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# Work Intensification and Emotional Labour Among UK University Lecturers: An Exploratory Study

Emmanuel Ogbonna and Lloyd C. Harris

## Abstract

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Until the early 1980s relatively little research interest was devoted to the concept of emotional labour in organizational settings. Although it is now acknowledged that emotional labour is present at different hierarchical levels and among many occupational groups, no study has explored the issue of emotional labour in the context of work intensification among professional groups. This article presents evidence derived from interviews with university lecturers to assess (1) the frequency and propensity of emotional labour and the extent to which emotional labour is increasingly becoming part of the work of university lecturers, (2) the extent to which such emotional labour is derived from the intensifying changes to the work environment of university lecturers, and (3) the positive and negative consequences of such emotional labour and work intensification. The article finds evidence of emotional labouring among university lecturers. It is argued that the increase in such emotional labouring is largely a result of the heightened intensification of the academic labour process, which is exacerbated by the multiple and sometimes conflicting demands of various stakeholders. The effects of such emotional labour included both positive and negative consequences. These findings lead to a discussion of a series of implications and conclusions.

**Keywords:** work intensification, emotional labour, university lecturers, job satisfaction, academic labour process, expectations

## Introduction

For generations, psychologists have studied the dynamic and complex nature of human emotions (for example, James 1884). Researchers in other disciplines have also been fascinated by the power of the concept of emotion to explain a variety of issues related to human experiences and behaviours (for example, Kemper 1985; Thoits 1990). Interestingly, while advances have been made in the study of emotion in a number of disciplines, relatively little research effort was devoted to the concept in organizational settings until the beginning of the 1980s (Hochschild 1983; Mastenbroek 2000). Similarly, although scholars have recently acknowledged that emotional labour is present at different hierarchical levels and among many occupational groups (for example, Fineman 1993; Martin et al. 1998; Taylor and Tyler 2000), there remains a shortage of studies on the nature and consequences of emotional labour among 'higher level'

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professional groups (Wharton 1993). In particular, no study has explored the issue of emotional labour in the context of work intensification among professional groups. Indeed, Wharton (1993) notes that with relatively few exceptions, much empirical work on the concept of emotion within organizations is focused on lower level or shop-floor employees, such as cashiers and checkout operators (for example, Rafaeli 1989a), flight attendants (for example, Hochschild 1983; Taylor and Tyler 2000), clerical workers (for example, Rafaeli 1989b), or workers at the Disney theme park (for example, Van Maanen 1992).

The purpose of this study is to examine the issue of emotional labour in relation to work intensification among university lecturers.<sup>1</sup> The article presents evidence derived from interviews with university lecturers to assess (1) the frequency and propensity of emotional labour and the extent to which emotional labour is increasingly becoming part of the work of university lecturers, (2) the degree to which such emotional labour is derived from the intensifying changes to their work, and (3) the positive and negative consequences of such emotional labour and work intensification.

In addition to contributing to the growing literature on emotional labour, this study responds to the recent calls for greater investigation of academic labour processes (for example, Oshagbemi 1996). Indeed, many commentators have observed that academics have traditionally concentrated on investigating the work of other occupational groups and, in so doing, they have tended to neglect their own labour process (for example, Miller 1991; Willmott 1995; Oshagbemi 1996). Thus, despite Hochschild's (1983: Appendix C) claim that university lecturers emotionally labour, to date, this aspect of the academic labour process remains woefully underexamined. This is especially pertinent in the university context, where lecturers undertake a wide range of disparate tasks (for example, teaching, research, administration, management, and student counselling) with each requiring varying degrees of emotional display over an extended period.

The article begins with a brief review of the literature in order to locate the issue of emotional labour in the context of the intensification of the academic labour process. The literature review is followed by a brief discussion of the methods adopted for the study. Subsequently, data derived from interviews with university lecturers are presented. The article culminates with a discussion of implications and conclusions.

### **Work Intensification and Emotional Labour Among University Lecturers**

The developments in academic work in the UK over the past 20 years have been well documented and it is not the intention to rehearse them here (interested readers should refer to the excellent contributions by Willmott 1995; Morley and Walsh 1995; Parker and Jary 1995; Prichard and Willmott 1997; Jary and Parker 1998). Rather, the aim of this review is to demonstrate how these changes have resulted in a greater intensification of the academic labour process and an increase in emotional labouring.

Perhaps the most significant development has been the drive towards greater efficiency in universities. This drive has been manifested in a range

of processes that have variously been referred to as the 'marketisation' of universities (Shore and Selwyn 1998), 'commodification' of university education (Willmott 1995), and the 'McDonaldization' of higher education (Parker and Jary 1995; Prichard and Willmott 1997). In this sense, the transformation of academic work has mirrored wider socio-economic changes, leading to the exposure of public-sector organizations in the UK to 'market discipline' (see Willmott 1995). In particular, driven by government initiatives, universities have been compelled to accommodate huge increases in student numbers without the corresponding increase in their funding (Morley and Walsh 1995; Jary and Parker 1998). Despite observations from various quarters that government policies on higher education are inherently contradictory (Jary and Parker 1998; Morley and Walsh 1995; Prichard and Willmott 1997; Willmott 1995), there have been no indications that such commentaries influence government policymaking. Indeed, the two major trade unions representing academic staff and the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) have continually (but fruitlessly) lamented the funding gap in higher education. (AUT 1999; CVCP 1999).

Notwithstanding the critical position of the CVCP on the funding of universities, in other ways their response has been consistent with the demand of governments to introduce new forms of management and to undertake sweeping changes in a multitude of areas. As far back as the mid-1980s, the Jarratt Report (CVCP 1985) urged leaders of universities to adopt 'lean and mean' business practices such as tighter budgeting and budgetary control and a general streamlining of decision-making systems to improve efficiency.

The changes arising from the Jarratt Report (CVCP 1985) have been immense and they cut across all facets of academic work. The objective has been to render the academic labour process more visible so that it can be subjected to greater control. There is no shortage of examples in the literature discussing various aspects of such intensification of the academic labour process (for example, Jary and Parker 1998; Morley and Walsh 1995; Prichard and Willmott 1997; Willmott 1995). Indeed, a recent Association of University Teachers (AUT) report concluded that workforce insecurity is significantly more prevalent in higher education than other occupations and professions, with forecasts indicating that by 2004 fewer than 50 percent of academic staff will benefit from permanent contracts (AUT 1999). Such an uncertain work environment has enabled the management of academic institutions to introduce 'coercive working environments, combined with escalating work-loads, long hours, open-ended commitment, together with increased surveillance and control' (Morley and Walsh 1995: 1-2). The ensuing industrial relations climate has been characterized by conflict, with the struggle for control and resistance leading to an unusually high number of disputes and instances of staff unrest (Trow 1993; Willmott 1995). However, despite the best efforts of the trade unions representing academic staff, university managements have been able to introduce (and in some cases impose) many of their desired changes.

Interestingly, the intensification of academic work is not merely a consequence of the demands made by the government and their university

managers. Unlike many other professions, academics are subjected to multiple and sometimes conflicting demands from other stakeholders, including students and external agencies such as employers and society at large. Similar to other service organizations (see Rafaeli 1989a; Sturdy 1998), changes to the nature of academic work (such as student teaching quality assessments, research assessment exercises, and teaching quality reviews) have provided tangible and comparable measures of 'lecturer quality' with which managers have been able further to tighten their control over the academic labour process. Of particular contemporary relevance are the increasing demands from students, who as 'customers' in an increasingly 'enterprise culture' (Knights et al. 1994; du Gay 1996) are ever more aware of their 'rights' to demand greater levels of service. The recent introduction of tuition fees for undergraduate home students is likely to exacerbate this process.

However, few studies have explored the responses of academics and the ways in which they seek to cope with the comprehensive changes to their labour process and the diverse nature of frequently conflicting demands that these have imposed. Indeed, given the argument that work intensification produces a variety of emotions, some positive and others negative (Fineman and Sturdy 1999), it seems appropriate to examine the concept of emotional labour in the context of work intensification among university lecturers.

In this regard, although a range of perspectives has been advanced in the study of emotions and emotional labour, it is not the aim of this article to provide an exhaustive review of these perspectives (see Morris and Feldman 1996). However, two contrasting approaches are worth highlighting. First, the interactionist approach focuses on the role of social factors in shaping the experience and expression of emotion. Thus, emotion is seen as occurring in the context of social relations wherein the experience and expression of such emotions are subject to external influences (Hochschild 1983; Kemper 1985; Thoits 1990; Ashforth and Humphrey 1995). Drawing from this perspective, Morris and Feldman (1996) argue that emotional labour is present where there is potential incompatibility between the individual's *authentic/real* emotion and that which is desired by the organization. However, they also note that the degree of effort (whether small or large) which is required to express even *authentic/real* emotion is tantamount to emotional labour (Morris and Feldman 1996).

A second and contrasting approach to conceptualizing emotional labour is offered by feminist theorists who argue that attempts to treat the various facets of emotional labour as opposites (for example, private versus public emotions and authentic versus fake emotions) weaken the analytical usefulness of the construct. Thus, feminist theorists argue that these facets are both inexplicably linked and mutually reinforcing in their manifestations and impacts (see Mumby and Putnam 1992; Putnam and Mumby 1993; Martin et al. 1998). In this sense, feminist researchers frequently suggest that what may be construed as an individual's private emotion (such as stress, anxiety, or fear) may be inseparable from the structural and power relations that produce them and should, as such, be viewed as both an individual and organizational problem (Martin et al., 1998).

Consistent with a range of recent studies (see Hochschild 1983; Ashforth and Humphrey 1993; Morris and Feldman 1996; Fineman and Sturdy 1999), this article favours the interactionist perspective on emotional labour. This perspective is preferred for a number of reasons. In particular, this perspective argues that emotional labour occurs in the context of social relations and thus incorporates the notion that emotional expression is subject to contextual pressures (Morris and Feldman 1996). It is within this framework that our analysis of work intensification in the context of the academic labour process is located. Thus, this perspective emphasizes broad, common expectations regarding appropriate emotional labour. Similarly, this approach stresses the distinction between *experiencing* emotions (feelings) and their *display* (emotions) (Fineman and Sturdy 1999). Lastly, even where congruence exists between organizationally espoused and displayed emotions, an interactionist perspective suggests that an element of emotional labour is involved (see Morris and Feldman 1996). Consequently, consistent with the work of previous researchers, emotional labour is defined in this article as 'the effort which is required to display that which are perceived to be expected emotions'.<sup>2</sup> This study aims to contribute empirical evidence of work intensification and emotional labour (the effort of emotional display) among university lecturers.

### Research Design and Methodology

The exploration of work intensification and emotional labour among university lecturers requires the use of a research approach which is able to obtain data that is both 'rich' in contextual information and 'deep' in understanding. Consequently, a study was designed explicitly to focus on these issues. In-depth interviews were utilized as the major component of research strategy. The interviews were comparatively unstructured, mainly containing open-ended questions. However, topic guides were produced for each interview to provide the general structure for the questioning. While efforts were made to ensure that all of the prescribed issues were covered, where applicable, interesting lines of enquiry were followed to facilitate unbroken discussion.

It is commonly acknowledged that while quantitative sampling is driven by the imperative of *representativeness*, qualitative sampling is concerned with the *depth* and *richness* of data. Indeed, Gummesson (1991) argues that this kind of sampling (known as judgement or purposive sampling) relegates representativeness to secondary importance and promotes the quality of data as the major concern. Given the exploratory nature of this study and the need to understand the context of the research, non-probability sampling was deemed appropriate (see Glaser and Strauss 1967; Lincoln and Guba 1986). A key issue within the judgement-quota, non-probability sampling employed is identifying and gaining access to 'key' informants whose insight to the issues of research is required (see Crimp and Wright 1995). In the current case, this requires access to knowledgeable individuals with personal experience of employment as a university lecturer as well as to key informants



with insight into particular context-specific changes, pressures, or expectations (for example, female lecturers, academics with experience predating Research Assessment Exercises, or individuals with experience of both 'old' and 'new' universities). Consequently, this study adopted a 'discovery-oriented' design akin to that of Mahrer (1988) and commonly used within social science research. Given the focus of the current study on the effects of such factors as work intensification, data collection focused on the non-professorial academic staff of the various lecturing grades (the job titles of 'lecturers' varying between 'old' and 'new' universities). In this regard, this study is designed to explore the impact of various factors on the staff who are at the receiving end of many of the changes in academic work.

A total of 54 interviews were conducted with academics from various faculties in 'old' or 'established' universities and lecturers in 'new' universities. The sample of academics deliberately included lecturers from both 'old' and 'new' universities in order to provide wider insight, improve generalizability, and so that emergent interesting contrasts and similarities could be explored. During sampling procedures, efforts were made to ensure that lecturers of different ages and specializations (largely teaching or research) were contacted. Briefly, informants were drawn from six universities (three old and three new). At each university, informal discussions were held with administrators (non-academic) and professorial staff to gain general data regarding the gender, age, experience, and specializations (mainly teaching or research) of the staff in that particular university. Thereafter, a sample of informants was developed from offline and online staff directories that reflected (as much as possible) the staff profile of the university. After checking the veracity of the sample with key informants, staff were contacted by telephone to arrange a mutually convenient time, date, and location for their interview. Although somewhat bound by confidentiality promises, some summary respondent information can be supplied. In brief, out of the 54 academics interviewed, 61 percent currently worked in 'old' universities, 85 percent were male, the average age was 34.4, and average experience was 8.3 years with an average length of tenure in present post of 3.7 years. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were conducted individually (although some informal group discussions were also held prior to formal interviews to gain access, reach a mutual understanding regarding confidentiality, and to contextualize the research project).

The interviews followed a broad schedule to ensure that all of the issues were discussed. After confidentiality assurances, a general introduction to the research project, and demographic and work-history questions, informants were questioned regarding the main issues. Typically, introductory questions to the central issues of interest included insights into the following.

- 1 Perceived changes to work environments, conditions, and expectations.
- 2 Perceptions of the impact of conditions on colleagues, subordinates, superordinates, support staff, and students.
- 3 Pleasant and unpleasant aspects of work. Sources, manifestations, and consequences of stress or lack of stress.

- 4 Current, past, and predicted (future) job dissatisfaction/satisfaction. The sources and consequences of dissatisfaction/satisfaction.
- 5 The differences between physical, mental, and emotional work (current, past, and present) and coping mechanisms.
- 6 Forms, types, or manifestations of emotional labour.
- 7 Current, past, and predicted (future) research, teaching, and administrative expectations. Societal, organizational, and occupational drivers of emotional labour.
- 8 The impact of gender and other issues on the above.

Obviously, introductory questions were used to initiate freer-flowing and open-ended narratives. These discussions allowed the researchers to ask more precise and tailored questions and also allowed individuals to provide personalized illustrations, narratives, examples, and other broader insights.

At the start of each interview authorization was sought to audio record the interview and where permission was granted, interviews and informal discussions were audio-taped and later transcribed. On the occasions when permission was not granted for audio recording, care was taken to ensure that extensive notes were made and, where appropriate, particularly illustrative quotations written verbatim. Analysis of audio-tapes and transcripts were conducted by methods of inductive reasoning (Lincoln and Guba 1986) and comparative methods (Martin and Turner 1986). To guide and organize this process, a systematic approach to the analysis of transcripts was adopted in a procedure akin to that of Turner (1981). This approach involves seven stages of analysis (developing categories, saturating categories, developing abstract definitions, using definitions, explaining categories, linking categories, and evaluating links) supplemented by the iterative examination of the analysis at the end of each step. To improve the validity of these processes, the two lead authors conducted analyses independently, compared results, and resolved differences and anomalies through discussion. In order to preserve the anonymity of respondents, a number of details have been altered (including such details as names and locations).

### **Work Intensification, Emotional Labour, and University Lecturers**

The findings are divided into three main sections. First, the frequency and propensity for emotional labour by lecturers is explored, as are insights into the extent to which such emotional labour is perceived to be increasingly central to lecturers' labour process. Second, the extent to which emotional display expectations are derived from recent labour intensification is investigated. Third, the effects of emotional labour and work intensification are examined.



### The Extent and Increasing Propensity for Emotional Labour by University Lecturers

This article defines emotional labour as ‘the effort which is required to display that which are perceived to be expected emotions’. In terms of the extent to which emotional labour is central to the labour process of university lecturers, unequivocal results emerged from the data. These findings indicate that *without prompting* during each of the 54 interviews, individuals described *more than three separate examples* of ‘emotional labour’. Further, after the concept was explained, all of the 54 informants argued that adhering to emotional display expectations formed *at least* ‘an important’ part of their everyday working lives to the extent that 16 informants described emotional labour as ‘fundamental’ to their labour process and a further 23 claimed that emotional labour formed a ‘central’ part of their work. These findings lead to the claim that emotional labour is perceived by university lecturers to be an everyday occurrence in their labour process.

Having illuminated the extent to which lecturers perceive emotional labour as *currently* a frequent part of their work, the opportunity was taken to gauge the extent to which such labour had recently become more (or less) prevalent. To explore this issue, lecturers with longer than five years’ experience were asked for their opinion. The results were again unequivocal in that each lecturer contended that their propensity to labour emotionally had dramatically increased in recent years, with opinion varying from ‘a thousand-fold in the last ten years’ to ‘over the last fifteen years ... by an order of magnitude every year’.

Exhibitions of emotion were found to range from that which Hochschild (1979, 1983) labels ‘surface’ and ‘deep’ acting to apparently spontaneous non-acted emotional displays. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) note that service providers may perform emotional labour through compliance with accepted display rules by simulating emotions which are not actually felt. Such ‘surface acting’ (Hochschild 1979, 1983) was described in a variety of ways by *all* of the lecturers interviewed. A university lecturer states:

‘Teaching is like pantomime. The audience don’t give a s\*\*t that you’ve got a hangover, your wife’s just left you and the dog’s just puked on your best tie — they want entertainment. Students expect a well-staged and rehearsed performance that entertains. They want a comic not a teacher.’ (Lecturer, old university, aged 29)

This view of lecturing clearly supports the dramaturgical perspective of Goffman (1959) upon which many conceptions of emotional labour are based (see Hochschild 1983). The increasing management utilization of student teaching quality evaluations to assess and control the performance of academics appears to be driving ‘student-focused’ emotional labour. Such surveillance mechanisms and other techniques appear to create pressures to conform, subjugating individual identity in a quest for standardization (see Willmott 1995).

University lecturers described their offices as ‘havens’, ‘refuges’, or even ‘sanctuaries’ wherein they could (briefly) escape or retreat, often to begin that which was described by many as their ‘real work’. The withdrawal into such

'refuges' appears to lead to a mental and even physical relaxation which when interrupted often triggered emotional labour. An academic described his reaction to such interruptions:

'It can drive you to the point of screaming. You're in your little "haven of peace" really getting into a paper and just when you're relaxed into that mindset there comes the little knock, knock, knock on the door. You then spend twenty minutes smiling and charming some kid feeling homesick when inside you're screaming "Just f\*\*k off and leave me in peace!"' (Lecturer, old university, aged 31)

Given the growing pressures of Research Assessment Exercises and Teaching Quality Reviews, the portrayal of offices as 'sanctuaries' is perhaps understandable. These findings suggest that some academics' self-perception is one of a relatively solitary individual worker whose labour process is punctuated by sporadic public displays of emotion whenever 'interruption' occurs.

Consistent with the suggestions of Hochschild (1983), evidence was found to suggest that the surface-acting form of emotional labour is also exhibited to internal actors. A university lecturer referred to the acting involved during a recent meeting with a superordinate:

'In my institution it's all about what they call "contribution". In other words taking on what is seen as a "fair" admin load. My last meeting with John Jones [her direct superordinate] involved him telling me of the extra admin he wanted me to do. There's no point whingeing — I just had to sit there smiling and nodding while inwardly seething — now that was a performance!' (Lecturer, new university, aged 37)

Thus, in the same way as interaction with students (as a form of external customer) triggered emotional labour, contact with internal actors also caused some surface-acted emotional displays.

Data analysis also suggests that some university lecturers were attempting actually to experience occupationally or organizationally espoused or expected emotions (see below). This is that which Hochschild (1983: 38) labels 'deep acting'. While less common than incidences of surface acting, three-quarters of those interviewed told stories which can be categorized as experiences of deep acting. The most commonly described form of deep acting was the active and conscious attempt by lecturers to arouse or repress emotion. For example, a long-serving lecturer describes his reaction to intensified student demands:

'I have to stop myself losing it sometimes. You have to keep yourself in check. You have to keep saying to yourself "they pay my wages", "they pay my wages". Students have a right to expect a calm and patient teacher — it's not their fault you're under pressure.' (Lecturer, new university, aged 44)

Although less common than the 'exhorted feeling' avenue, a minority of those interviewed attempted to evoke sentiment to induce appropriate emotions. Interestingly, this form of 'deep acting' was significantly more common among female academics of all types. The finding of gender-based differences in emotional labour provides further evidential support for a range of existing studies (for example, Hochschild 1983; Filby 1992). However, this finding also contributes important evidence of differential emotional

labour among 'higher' professional groups. For instance, one lecturer described how she evoked emotional calm:

'When they start getting arsey with me I just switch off and think of fishing. I've never fished but I've always fantasized that it must be the most relaxing thing ever. Just sitting there watching the world go by — it works every time.' (Lecturer, new university, aged 35)

Ironically, such 'deep acting' is tantamount to 'self-control'. That is, academics have learned not only to control their emotions, but also to display the appropriate emotional responses even under stressful conditions. This type of 'self-control' has been described as the ultimate form of control desired by manipulative managements (for example, Noon and Blyton 1996).

The findings of the study also suggest that university lecturers frequently exhibit spontaneous emotions as an everyday part of their working lives. As Morris and Feldman (1996) have argued, the degree of effort required to display such emotion can be categorized as 'emotional labour'. Given that many lecturers entered the profession to teach and mentor young people, it was unsurprising to find a large percentage of lecturers who claimed sincerely to feel concern and pride in the achievements of students. A relatively young lecturer commented:

'I think most of us care about most of them. You get the occasional one who you just want to strangle but you also get the ones that make you proud. I had a tutee last year — she went through hell — all sorts of s\*\*t — when she graduated I was really proud of her — really, really proud — she got a 2.1.' (Lecturer, old university, aged 29)

The finding that many academics are willing spontaneously to display non-acted 'positive' emotions indicates that lecturers may be separating the negative feelings arising from the external attempts to control their work from their own beliefs about their professional roles and ethics. Ironically, such display of non-acted emotion is important in achieving many of the management objectives which induce negative emotion, in that such displays appear to legitimize and reinforce management expectations.

### **Work Intensification and Other Causes of Emotional Labour Among University Lecturers**

During data analysis, it emerged that as well as other factors, work intensification appeared to be linked to the extent of emotional labour by lecturers. In emotionally labouring, university lecturers tended to be responding to a mixture of occupational *and* organizational expectations. Such expectations appear to be derived in part from recent work intensification, but also from other broader factors.

At the occupational level, informants argued that expectations were intensifying. In particular, long-serving or older lecturers were in a better position to comment on recent intensification of expectations by agencies. Such lecturers typically stressed the additional roles that academics had relatively recently 'acquired'. For example, a long-serving university lecturer states:

'Just ten years ago being a bloody good teacher was enough. That doesn't "cut the mustard" these days. Now it's about being good at every damn thing they think of — researching, generating income, consulting, mentoring, administering ... Give them a few years and we'll all be expected to be bleeding rocket scientists!' (Lecturer, new university, aged 44)

These findings are consistent with the concerns raised by the major trade unions representing university lecturers (for example, AUT 1999). Interestingly, all of those interviewed argued that the additional working roles went beyond reasonable boundaries, suggesting not only a failure of management effectively to subjugate workers, but also that academics were resisting 'exploitative' managerial demands (Willmott 1995; Prichard and Willmott 1997).

However, to some degree, lecturers themselves appeared to collude with such intensification forces, principally through defending lecturer 'professionalism'. All the academics participating in the study vociferously vindicated their professionalism and commonly argued that, linked with an intensification of their labour process, such professional expectations placed pressure on their working lives. The comments of one academic in the context of organizational pressures to increase the number of students obtaining first-class degrees help to explain this point:

'Part of being a professional is retaining your professional ethics — whatever the pressure to fold. I don't care what the college says is the allowable percentage of fails — to me if a student is good they pass; if they don't make the grade they're marked as a fail.' (Lecturer, old university, aged 34)

The ethical considerations of such college-level pressures are beyond the scope of this article, but are clearly linked to work-intensification issues (see Willmott 1995; Parker and Jary 1995).

The 'new managerialism' of universities (see Willmott 1995) appears to involve senior (typically male) academics exerting more power over their subordinates with a view to intensifying the labour process of junior lecturers. In this regard, consistent with existing literature (Morley and Walsh 1995; Davies and Holloway 1995), this study finds that female academics felt particularly vulnerable to such forms of managerial control arising from work intensification. One lecturer argued:

'Oh, I definitely think that women are put under more pressure and scrutinized more heavily than men. I'd say that women have got to work two or three times harder than men to get ahead. To get ahead is difficult enough, but to get ahead as a woman is tougher still.' (Lecturer, old university, aged 34)

Similar stories were told by many lecturers in relation to contact with a variety of internal personnel, including colleagues, administrators, and support staff. This *may* suggest that senior male academics are marginalizing junior female lecturers (see Morley 1994) or that they are promoting work environments which suppress women (see Cockburn 1991). Interestingly, such findings echo the conclusions of other studies of emotional labour which argue that although women are particularly skilled at emotional labouring, such skills are frequently less valued by the male-dominated management of organizations (see Bolton 2000).

Work intensification was also a factor in terms of organizational pressures. Characteristically, such pressures were viewed in financial terms. A university lecturer states:

'It is becoming more and more clear that lecturers are expected to do more for less pay. From the time you are appointed they make it clear to you that you have to be excellent in every area. This is what they call an induction programme. You are required to publish in grade "A" journals, you are required to be an excellent teacher, get research income and be an excellent administrator; yet you are put on a fixed-term contract. After twelve months, you have your first probationary meeting at which you are required to state how you have achieved the targets in each of these areas.' (Lecturer, old university, aged 30)

That which is interesting about the above quotation is the linking of increasing expectations to reward systems. The intensification of labour, aided by management tools to create comparable measures of performance, appear not only to be a source of stress, but also an organizational guide to required emotional labour.

Applying Morris and Feldman's (1996) dimensions of emotional labour helps to elucidate the links between work intensification and the changing emotional labour requirements. Many informants noted that the increasing expectation to be 'nice' (rather than simply professional) to students has changed the content of emotional display rules. Similarly, growing research output expectations manifested in clearer and more widely disseminated organizational expectations (often in the form of research 'handbooks') were also attributed with changing expectations. This point is aptly illustrated by the comments of one lecturer who argues:

'When I joined this university in 1987 research was seen as useful but not sacrosanct. You'd research topics that interested you and you placed any articles in the journals with the highest readership. Today, you are given a list of "appropriate" journals that are invariably the top ones in your field. We can't all achieve this expectation.' (Lecturer, old university, aged 40)

Participants identified an increase in the severity of penalties for non-compliance with emotional display rules. A particular source of discontent is the increasing tendency to link student evaluation assessments with probationary reviews and promotion prospects. Similarly, it appears that the increase in student numbers without a corresponding increase in resource allocation (AUT 1999; CVCP 1999) has resulted in individual lecturers being exposed to greater numbers of students. In this way, lecturers commonly argued that the overall frequency of lecturer-student contact had significantly risen, while the quality of interaction had fallen:

'When I joined this place you didn't teach any class larger than 120. Today we have classes of 400 plus. It is very difficult to relate to all these people. It is impossible for you to have a personal relationship with 400 people. I really, really hate teaching such large classes.' (Lecturer, old university, aged 41)

Linked to the change in the content of emotional display rules and the increased penalties for non-compliance, the heightened frequency of contact

exacerbates the nature of emotional labouring among university lecturers. One interviewee provides a good summary of the combined nature of these forces:

'I have this first year class of about 380 students. They're like school kids! You go to the lecture theatre and they're busy throwing paper planes and texting messages to their friends! This really gets up my nose. Sometimes I feel like shouting at them but I know what this will do to my teaching evaluations. I just stand there and pretend to be laughing even though I'm fuming inside.' (Lecturer, old university, aged 44)

### **The Consequences of Work Intensification and Emotional Labour**

The more positive consequences among university lecturers can be categorized into two main effects. First, adhering to expected display rules provided lecturers with a form of coping mechanism. Many long-serving lecturers interviewed claimed that such coping mechanisms were unnecessary at the start of their careers, but were becoming increasingly important as expectations intensified. A lecturer commented:

'I don't think it's feasible for us to care about every single student. Ten years ago I knew their names and faces — today it's a miracle if I can remember what degree they're doing. Pretending to remember their problems and faking concern is just a coping response.' (Lecturer, new university, aged 39)

Thus, in some senses, emotional labour by lecturers may be a cognitive defensive response to the work overload. Indeed, some informants suggested that this could be reduced by what was described as 'professional detachment'. It is suggested that such coping mechanisms represent considered strategies by lecturers designed to counter intensification to their labour process and to delineate between 'real' and 'working' identities. Thus, emotional labouring may become a way of resisting increasing managerialism (see Willmott 1995).

The second positive impact centres on organizational rewards for the display of 'appropriate' behaviours and emotions. Many lecturers commented that career progression was linked to their ability to sustain a 'professional identity' which matched ever-intensifying organizational expectations. Hence, where demands centred on teaching quality, lecturers discussed how they maintained personal images as individuals who 'genuinely' cared about student welfare. A lecturer claimed:

'It's about image — creating a brand of "me". In my place careers are built on teaching portfolios. If you can create an image of yourself as a brilliant teacher — you've got it made. I have no problem with faking concern about students if it gets me another increment [point].' (Lecturer, new university, aged 27)

Similar results emerged for lecturers in institutions where research and publication were prioritized.

Despite some positive consequences, all of the lecturers interviewed referred to negative outcomes. The intensification of the work of university lecturers appears to be exerting a strongly detrimental impact on some lecturers who recognize intensifying expectations and respond through displaying 'appropriate' emotions. Such emotional labour is not spontaneous, leading many



lecturers to experience feelings of inadequacy at having to 'fake' emotions in order to cope with seemingly legitimate demands. A university lecturer stated:

'I feel guilty about each aspect of my work. I'm not enthusiastic enough to publish enough, I'm too hassled to care genuinely about the quality of my teaching and I'm too stressed to get my admin done on time. I just want a job where I can be me without feeling like a complete fraud.' (Lecturer, new university, aged 31)

The effects of such feelings of guilt are manifested in apparently high levels of stress, which according to most of those interviewed, is increasing exponentially. Although the extent of stress within the profession cannot be solely attributed to work intensification and emotional labour, it seems probable that these factors constitute significant causes. Illustratively, a relatively young academic commented:

'When I was a student I thought lecturers had a whale of a time — a few hours teaching here and there — easy street! In the past month I've woken up four or five times and said to my wife "I just can't go in" — I simply can't face the mess. I've a constant stress headache and my blood pressure must be akin to volcanic pressure.' (Lecturer, old university, aged 31)

Work intensification and the emotional labour of university lecturers was also found negatively to impact on interaction between academic colleagues. Such circumscribed interaction appears to limit emotional support from understanding colleagues, magnifying the negative impacts of emotional labour. Typically, longer-serving lecturers commented on diminishing levels of interaction between colleagues. A lecturer commented:

'Years ago this was a dynamic place — everybody in and out of everybody else's office. If you had a problem you talked about it, worked the problem through. Today everybody's out for themselves — nobody wants to show weakness. We're all individuals within a partitioned box!' (Lecturer, new university, aged 42)

These and other findings suggest a revolution in the labour process of university lecturers from collegiate environments to intensified working conditions which appear to promote competition through forms of performance-related pay systems and individualism. One lecturer commented on the level of isolation:

'When I came here [an established research-oriented university] I didn't expect fanfares but I did expect some team spirit. What I've found is that most people who work here are only interested in themselves — we all work in a vacuum, centred on our narrow little fields. I moved here, left my friends and family behind to come to a place where I don't think I've spoken to the guy in the next office for six months!' (Lecturer, old university, aged 36)

A theme underpinning the above illustrative statements regarding lack of teamwork and social isolation is the widespread belief that most university lecturers are 'pretending', 'faking', or 'lying' about their levels of job satisfaction. That is, while most lecturers take extraordinary efforts to portray socially, occupationally, or organizationally expected images and believe *their* efforts to be successful, all the lecturers interviewed believed that their colleagues were emotionally labouring.

Overall, while akin to Wharton (1993) some positive consequences of emotional labour were uncovered, consistent with many observers (for example, Hochschild 1983; Morris and Feldman 1997) it would appear that the intensification of the academic labour process and increased managerialism (see Willmott 1995; Prichard and Willmott 1997) have resulted in negative consequences for university lecturers.

### Conclusions and Implications

The current study suggests that UK university lecturers engage in emotional labour as an everyday part of their working lives. This finding supports the suggestion of Hochschild (1983: Appendix C) that university and college lecturers are one of the occupations which will emotionally labour and responds to the call of numerous researchers for more studies of emotional labour in diverse contexts (for example, Wharton 1993; Sturdy 1998). This study presents the first empirical evidence of work intensification and emotional labour among academics, and documents one of the comparatively few studies of emotional labour dedicated to the study of professional-level workers.

Lecturers believed that occupational and organizational expectations, driven by work intensification pressures, exerted a stronger and more direct influence on their emotional labouring. In this sense, the findings suggest differentiation in the strength and pervasiveness of the source of expectations (as well as bearing testimony to the intensified pressures on lecturers). However, the more regular, intense, and direct effect of more specific and detailed occupational and organizational expectations carries a greater impact. Such expectations have resulted from the radical alterations of the academic labour process in which there has been a drive for efficiency (for example, Jary and Parker 1998). Interestingly, although the impetus for such intensification is almost exclusively political through government-derived initiatives, university managers have exercised a high degree of choice as to which policies are developed as well as how such policies are implemented. Indeed, university managers have chosen to implement many policies aggressively and the organizational expectations of academics have significantly increased.

Furthermore, certain forms of emotional labour were so governed by intensified occupational expectations that emotional labour was frequently equated with professionalism. This raises an interesting issue regarding the power of intensified occupational expectations of professionals. In the current study, it would appear that lecturers believe that they cannot be 'professional' without emotional labour. Given that professions are typically characterized by strong professional expectations, this raises the question of whether emotional labour is a fundamental characteristic of professionals' working lives. Further, to some extent the emotional content of academics' labour process is influenced by self-imposed professional-ethical standards. Interestingly, the guardians of academics' professional standards would appear to be senior academics. In this regard, the university sector is unusual in that the division between workers and managers is somewhat blurred, with

senior academics (and guardians of professional standards) apparently undertaking similar labour (and thus emotional labour) to that of junior lecturers.

Existing research on satisfaction concludes that academics are generally satisfied (Oshagbemi 1996). However, our interviews revealed widespread discontent and dissatisfaction which, arguably, was masked by emotional labour in line with occupational and organizational expectations. However, the findings of this study do *not* suggest that all academics are unhappy with every aspect of their work or that emotional labour always results in negative impacts. Indeed, emotional labour appears to be *Janusesque*, in that, while emotional labour is increasingly demanded by work-intensifying managers, emotional labour also constitutes an important coping mechanism for many of those studied. Nevertheless, the study does demonstrate that most academics are dissatisfied with the reduction in their autonomy and the increasing attempts to control and intensify all aspects of their work, with this discontent often disguised by emotional labour. An important finding of this article is thus related to the consequences of emotional labour and work intensification. Consistent with the findings of a number of theorists (for example, Hochschild 1983; Fineman and Sturdy 1999), this study finds that the work intensification and subsequent emotional labour of university lecturers contributed to a high degree of stress and a lack of team spirit and teamwork, all of which are negatively related to performance (see Ostroff 1992).

This article was designed to illuminate and explore the comparatively poorly understood concept of emotional labour in relation to work intensification in the highly relevant context of university lecturing. While this article constitutes an important first step in investigating these apparently endemic phenomena, clearly, further research is desirable. In particular, to evaluate the extent to which the findings of this study are generalizable, both within and outside the current context, future projects could examine the links between work intensification and emotional labour in a range of diverse professional and occupational groups.

## Notes

- 1 For purposes of clarity, the terms 'university lecturer', 'academic', and 'university academic' are used interchangeably to refer to university staff employed principally to teach or to research, or both.
- 2 This definition of emotional labour is purposefully broad to reflect the theoretical perspective employed, the exploratory nature of the study, and the multiple facets of this complex and dynamic concept. While in some regards, this is an advantage in terms of, for example, inclusiveness and richness, in other respects, this may also be viewed as a limitation. Specifically, narrower conceptualizations from alternative perspectives may well benefit from more constricted views that focus exclusively on, for example, spontaneous emotional outbursts. The authors are indebted to one of the reviewers for highlighting this issue.

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