarely acknowledged as labor in and of itself. Thus, we are of the perspective that if we can conceptualize and understand emotion and emotional labor as a form of labor compelled by organizational norms and rules, even tacitly, it becomes possible to consider how organizations can and should better acknowledge this aspect of labor and support individuals in these facets of work life (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Fisk & Friesen, 2012). Furthermore, if we position emotional labor as a topic pertaining to organizational leaders, then work, like ours, provides important insights for those who are involved in the preparation of leaders, such as educational leadership faculty. We address such insights and implications in the closing section of this paper.

In the next section, though, we discuss the scholarship that addresses the role and experiences of department chairs. Then, we present the literature that considers emotion and emotional labor in higher education. In the third major section, we describe our theoretical lens before moving on to describe our methodology, findings, and conclusions.

Literature Review

The Role and Experiences of Department Chairs

King (1997) and Aziz et al. (2005) agreed that department chairs have multiple roles and responsibilities. Department chairs oversee technical matters like logistics and coordination in addition to more substantive issues like ensuring accurate communication between upper level administrators and the faculty (Wepner, D'Onofrio, Willis, & Wilhite, 2002). Additionally, all of these researchers suggest that department chairs must work to maintain the academic and scholarly integrity of the departments. To this point, Jones (2011) explained that department chairs "occupy a position at the heart of the organization" (p. 280) because they are charged to look after the units that serve as the most immediate academic home to faculty and students within a university. As such, chairs find themselves amid major decisions pertaining to curriculum, teaching loads, and faculty evaluation. In this position, they are charged to protect and advance department interests while balancing potentially contradictory university demands. Of this, Jones (2011) wrote:

Efficient and knowledgeable management is of considerable importance to any departmental entity, but under effective leadership much of it should be delegated to well-informed non-academic administrators. In this way [department chairs] are in a position to continue to contribute to their disciplinary area as viable scholars...This emphasis on leadership is an outworking of the postulate that academic departments and related units play a vital role in establishing the ethos of the institution. (p. 280)

As Jones' writing suggests, chairs are expected to act as a buffer who will protect the professional orientations of the faculty, promote the interests of the students, and satisfy the demands of upper administration and external accountability agencies (Benoit, 2005). Extensive work by Gmelch and colleagues (Gmelch, 1991; Gmelch & Burns, 1994; Gmelch & Gates, 1995, 1998; Gmelch, Wolverton, Sarros, & Wolverton, 1999) has suggested that, as a result of their multiple, sometimes conflicting roles, department chairs experience exorbitant levels of stress.

In sum, what is already known about the role and experience of department chairs suggests that emotion and emotional labor are viable lines of inquiry. In the next section, we consider the scholarship focused on emotion in higher education. Although this literature does not specifically address administrators or chairs, it is helpful to consider the ways that emotion and emotional labor have been positioned as matters of import within higher education.

Emotion Scholarship in Higher Education Studies

Historically, leadership, organizational, and workplace based literatures have suggested that emotions have no role in organizational matters (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Owens, 1991; Zapf, 2002). This is particularly true in the case of higher education and academia (Miller, 2001; Neumann, 2009; Smith, 1987; Woods, 2010, 2012). Traditional conceptions of organizations were grounded in a scientific epistemologies and orientations (Hochschild, 1979, 1983; Smith, 1987, 1990) where matters of personal biographies or subjectivities were best set aside (Smith, 1987). Consider the following description of educational administration from Owens (1991):

Emphasis was on *efficiency* (that is, low per-unit cost), *rigid application* of detailed, uniform work procedures (often calling for minute-by-minute, standard operating procedures for teachers to use each day throughout a school system) and detailed *accounting procedures*. (p. 39, italics added)

Today, the scientific, rational, and accountability oriented approach to higher education administration continues to abound (see Ball, 2000; Bensimon, 1995; Jones, 2011; Leathwood & Hey, 2009). For example, research shows that faculty members are expected to document every academic activity to appease accountability and audit agencies; such reports are to encase quantifiable, objective expressions, not emotional or personal reflections and insights (Bansel, Davies, Gannon, & Linnel, 2008; Davies & Bansel, 2005). At the same time, administrators, especially those that occupy a sort of "middle manager position" (Jones, 2011), like department chairs, are expected to leverage incentives and/or punitive actions to maximize faculty performance.

Although higher education administration and evaluative practices are often framed and promoted with the language of objectivity and rationality, there are scholars whose work shows that systems built on scientific premises demand emotional investments as well

(Fineman, 1993, 2000). For example, Miller (2001) described how scholars, students, and administrators reacted after a campus tragedy. There were moments, Miller noted, that the administrators expressed emotion, but those moments were quickly reframed or suppressed as administrators developed emails and press releases to encourage everyone to move forward and look ahead. Miller commented on and problematized the pervasive rationality that guided administrator behavior, and noted how administrators anxiously worked to get the university “back to business” (also see Chávez, 2009). Making sense of the administrators’ behaviors, Miller noted that the “bureaucratic approaches to organizational theory...have emphasized the duality between rationality and emotion in the workplace” (p. 594). It was, Miller explained, as if campus administrators believed the only way to restore the operations of the university were to bracket the memory and emotions spurred by the tragedy and push forward with more rational behaviors. Yet, Miller noted that the suppression of emotion in the name of rationality is itself an emotional act; other scholars of emotion and emotional labor agree that such suppression can yield dissatisfaction and dissonance within individual’s personal experiences of emotion when away from work (Fineman, 1993, 2000; Fisk & Friesen, 2012; Hochschild, 1983).

Another process in higher education which is touted as rational and scientific, but which is underlined by emotion and requires emotional labor is the research, writing, and publication process, as described by Ek, Cerecer, Alanís, and Rodríguez (2010). For example, scholars suggest that to proclaim a personal passion for one’s scholarly work remains taboo in academia, meaning that the personal foundations of one’s scholarship (Neumann, 2009) and the emotional twists and turns involved in writing and publishing are very rarely acknowledged (Ek et al., 2010; Woods, 2012; Varga-Dobai, 2012). Ek et al. (2010) described how the publication process is dressed with the language of rationality and detachment: reviews are blinded, judged only on “merit,” and often assigned numerical scores. Yet, because the core of one’s writing is often anchored in one’s personal biography and politics (Delgado-Bernal, 2007; Neumann, 2009; Varga-Dobai, 2012), the reception of evaluations incites emotion. Writers brace for the reviewers’ comments and attempt to remove their personal stake as they read reviewers’ notes, which were prepared by reviewers who attempted to set aside their personal biases.

In sum, there is some scholarship in the field of higher education that has focused on emotion and emotional labor. Specifically, Miller’s (2001) work highlights the emotional labor involved in performing rationally whereas others have written more generally about the emotional labor involved in writing and publication. So, while emotion and emotional labor are not absolutely new considerations in the higher education field, there is much room to explore emotion and emotional labor with regard to higher education administrators. Following the lead of the scholarship reviewed thus far, we seek to study emotion and emotional labor through a sociological lens to focus on the ways that emotion and emotional labor are guided by socio and cultural rules, norms, and interactions.

Conceptual Lens: Emotional Labor and Emotion in the Workplace

In this project, we intend to highlight higher education administration, and universities, more generally, as work and workplaces that command emotion. Most studies of emotion in the work place are situated in the work of Arlie Hochschild (1979, 1983). Hochschild noted that emotions do not happen to people, but that they are induced in the context of relationships, situations, and broader social, cultural, and political phenomena. Hochschild argued that expectations related to emotional labor are drawn from “feeling rules” that society has developed about what one should feel, how one should make another feel, and, in terms of labor, how this prescription can lead to preferable (sometimes profitable)

outcomes. More specifically, Hochschild studied how emotions are built into the expectations of labor in contemporary society. Of this, Hochschild (1983) wrote:

[Emotional] labor requires one to induce or suppress fuelling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others ...this kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor deep and integral to our individuality. Beneath the difference between physical and emotional labor there lies a similarity in the possible cost of doing the work: the worker can become estranged or alienated from an aspect of self. (p. 7)

The connection between one's labor and sense of self (or loss of self) is clear in Hocschild's writing. Hochschild worried that the emotional labor expected of individuals in the work place would strip their abilities to authentically engage their emotional sense of self when away from work. Perhaps this is why most scholars on emotion foreground their work in the assumption that emotions are linked to greater individual wellbeing (e.g., Fisk & Friesen, 2012; Woods, 2012; Zapf, 2002). Thus, a study of emotional labor is essentially a study of broad and powerful rules and norms that have been institutionalized by society, and which bear down on the individual level.

Scholars of organizations have taken up Hochschild's basic premise: that organizations can and do make use of worker's emotions (Dougherty & Drumheller, 2006; Fineman, 1993; Fisk & Friesen, 2012; Miller, 2001; Sieben & Wettergren, 2010). Some of the more recent literature goes to greater length to distinguish between emotional labor and emotion management (Fineman, 1993, 2000; Sieben & Wettergren, 2010). With emotion management, employees are expected to act rationally or to press down emotions. Of this, Fineman (1993) explained:

Many professional workers . . . are paid for their skill in *emotion management*.... The feeling rules are implicit in their professional "discipline" (an apt term)—"rational," "scientific," "caring," "objective." Benign detachment disguises, and defends against, any private feelings of pain, despair, fear, attraction, revulsion or love; feelings which would otherwise interfere with the professional relationship. There are costs if the mask slips—perhaps a feeling of unease... or more seriously, expulsion from the professional community for revealing "inappropriate" emotions. (p. 19)

Fineman's notion of emotion management reflects Miller's (2001) description of the administrators who urged the university to move forward, quickly and bravely, through the campus tragedy. It is important to note that the expectation to manage and thus hide emotion suggests that rationality is not an emotion. Yet, the pushing down, muting, or bracketing of emotions in order to appear rational and detached is itself arduous work (Chávez, 2009; Dougherty & Drumheller, 2006; Ek et al., 2010). On this point, Dougherty and Drumheller (2006) noted:

...despite the privileging of rationality in Western organizations, organizational members certainly do not stop experiencing emotions when they think about, talk about, and do work...Workers, then, must tread a treacherous path between the emotions they experience and the socialized expectations of rationality in the workplace. (p. 216)

Based on the literature reviewed here, we suggest that the theory of emotional labor contains two major tenets. We used both to guide our analytical work. The first tenet is emotional work, which is the conjuring up of emotion. Emotional work is best exemplified in Hochschild's (1979, 1983) description of the flight attendants who were constantly asked to conjure up a happy performance and serve with a smile. The second tenet is emotional management, which is the suppression of emotion. Emotional management was highlighted in Miller's (2001) description of administrators who wanted to move quickly through the campus tragedy to re-establish the university as stable, objective, and predictable. This dual conceptual approach guided our thinking about and exploring the emotional labor involved in one department chair's experience.

Methodology

Two complimentary methodologies guided our work. Our primary methodological approach was Participatory Action Research (PAR; Guillemin & Drew, 2010; Wang, 1999), which intentionally ascribes a position of power to the research participant. Additionally, our PAR approach was complemented by photo-enhanced methodology. To complement the PAR design, we also used photo-enhanced research methods. Specifically, we followed the principles of photo-elicitation methodology (Guillemin & Drew, 2010; Hansen-Ketchum & Myrick, 2008; Wang, 1999), which does not take photos as objects of analysis, but as entry points to discuss "what is meaningful... [yet] unsayable" (Guillemin & Drew, 2010, p. 11). Following the PAR tradition, we see our work as "an alternative to positivist ways of knowing by *listening to and learning*" (Wang, 1999, p. 186) from a knowledgeable and agentic research participant. In this way, our methodological approach followed Wood's (2010, 2012) call to deploy non-mainstream methodologies and epistemologies to explore the complexities of human emotion.

After receiving clearance from the lead author's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I (Leslie/lead author) asked Rodolfo to participate in a study about emotional labor in higher education. Rodolfo was familiar with the scholarship on emotional labor and had used the framework in some of his own research; this allowed us to move through the project with enhanced ease. Furthermore and in line with PAR methodology, Rodolfo's active participation in the project allowed us to co-create knowledge as we utilized the lens of emotional labor to study his experience as a higher education administrator. We began with my asking Rodolfo to take photos of images or situations that led to or demanded emotional labor. We agreed that we would use the photos not as objects of analysis, but as tools to help us, especially Rodolfo, re-enter the story that required the emotional labor.

Methods

Per the IRB clearance, the data collection methods for this project included (a) photo-taking; (b) photo-captioning; (c) field notes, and (d) a loosely-structured interview (Keats, 2009, p. 185). The IRB parameters stated that references to Rodolfo's university or individuals that he works with would be masked. We also specified that pictures would not include any identifiable markers of the university or individuals. Accordingly, we limit the display of photos in this paper. However, because we used the photos only as methodological tools to re-enter a particular story or situation that demanded or represented emotional labor, this is not problematic.

Together, we co-designed a time line to help us structure the research project. We agreed that Rodolfo would take photos during fall 2011 and email them to me. Acting as both researcher and participant, Rodolfo decided that he would add captions to the photos in order

to help him reconnect to the story behind the picture taking (Keats, 2009). These captions were also treated as data. Near the end of fall 2011, we sat down face to face to talk about the photos, but we also conversed about them via telephone from time to time in spring 2012. I took notes on these conversations and we also treated the notes as data. Below, we describe the guidelines for Rodolfo's photo-taking and for our interview.

It is well documented that participants involved in photo-enhanced research prefer to have a sense of the project and its aims (Hansen-Ketchum & Myrick, 2008; Wang, 1999). Accordingly, Rodolfo and I developed some overarching guidelines for photo-taking. A reading of the literature on the role of the chair, the current social, cultural, and political contexts of administration in higher education (Aziz et al., 2005; Jones, 2011) and the scholarship focused on emotion in the context of higher education (Miller, 2001; Neumann, 2009; Woods, 2010, 2012) allowed us to develop a set of flexible parameters for both data collection methods.

Specifically, through our readings on the role of higher education chairs and deans, we agreed that Rodolfo would attempt to capture photos that expressed emotional labor in relation to the various responsibilities he held as a department chair. These responsibilities included: (a) administration; (b) teaching; (c) research and scholarship; and (d) service. We attempted to study the concept of emotional labor and its relationship to working in higher education administration by structuring photo-taking and interviews according to the roles and expectations common to department chairs. This strategy aligns well with Wood's (2012) argument that emotion in the work place must be understood as a combination of both individual and contextual features and Hochschild's (1983) conception of emotional labor as an organizational level manifestation of broader socio-cultural rules and norms.

The interview began with broad questions, in which I asked Rodolfo to talk generally about his work. Then, I asked more specifically about his different responsibilities and what kinds of situations might incite emotion. I asked Rodolfo to explain what he does in response to those situations and with those emotions. The photos were particularly helpful in pinpointing the specific issues and situations that demanded emotional labor. Following the principles of PAR, the interview and related phone exchanges were conversational in tone.

Analysis

Although we collectively participated in the analysis of the multiple data sources, I (Leslie) manually and deductively coded (Saldaña, 2012) the interview transcript, picture captions, and field notes ahead of Rodolfo. With Rodolfo's 70-hour workweek, we agreed that it was most practical for me to take the lead on coding. However, an audit trail helped me keep track of my coding decisions. Specifically, I color-coded the different pieces of data based on the following questions: (a) What kinds of emotions did Rodolfo mention; (b) When was "emotion work" required and what kind of emotions did Rodolfo conjure up in his emotion work; and (c) When was "emotion management" required and what kind of emotions did Rodolfo manage?

Again, I developed an audit trail to trace my decision-making processes in order to describe why I coded an item as "emotion work" versus "emotion management." I shared my audit trail via phone conversation and/or electronic email exchanges with Rodolfo, so that he could review and provide feedback for the analysis over multiple iterations.

Rodolfo's analysis of the data and review of my coding work helped us tie the different forms of emotional labor to different aspects of his work as an administrator. This was particularly important because, again, the goal of this paper is to highlight the kind of emotional labor poured into higher education administration, and we were particularly interested in pinpointing the particular situations that seemed to demand emotion work and/or

management from Rodolfo. Together, we were able to identify moments of emotion work and moments of emotion management. We agreed that Rodolfo tended to employ these different forms of emotional labor in response to particular situations.

We established trustworthiness for our analysis by employing a number of practices that are often used to help researchers temper biases (Maxwell, 1992). First of all, we triangulated the analysis, over time, by examining the interview transcript alongside Rodolfo's photo captions and field notes from our multiple conversations. We returned to the scholarship on emotional labor and higher education administration to consider our work in relation to the broader literature. Connections to the literature suggest that we have detected and are making arguments that others have also articulated. Finally, sitting together with the photos and audit trail notes was particularly helpful because it also provided the opportunity to talk through insights that surprised us. For example, as we discuss in the findings, emotional labor is not always a one-way process; Rodolfo benefitted from the emotional labor of some of his colleagues from time to time.

Finally, we believe that our on-going dialogues enabled what Lather (1986) has described as "catalytic validity." Specifically, catalytic validity refers to the degree to which the research process moves the participants to a heightened understanding of the subject and energized participants with new insights and knowledge. To this end, in the closing moments of the interview, Rodolfo noted:

...I consider myself very emotional, a very sensitive person. Really, how do you represent that? Make it so that, you know, that it touches you? How do I represent an image of that? [This methodology]: it's very counter to the current ideology of productivity, of coldness of productivity and collaboration...I think exploring this avenue, I think is very counter, very counter to the current ideology...

Findings

We approached this work with a critical lens, which aligns with our PAR approach, to examine to what extent Rodolfo found himself pouring emotional labor into his work, and what kinds of situations led to such work. As noted earlier, it is only by positioning emotional labor as expectations and norms that are institutionally crafted and maintained that organizational leadership might consider addressing this facet of organizational life, which bears down on member well-being and one's sense of self (Fisk & Friesen, 2012). When we examined the data in response to our first guiding question "what kinds of emotions did Rodolfo mention," we consistently came across the word "frustration." In fact, Rodolfo used the word "frustrate/frustration" 20 times in a 90-minute interview. Other frequently used words included "tired" or "stressed." These findings align with the previous literature on the experience of department heads (Gmelch & Gates, 1995, 1998). There were, however, a number of times that Rodolfo described joyful moments:

I save emails where students ask me "Dr. [name] when are you going to teach us again?" And, well, [I think] maybe something happened in their heads. It's hard to know...but when I see those things, I'm very pleased.

We point to these noted feelings because they provide contextual information about Rodolfo's experience. However, they also help us distinguish between affect, which are felt internally, and emotional labor, which may be felt internally, but is displayed externally as part of larger social, cultural, and organizational norms, rules and expectations.

Much of Rodolfo's emotional labor stemmed from his position in the intersection of multiple different cultures and constituencies. An exemplary comment of this was provided when Rodolfo noted:

...I see myself as a "chair of the faculty." I don't know if that's the right word. I'm not an administrator. I'm not here to punish faculty or see that they are doing the right thing or not. I don't see myself at all that way...but that puts me in a lot of difficult situations with the college administration ...I'm always getting in difficult situations with the administration. We see administration very differently.

In the quote above, Rodolfo declares that he sees himself as the "chair of the faculty" rather than a "chair for the administration." When asked to elaborate on this comment, he compared it to a similar analogy used to describe the difference between a "player's coach" or a "staff's coach." A player's coach, like a chair of the faculty, upholds the faculty's professional discretion and orientation, and protects the department as an academic scholarly home. A staff's coach, like a chair for the administration, manages the technical aspects of the department and might enforce rules and practices that interfere with the faculty's philosophy.

Rodolfo's buffering between these two major constituencies (administration and faculty) required extensive emotional labor. Thus, several of the pictures that Rodolfo shared were related to his being positioned between upper administration and his faculty colleagues. For example, one image was an email from a high-level administrator pressuring Rodolfo to convince faculty to enroll in grant writing workshops. The administrator aptly reminded Rodolfo that the tenure and promotion committee considers such criterion. Alongside this email image, Rodolfo shared an image of another email from a colleague. The colleague cajoled Rodolfo for a message he had just passed to the faculty from upper administration at a recent meeting. Taken together, this pair of photos depicted the kind of in-between space in which Rodolfo constantly worked to satisfy upper level administrators, faculty colleagues, and his own personal commitments. To this point, Rodolfo took seriously the fact that the department faculty had unanimously voted for him to serve as chair for two consecutive terms. He felt that his department colleagues entrusted him to preserve the academic integrity of the department. Of this, Rodolfo stated:

I really believe in faculty governance. I really respect the discussions and what can come out of that. I really believe that the more people [we have] contributing to the issues...as hard as that might be.... I always recognize that when we discuss some issues you're going to have people against, in favor, or just completely oblivious about the issue, but whatever comes out are always a mutual product, a mutual decision...

This comment captures the heart of what Rodolfo wanted to accomplish as a departmental chair. It also reflected the charge that he felt his colleagues had given to him. Below, we show that Rodolfo poured an extensive amount of emotional labor into balancing the expectations of his department with the upper level demands of the administration.

In keeping with the conceptualization of emotional labor, we suggest that Rodolfo's emotional labor entailed emotion work, or the conjuring of emotions, as well as emotion management, or the suppression of emotion, particularly any emotion that would not be deemed professional or acceptable. Emotion work was common to Rodolfo's experience within his department among his colleagues. There, he conjured up openness, hope, and even vulnerability. However, outside his department and particularly in interactions with upper

level administrators, Rodolfo performed emotion management. Specifically, Rodolfo challenged policies and practices that he believed marginalized his department or non-tenured faculty members in his department, but he did so with the language of rationality and objectivity, even detachment. In other words, Rodolfo attempted to advance the interests of his departments by suppressing anger and sometimes hurt.

Emotion Work

Again, inside his department, Rodolfo carried out emotion work. For example, Rodolfo kept an open-door policy, which often meant prolonged and labored discussion of small and large issues, alike. Rodolfo provided a good example of this:

I spend a lot of time, for example, talking to people, chasing different opinions, asking questions to make a decision, but to make a decision that is shared by everybody, that is generated by everybody.

Being available and seeking out multiple voices might seem a rather ordinary practice, but Rodolfo described how such openness required patience and flexibility. Of this, he said:

Just this morning, I came in early because I needed to prepare the minutes for a faculty meeting.... One of the faculty members came in and took about 40 minutes of my time...I wish he had spent five minutes in my office, but it took longer. I was desperate to go back to my minutes, which I didn't have time to do, and I ended up printing what I had without revising them. When we went to the meeting, I distributed the minutes, and sure enough the person who took my time found the error and noted it.... That to me is part of the emotion work.... I have seen people do otherwise and say "Sorry, I don't have time. Maybe we can talk later." I have never done that.... I have never told someone. "I'm sorry I can't talk right now. I'm busy." ...That is very taxing.

The quote above illustrates the kind of emotion work that Rodolfo poured into his labor as a chair. Furthermore, even after long administrative meetings, Rodolfo made efforts at openness and kept his department informed. He noted:

I keep [the faculty] informed of all my discussions, what goes on in the meetings with the upper administration. Right after the [administrative] meetings, I come up.... I talk to everybody individually, or I get a few [of them], have a cup of coffee with them and talk to two of them. I always tell them what is going on: what are the issues and what are the discussions. In a way, it's my way of saying, "You know, I am frustrated. How do you feel?"

Being open and vulnerable, and yet available and empathetic is emotion work because it often requires that Rodolfo conjure up a particular disposition (Fisk & Friesen, 2012; Hochschild, 1979, 1983). What is particularly interesting is that Rodolfo described how he shared his frustration with his colleagues, and allowed himself to be vulnerable. Rodolfo's faculty colleagues seemed to appreciate this openness and reciprocated. For instance, in the quote that follows, Rodolfo described how his departmental colleagues made themselves available to him at moments where he believed he had failed as a chair. Consider what senior faculty members said to Rodolfo when he unsuccessfully attempted to garner more travel resources for junior, tenure-track faculty in the department.

The tenured faculty professors say to me “Forget about my travel money. If you need my 500 dollars to send one of the untenured faculty members [to a conference]: use it.” So, then a tenure-track professor might have one thousand bucks to travel. I see this as a very good gesture.

Gestures, like the ones offered by senior faculty in Rodolfo’s department, rendered a more hopeful Rodolfo - an emotion that had been built up not by Rodolfo alone, but through the actions and exchanges he had with his colleagues.

Within his department, then, Rodolfo worked as an open, flexible, and vulnerable leader. In turn, he benefitted from reciprocal acts of vulnerability and openness. It is interesting to note that Rodolfo administered his department in a way that counters the overarching perspective on higher education administration. Specifically, much of the literature on higher education administration characterizes administrators as managers imbued with the ideologies of managerialism, accountability, and neoliberalism (e.g., Rhoades, 2001; Schrecker, 2010), and yet Rodolfo’s actions were far from managerial or market-oriented. In the next section, the emotion management characteristic of Rodolfo’s work is described.

Emotion Management

When outside the department, Rodolfo constantly performed emotion management. Rodolfo offered specific examples of situations that required him to manage his emotions. For example, Rodolfo described a conflict regarding the upper administration’s desire to have all departments offer the majority of courses online. Yet, Rodolfo’s faculty had previously agreed to limit on-line offerings in order to work closely with students. Rodolfo worked to preserve the professional discretion of his department and refused to move courses online. Rodolfo said “Our dean says ‘All the programs need to be online...I feel that there is a rock there.’” Rodolfo explained that his department’s decision to maintain the majority of courses in a face-to-face format were constantly being questioned, meaning that working or talking to the administration was like working with a rock (Figure 1).



Figure 1. This picture represents how working with the college administration is like an uphill task, like picking at a rock – Rodolfo.

At first, this issue may seem trivial, not tragic or dramatic enough to deserve closer consideration. However, it is a situation that frustrated Rodolfo. Yet, in his responses to the administration, Rodolfo suppressed his feelings. He explained that his department could not, in good faith, offer all classes in an on-line format. He explained that students in the

department preferred hybrid course formats. In other words, Rodolfo did not describe the frustration he or his faculty felt regarding the overreach of administrators into the faculty domain of curriculum decision-making; instead, he pointed to data generated in student evaluations.

Rodolfo explained how these challenges led to conflicts between him and the upper administration. Ultimately, he believed that these conflicts damaged the kind of resources allocated to his department. Consequently, Rodolfo carried guilt, as displayed below:

Sometimes, I feel that maybe [I have the] wrong approach...my approach...it's not brown-nosing. Maybe, if I would take a different approach, we would get the benefits of that. But no, that would be betraying who I am and who we are as a department. I don't think that the faculty would want that; you know, a chair that brown-noses.

One of the most critical situations that Rodolfo had to work through involved changes to the faculty evaluation system. Worried that the change to the evaluation system would disadvantage junior faculty, particularly scholars who tended to publish in non-mainstream journals and on topics at the edge of the field, Rodolfo challenged elements of the new evaluation system, with support of the faculty. Rodolfo elaborated his concerns about the new faculty evaluation system as he spoke about a specific tenure and promotion case. The issue was highly emotional for Rodolfo. As Rodolfo spoke, his tone changed and he used his hands to animate certain points. Rodolfo offered the following details:

This scholar may not have 20 publications. The scholar's contribution to the field may be small, but it is important. You know, opening up new lines of inquiry, thinking about [topic]. Nobody does that [topic], but that is the hard thing. You know, when you go to academia and you start writing about a topic [that] nobody cares about, and they don't understand...

During the interview, it was evident that Rodolfo was passionate about this scholar's work, and more generally, about the idea of academic freedom and inquiry. Yet, he worked extremely hard to reframe and manage his emotions as he prepared to address the administration about the tenure case. He described how he planned to present the case to administration:

I'm about to write two letters in support of the scholar's case...It's been laboring in my mind, "What am I going to say? How am I going to do that?" If it is a matter of counting, well that's (Rodolfo paused) -- I think I am going to go at the issue by saying: "we are trying to build a culture of collaboration and understanding. It has to be built with collegiality, and we are pretty close to having that now. If we yank somebody out, that will create holes. If we bring somebody in, it will take time to see if it's going to work, and we have history that, in our case, it doesn't work."

Rodolfo's narrative on this particular situation is illustrative of emotion management (Fisk & Friesen, 2012; Sieben & Wettergren, 2010). One moment Rodolfo was describing the tenure case with passion and expression, making the case with emotion, striking the table to make his points. He honored this scholar's work, particularly that his scholar demonstrated a unique approach to scholarly inquiry. Accordingly, Rodolfo refused to evaluate the scholar's record on the basis of numbers. However, when he described his plan for advocating for this scholar, he explained that he would use the language of rationality, efficiency, and

management. In essence, Rodolfo planned to anchor his argument in organizational efficiency rather than advocate on any other basis.

Discussion and Implications

Our discussion has three aims. First, we discuss the kind of emotional labor that Rodolfo poured into his work as a department chair. Then, we consider how participatory action research (PAR) enhanced by photo elicitation methods provided a strategy to learn about higher education administration in a different way. Finally, we highlight practical implications.

That most of Rodolfo's emotional labor related to the narrow space he occupied between the upper administration and his department is not surprising. Just as the prior literature suggests, Rodolfo struggled to balance between the expectations of his department colleagues, his commitment to academic freedom and integrity, and the demands of the upper administration (Aziz et al., 2005; Jones, 2011; King, 1997). Again, like other studies have shown, these tensions resulted in high levels of stress for Rodolfo (Gmelch & Gates, 1995, 1998). However, in this work, we show a greater depth of Rodolfo's emotion. We show how Rodolfo conjured emotions and suppressed emotions and how these acts of emotional labor were contingent on context and social relationships.

Within his department, Rodolfo conjured emotions of openness, empathy, and vulnerability. Other scholars have documented how airline attendants (Hochschild, 1983), lawyers, professors (Bellas, 1999; Zhang & Zhu, 2008), nurses, and even personal trainers (George, 2008) are expected to engage in similar emotion work (Wharton, 2009). George (2008) discussed how personal trainers conjure up excitement for their clients. Professors have been described as putting on exciting and engaging performances to motivate their students (Bellas, 1999; Zhang & Zhu, 2008). Just as airline attendants worked to be happy and empathetic for their passengers (Hochschild, 1983), Rodolfo worked to be open, empathetic, and vulnerable in interactions with the faculty and staff within his department.

When outside of the department, Rodolfo strove to advance the integrity and resources of his department. For example, he managed frustration and suppressed hurt in order to ensure that his department had a fair chance at accessing resources and advancing junior scholars. When outside the department, we showed how Rodolfo managed his emotions by reframing them with the widely accepted and legitimized language of organizational efficiency and rationality. To be heard and taken seriously as a leader, Rodolfo complied with wider rules and expectations pertaining to administration and leadership. In other words, he pushed down his anger and worked to approach problems like a "professional." Sieben and Wettergren (2010) described this kind of emotion management as follows:

[Emotion management] renders explicit the display and embrace of "positive" emotions...while it requires the control and management of "negative" ones (anger, jealousy, envy, resentment, disappointment, sadness, ironic, or disengaged distance). Yet, the contemporary focus on emotions is not equal to "letting emotions out" rather it recognizes their existence...while simultaneously demanding their use in accordance with norms of "intelligent" management of emotions. (p. 4)

Although Rodolfo pushed down anger and hurt and utilized language that reflected the logics of organizational efficiency and functionality, our multi-faceted approach to this inquiry, especially the coupling of photos with interview data, highlighted how this was not a

rational or objective experience for Rodolfo at all, but one that was fraught with emotion. We discuss how our methodological approach renders potentially fruitful implications next.

In this study, we heeded Woods' (2012) suggestion to adopt non-mainstream methods to study emotion in the workplace. Specifically, we used participatory action research enhanced by photo research methods to explore a complex topic: that of emotion and emotional labor. Using photos as a methodological device helped Rodolfo to re-enter some of the complexities and emotional aspects of his work. It allowed us to present knowledge with different forms and to invite readers into a more multi-dimensional conception of Rodolfo's emotional labor. In other words, the participatory nature and photos helped us transcend the discursive culture and traditional representations of knowledge in order to shine a different light on the practice of higher education administration. We hope that others move forward with such innovative methods, particularly in the higher education and education related fields, where methods and approaches remain lodged in traditional, post-positivist conceptions of knowledge (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Owens, 1991).

We close with implications relevant to those who prepare leaders for the educational field. Above all, we have offered a picture of higher education administration that is not typically discussed in leadership preparation programs. If we consider the insights shared by Rodolfo, leadership preparation might be framed with a more multi-dimensional lens that includes how larger socio-cultural norms and rules intersect with individual leaders in ways that compel emotion work and emotion management. We suggest that emotional labor is a concept that could easily be threaded through higher education leadership course work. Rodolfo's reflections, for example, could help students reflect on the kind of leader they want to be, what that will mean to their work experience and how they will work towards such goals. These insights also present a realistic picture of the emotional toll that leaders often endure, but one that goes beyond the notion of stress. Additionally, such insights could be used to help leaders consider the sort of emotional labor that is expected of members within the organization they lead. Ultimately, our suggestions are anchored in the fundamental concerns that Hochschild (1983) first articulated about emotional labor: that individuals become estranged from their sense of self and their ability to authentically feel when away from work (Fisk & Friesen, 2012). We suggest that if leaders consider emotional labor and its potential tolls, a more humane approach to leadership and daily work life might be engendered.

References

- Ashforth, B. E., & Humphrey, R. H. (1993). Emotional labor in service roles: The influence of identity. *Academy of Management Review*, 18(1), 88-115.
- Aziz, S., Mullins, M. E., Balzer, W. K., Grauer, E., Burnfield, J. L., Lodato, M. A., & Cohen-Powless, M. A. (2005). Understanding the training needs of department chairs. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30(5), 571-593.
- Ball, S. J. (2000). Performativities and fabrications in the education economy: Towards the performative society? *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 27(2), 1-23.
- Bansel, P., Davies, B., Gannon, S., & Linnell, S. (2008). Technologies of audit at work on the writing subject: a discursive analysis. *Studies in Higher Education*, (33)6, 673-683.
- Bellas, M. L. (1999). Emotional labor in academia: The case of professors. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 561(1), 96-110.
- Benoit, P. (2005). Leadership excellence: Constructing the role of department. *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*, 3(1). Retrieved from <http://contentcat.fhsu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15732coll4/id/124/rec/1>

- Bensimon, E. M. (1995). Total quality management in the academy: A rebellious reading. *Harvard Educational Review* 65(4), 593-611.
- Brief, A. P., & Weiss, H. M. (2002). Organizational behavior: Affect in the workplace. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53(1), 279-307.
- Chávez, A. F. (2009). Leading in the borderlands: Negotiating ethnic patriarchy for the benefit of students. *NASPA Journal about Women in Higher Education*, 2(1), 39-65.
- Davies, B., & Bansel, P. (2005). The time of their lives? Academic workers in neoliberal time(s). *Health Sociology Review*, (14)1, 47-58.
- Delgado-Bernal, D. (2007). *La trenza de identidades: Weaving together my personal, professional, and communal identities*. In K. P. González & R. V. Padilla (Eds.), *Doing the public good: Latina/o Scholars engage civic participation* (pp. 135-148). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Dougherty, D. S., & Drumheller, K. (2006). Sensemaking and emotions in organizations: Accounting for emotions in a rational(ized) context. *Communication Studies*, 57(2), 215-238.
- Ek, L. D., Cerecer, P. D. Q., Alanís, I., & Rodríguez, M. A. (2010). "I don't belong here": Chicanas/Latinas at a Hispanic serving institution creating community through Muxerista mentoring. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 43(4), 539-553.
- Fineman, S. (1993). Organizations as emotional arenas. In S. Fineman (Ed.), *Emotion in organizations* (pp. 9-35). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fineman, S. (Ed.). (2000). *Emotion in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Limited.
- Fisk, G. M., & Friesen, J. P. (2012). Perceptions of leader emotion regulation and LMX as predictors of followers' job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(1), 1-12.
- George, M. (2008). Interactions in expert service work demonstrating professionalism in personal training. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 37(1), 108-131.
- Gmelch, W. H. (1991). *Paying the price for academic leadership: Department chair tradeoffs*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association. Chicago, IL.
- Gmelch, W. H., & Burns, J. S. (1994). Sources of stress for academic department chairpersons. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 32(1), 79-94.
- Gmelch, W. H., & Gates, G. (1998). The impact of personal, professional and organizational characteristics on administrator burnout. *The Journal of Educational Administration*, 36(2), 146-159.
- Gmelch, W. H., & Gates, G. S. (1995). *The stressful journey of the department chair: An academic in need of a compass and clock*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA, April 1995. Retrieved from: http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED385188&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED385188
- Gmelch, W. H., Wolverton, M., Sarros, J. C., & Wolverton, M. L. (1999). Stress in academic leadership: US and Australian department chairs/heads. *The Review of Higher Education*, 22(2), 165-185.
- Guillemin, M., & Drew, S. (2010). Questions of process in participant-generated visual methodologies. *Visual Studies*, 25(2), 175-188.
- Hansen-Ketchum, P., & Myrick, F. (2008). Photo methods for qualitative research in nursing: An ontological and epistemological perspective. *Nursing Philosophy*, 9, 205-213.

- Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies*, 17(1), 13-26.
- Hochschild, A. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology*, (85)3, 551-592.
- Hochschild, A. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Jones, D. G. (2011). Academic leadership and department headship in turbulent times. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 17(4), 29-288.
- Keats, P A. (2009). Multiple text analysis in narrative research: Visual, written, and spoken stories of experience. *Qualitative Research*, 9, 181-195.
- Kezar, A., & Carducci, R. (2007). Cultivating revolutionary educational leaders: Translating emerging theories into action. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 2(1), 1-46.
- Kezar, A., & Lester, J. (2009). Leadership in a world of divided feminism. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education*, 1(1), 49-73.
- King, P. E. (1997). Surviving an appointment as department chair. *Journal of Association for Communication Administration*, 3, 211-217.
- Lather, P. (1986). Research as praxis. *Harvard Educational Review*, 56(3), 257-277.
- Leathwood, C., & Hey, V. (2009). Gender/ed discourses and emotional sub-texts: Theorising emotion in UK Higher Education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 14(4), 429-440.
- Maxwell, J. A. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(3), 279-301.
- Metcalf, A. S. (2012). Imag(in)ing the university: Visual sociology and higher education. *The Review of Higher Education*, 35(4), 517-534.
- Miller, K. (2001). The experience of emotion in the workplace: Professing in the midst of tragedy. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 15, 571-600.
- Neumann, A. (2009). *Professing to learn: Creating tenured lives and careers in the American research university*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Owens, R. (1991). *Organizational behavior in education* (6th ed.) Portland, OR: Allyn & Bacon.
- Rhoades, G. (2001). Managing productivity in an academic institution: Rethinking the whom, which, what, and purpose of productivity. *Research in Higher Education*, 42(5) 619-633.
- Saldaña, J. (2012). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Sage.
- Schrecker, E. (2010). *The lost soul of higher education: Corporatization, the assault on academic freedom, and the end of the American university*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Sieben, B., & Wettergren, S. (2010). Emotionalizing organizations and organizing emotions – Our research agenda. In B. Sieben & S. Wettergren (Eds.), *Emotionalizing organizations and organizing emotions* (pp. 1-22). New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Smith, D. E. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Smith, D. E. (1990). *The conceptual practices of power: A feminist sociology of knowledge*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Wang, C. (1999). Photovoice: A participatory action research strategy applied to women's health. *Journal of Women's Health & Gender-Based Medicine*, 8(2), 185-192.
- Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369-387.

- Wepner, S. B., D'Onofrio, A., Willis, B., & Wilhite, B. (2002). Getting at the moral leadership of education deans. *The Qualitative Report*, 7(2). Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR7-2/wepner.html>
- Wharton, A. S. (2009). The sociology of emotional labor. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35, 147-165.
- Woods, C. (2010). Employee wellbeing in the higher education workplace: A role for emotion scholarship. *Higher Education*, 60(2), 171-185.
- Woods, C. (2012). Exploring emotion in the higher education workplace: Capturing perspectives with Q methodology. *Higher Education*, 64(6), 891-909.
- Varga-Dobai, K. (2012). The relationships of researcher and participating in qualitative inquiry: From "self and other" binaries to post-structural feminists' perspective of subjectivity. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(93), 1-17. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR17/varga-dobai.pdf>
- Zapf, D. (2002). Emotion work and psychological well-being: A review of the literature and some conceptual considerations. *Human Resource Management Review*, 12(2), 237-268.
- Zhang, Q., & Zhu, W. (2008). Exploring emotion in teaching: Emotional labor, burnout, and satisfaction in Chinese higher education. *Communication Education*, 57(1), 105-122.

Author Note

Leslie D. Gonzales is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education – Educational Leadership at Clemson University. Her work focuses on the study of the academic profession, faculty agency, and critical organizational theory. She may be contacted at Eugene T. Moore School of Education, Clemson University; Email: leslieg@clemson.edu

Rodolfo Rincones is an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at University of Texas El Paso. His work centers on comparative educational studies, postcolonial theory, and mixed methodology. He may be contacted at Educational Leadership and Foundations, University of Texas El Paso; Email: rincones@utep.edu

Copyright 2013: Leslie D. Gonzales, Rodolfo Rincones, and Nova Southeastern University.

Article Citation

Gonzales, L. D., & Rincones, R. (2013). Using participatory action research and photo methods to explore higher education administration as an emotional endeavor. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(64), 1-17. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR18/gonzales64.pdf>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.