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## 7 BOUNDED EMOTIONALITY AT THE BODY SHOP

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Impersonal criteria for making decisions and restraints on emotional expression at work have long been the hallmarks of organizational life (for example, Weber, 1946, 1981). Recent work has broken this emotional taboo (for example, Fineman, 1996), exploring how certain organizations require the expression of particular emotions at work in order to maximize organizational productivity, an aspect of job performance that has been labelled emotional labour (see for example Hochschild, 1983; Van Maanen and Kunda, 1989). Sutton (1991) and his colleagues (for example, Sutton and Rafaeli, 1998) have explored discrepancies between outward behaviour and inward feelings experienced by smiling flight attendants and nasty bill collectors. In contrast, feminist organizational theorists have developed an idealized view of the role of emotions in organizations, unencumbered, for the most part, by concerns about productivity, customer satisfaction, or profitability (see for example Marshall, 1984; Calas and Smircich, 1989; Hearn et al., 1989; Mills and Tancred, 1992; Gherardi, 1995; Meyerson, 1998). The feminist premise 'the personal is political', legitimates exploration, through self-disclosure, of how aspects of work affect home life, and vice versa (Olsen, 1983; Frug, 1986; Okin, 1989; Bologh, 1990; Martin, 1990; Wharton and Erickson, 1993). This refusal to try to dichotomize the public and the private legitimates the expression and exploration of a wider range of emotions at work, including sexual attraction, affection, vulnerability, fear, sadness and joy, dismantling many barriers between what is felt and what is expressed.

### **Bounded emotionality**

Putnam and Mumby (1993) offered a modification of the feminist position on these emotional issues. They introduced bounded emotionality as a limited and pragmatic approach to the problem of emotional control in organizations. Mumby and Putnam focused on work-related emotions, which they defined as 'feelings, sensations, and affective responses to organizational situations' (1992: 471), although they acknowledged that such work feelings stem from and affect emotions arising from one's personal history and home life. Bounded emotionality encourages the expression of a wider range of

emotions than is usually condoned in traditional and normative organizations, while stressing the importance of maintaining interpersonally sensitive, variable boundaries between what is felt and what is expressed. At the risk of extending Mumby and Putnam's (1992: 471) ideas with a specificity they did not intend, bounded emotionality has six defining characteristics, each of which is discussed below: intersubjective limitations, emergent (rather than organizationally ascribed) feelings, tolerance of ambiguity, respect for individual differences in values, authentic self-expression, and community building.

*Intersubjective limitations* Emotional expression in organizations should be bounded, Mumby and Putnam argued, because individuals should constrain emotional expression in order to function effectively in interpersonal relationships in ways that are sensitive to other people's emotional needs and competencies. In work settings, bounded emotionality should begin with a recognition of another person's subjectivity, acknowledging potential differences as well as commonalities and working within whatever emotional limitations both individuals bring to the relationship (Mumby and Putnam, 1992: 478; see also Putnam and Mumby, 1993: 51-2; Meyerson, 1994, 1998). Such limitations would include an individual's preferred modes and range of emotional expression. For example, one person might have a hot temper, needing to express anger before calming down, while another might be more restrained and self-contained, preferring public expression of a narrower range of emotions. Intersubjective responsiveness to such individual limitations, or preferred modes of emotional expression, would presumably have as a prerequisite some intimate knowledge of the other obtained through careful observation and voluntary self-disclosure.

Meyerson (1998) observed that bounded emotionality presents a stark contrast to bounded rationality. Emotions are to be bounded voluntarily, to protect interpersonal relationships, while rationality is bounded (see for example Simon, 1976) because of inevitable human limitations in information processing ability, producing such short cuts as cognitive heuristics, satisficing, and standard operating procedures. Mumby and Putnam's formulation of the bounding of emotional expression at work drew on feminist deconstructions of the false dichotomy between rationality and emotionality and delineated ways organizational theory and research have privileged cognitive functioning, leading to a neglect of emotional issues and an over-emphasis on cognitive aspects of decision making. To highlight these issues, Mumby and Putnam chose to frame bounded emotionality as a concept of resistance to bounded rationality.

*Spontaneously emergent work feelings* The goal of bounded emotionality is to build interpersonal relationships through improved mutual understanding of work-related feelings, primarily in order to foster community rather than further the efficiency or productivity goals of the organization. Work feelings should emerge spontaneously from the performance of tasks; they should not be organizationally ascribed. Several studies show how emergent work

feelings can surface in a manner which is not controlled by an organization's management or initiated primarily for the organization's benefit. For example, Morgen (1994, 1995) found that staff in feminist health clinics emphasized self-disclosure and openly discussed work-related and personal feelings. Cohen and Sutton (1995) found that, for their own enjoyment, hair stylists encouraged salon clients to talk about personal matters.

Mumby and Putnam (1992: 479) acknowledged that emotions can sometimes be bounded both for intersubjective reasons and to serve the organization's instrumental purposes – simultaneously: 'Organizations do not need to sacrifice or lose sight of technical efficiency, but they should embed instrumental goals within a larger system of community and inter-relatedness.' This means that, in spite of their conceptual distinctiveness, bounded emotionality and emotional labour may be empirically difficult to distinguish. It may be that bounded emotionality will be more situationally variable, as the need to exercise respect for intersubjective limitations may vary depending on the individual and the context, while emotional labour norms (for example, you should smile) may be more stable. When instrumental concerns foster emotional labour, Mumby and Putnam argue that resulting felt emotions such as anxiety or frustration are to be expected and should, within intersubjective limits, be expressed in accord with bounded emotionality.

*Tolerance of ambiguity* Tolerance of ambiguity is an essential component of bounded emotionality because it permits contradictory feelings, positions and demands to coexist. Given the discussion above regarding the complex mix of feelings likely to emerge in situations where emotional labour is required, the enactment of bounded emotionality necessarily entails some tolerance of ambiguity, including contradictions and irresolvable tensions (Meyerson, 1998).

*Respect for individual value differences* No one set of values should take precedence over all others. Enacting value priorities must, according to bounded emotionality, depend on individual preferences and context. Therefore, for example, management must not attempt to enforce, or even generate commitment to, a single set of 'shared' values. Instead, the value priorities of individuals must be respected, allowing a heterarchy rather than a single hierarchy of value priorities.

*Authentic self-expression* Bounded emotionality should facilitate a person's ability to express him or herself 'authentically' (without distortion) at work. This presumes that a person has a single self that, transcending context, can be known. Without such a concept of self, the idea that bounded emotionality can facilitate the experience of being 'authentically oneself' at work would be meaningless. This conceptualization of a unified self supersedes notions of mind-body dualism and presumably, alienated or fragmented labour. Mumby and Putnam are assuming an integrated, unitary and probably knowable self.

*Community* One purpose of enacting bounded emotionality is to facilitate strong feelings of community among organizational members. Evidence supporting this contention has been found in a series of studies of bounded emotionality in feminist organizations (Ferree and Martin, 1995), including a record company (Lont, 1988), a female weavers' guild (Wyatt, 1988), and dyadic tutoring teams at a university (Nelson, 1988). Studies such as these, of organizations exhibiting norms of bounded emotionality, have all focused on relatively small, usually non-profit organizations.

### **Exploring the bounds of bounded emotionality**

This chapter works with and extends, a bit, the idea of bounded emotionality. Rather than refer to an integrated self we argue, drawing on post-structuralism and social psychological research (such as Flax, 1990; Kitayama and Markus, 1996), that the self is fragmented, composed of overlapping, nested identities that become activated in a context-specific manner, without assuming clarity or consistency over time. Definitions of the self and the potential for authenticity are important, particularly because this chapter addresses questions of diversity in emotional preferences. Mumby and Putnam seem to advocate bounded emotionality as a singular and more desirable alternative to the usual ways of organizing work, remaining silent about how to treat diversity. This silence raises some questions. How does a group or an organization foster bounded emotionality without creating conformity pressures that undermine or counteract commitment to being sensitive to individual limitations and respecting a heterarchy of values?

Some people prefer more impersonality and emotional reserve. If an ideal bounded emotionality is enacted, such differing subjectivities should be recognized, listened to, and treated particularistically, so that multiple patterns of reaction to bounded emotionality are treated as normal and acceptable (Meyerson, 1998). Alternatively, those who differ could simply be pressured to conform to accepted, bounded emotional behaviour, suppressing, repressing or subordinating their subjectivities. This would entail a departure from authenticity, whether one defines this in integrated or fragmented terms. Without enacting respect for those who differ, bounded emotionality may carry the risk of becoming simply a revised claim for conformity, albeit with a different definition of what is desirable. Further, if it is the case that more women than men have been socialized to prefer emotional expressiveness and self-disclosure, then bounded emotionality may become a claim for conformity to reversed gendered standards of behaviour that disproportionately disadvantage men.

Prior research on bounded emotionality has focused on a limited set of small, often non-profit, organizations. We don't know if it is possible to enact bounded emotionality in one of the large for-profit organizations that dominate so much of industrialized society. The efficiency and financial pressures of the competitive marketplace, compounded by the pressures

toward growth that come, particularly, when a company is publicly owned, would work against the time consuming, non-instrumental orientation of bounded emotionality. Feminist theory advocates explorations of the intersections of public (work) and private (home) concerns (see for example Hochschild, 1989), yet because of the pressures of a competitive marketplace, there is always the danger that performance concerns will take precedence over other priorities. Given these tensions, bounded emotionality may be difficult to enact in a large for-profit organization, creating pressures toward reversion to more familiar forms of emotion management in organizations: impersonality or emotional labour, reinforced by traditional bureaucratic or normative control mechanisms.

Bounded emotionality would have a better chance of surviving in such a context if facilitating factors were present. Two such factors are: (1) the proportion of women in various parts of the organization's hierarchy, and (2) the organization's ideology. First, if more women than men have been socialized to prefer expressing the kinds of emotions and engaging in the kinds of self-disclosure on which bounded emotionality is based, this form of emotional management might be more likely to flourish in an organization that employed a relatively large proportion of women, provided that some of those women held high-level management positions and were willing to influence the development of these kinds of emotional norms. Second, the enactment of bounded emotionality might have a greater chance of success in an organization that has an ideology congruent with some of the fundamental elements of bounded emotionality. Although it is doubtful that any organization has deliberately incorporated bounded emotionality into its strategy and goals, an organization might endorse goals or values congruent with some of its attributes.

## **Method**

### *The organization and its employees*

As part of a larger project, we studied a large for-profit organization that had an unusual prevalence of women employees in the managerial ranks and that endorsed an ideology that supports a subset of the elements of bounded emotionality. The Body Shop International (BSI) is a publicly owned firm in the cosmetics industry, with retail outlets scattered across the globe. The company is known for its commitment to using naturally based products, protecting the environment, and promoting various social and political causes. This chapter is based on data collected between December 1992 and November 1993; during this interval BSI employed over 6,000 people internationally. At that time there were just under 1,000 retail outlets in 42 countries, with new stores, both franchised and company-owned, opening every two to three days. Between 1 March 1990 and 28 February 1992, total revenues had risen from £208.1 million to £265.4 million (company memo

dated 16 September 1992). In these years, BSI was a large and successful private sector organization. Recent growth had been so rapid that current structures, job definitions, employee statistics, and even records of names and telephone numbers were unavailable or seriously out of date. Because rapid change both preceded and extended beyond the period of investigation, this study is an in-depth snapshot of a particular period in the company's life cycle, rather than a longitudinal study.

We interviewed and observed approximately 575 employees, drawn from all levels of the hierarchy, in all five parts of the company in the United States and the UK. (A breakdown of the characteristics of the employees observed and interviewed, and a fuller description of the variety of methods used is available in Martin et al., 1998.) Most of our data collection time was spent in observation, participant-observation and informal conversations. Duration of observations ranged from two hours to several weeks (periodically), with greater time spent in observations of and informal conversations with non-managerial employees, particularly on shop floors. We conducted in-depth structured interviews with 57 employees, representing all five parts of the firm, including most levels of management; 16 (28%) of these interviewees held non-managerial positions. Because most of our interactions with non-managerial employees involved extensive observation and informal conversations, we have more confidence in our understanding of non-managerial perspectives than these structured interview numbers would suggest. However, the informality of our interactions with non-managerial employees means we do not have as much in-depth material from these levels of BSI as we would like.

Titles, employee lists, and statistics were often viewed as a low priority at BSI, so these kinds of information were difficult to find, often out of date, and sometimes in error. For this reason, any numbers below should be regarded as the best, good faith estimates we could obtain. At our request, company officials estimated the percentage of women employees during this period (for the UK only, because US offices were growing so rapidly that employee listings were unavailable at the time). Although men held a considerable proportion of the very highest level jobs at BSI, the company was staffed at upper-middle, middle and lower levels largely by women and served mostly women customers. In the UK, of 167 people at the middle to upper management levels, 134 (80.2%) were women. This was an unusually high percentage of women in relatively high levels of management, compared to national averages in both the United States and the UK (see for example Marshall, 1984, 1995; Morrison et al., 1987; Collinson et al., 1990). Such a percentage is large enough to create dramatic changes in organizational practices (Pettigrew and Martin, 1987).<sup>1</sup> (More detailed breakdowns of the percentages of women in various parts of the corporation are given in Martin et al., 1998.) It is rare to find a large multinational corporation where such a large proportion of female employees holds middle and upper level managerial positions. However, women were not close to a majority at the highest ranks, and in the months the study was conducted there was a widely

shared perception that increasing numbers of men were starting to be hired from outside the company into top executive positions.

Several limitations of our focus merit mention. This is a study of a single organization. The company is similar to many others in its large size, financial solvency, international scope and rapid growth. We also chose it because of the distinctiveness of its ideology and the proportion of women in its managerial ranks. Our goal was to examine an outlier – a corporation that was unusual on these two dimensions – to help us explore bounded emotionality in a large for-profit organization subject to the efficiency pressures of a competitive marketplace. This is a cross-sectional study, rather than a longitudinal account that would permit us to address questions about the origin and evolution of bounded emotionality.

#### *Data collection and analysis*

The first and second co-authors used a variety of methods, including: the study of archival materials published by the company and others; observation in offices, manufacturing plants, distribution centres, and especially on retail shopfloors; participant-observation in employee training programmes and on the shampoo bottling line; on-site structured interviews, described above; informal conversations on- and off-site, in pubs, parking lots, cafeterias and restaurants; and public events at BSI and elsewhere. We used this variety of methods not to triangulate (use different methods to show evidence supporting the same conclusions), but because these various approaches permit us to address different questions and find different kinds of answers. Inconsistencies across employees, contexts and research methods were therefore anticipated. For example, we saw contradictions between the practices we could observe and the interpretations of behaviour offered in some interviews. When such inconsistencies occurred, these issues were explored, whenever possible, in subsequent interviews and observations.<sup>2</sup> We took extensive notes regarding all interviews, lectures and seminars, and archival material. For off-site and informal conversations, we took no notes during the interactions but, at the end of each session, prepared field notes with as much accuracy as possible, preferring to omit rather than misquote. Each night, or as soon as possible, the researchers transcribed these research notes. We sorted the data captured in over 400 pages of field notes, inductively developing new and subdividing or discarding old categories, as suggested by proponents of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). One of the first new categories to emerge, unanticipated when we planned our study, was the topic of this chapter, the management of emotions.

#### **Emotion at BSI**

Although origins of a company's emotional management practices cannot be attributed solely, or perhaps even substantially, to a leader's actions or

preferences, these can be contributing factors.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, it is important to include in this account, as a piece of the puzzle, a statement from BSI's founder, Anita Roddick, regarding the company's goals and values which were institutionalized in the form of the company's charter. Focusing on emotional values, Anita Roddick explained:

I am mystified by the fact that the business world is apparently proud to be seen as hard and uncaring and detached from human values . . . the word 'love' was as threatening in business as talking about a loss on the balance sheet. Perhaps that is why using words like 'love' and 'care' is so difficult in today's extraordinarily macho business world. No one seems to know how to put the concept into practice . . . I think all business practices would improve immeasurably if they were guided by 'feminine' principles – qualities like love and care and intuition. (Roddick, 1991: 17)

Anita Roddick's use of the word 'feminine' in conjunction with qualities like love and care signals an attempt to revalue emotionally expressive characteristics, such as caring, stereotypically associated with women. She does not explicitly endorse bounded emotionality, although love and caring are congruent with it. Her language, however, intertwines instrumental objectives with emotional concerns, making it difficult to determine if she is giving priority to emotional labour over bounded emotionality. Because a leader's rhetoric and employees' reality can differ, it is essential to examine how and if these ideas are enacted.

#### *Enacting bounded emotionality*

Although the company does not explicitly advocate discussing home, family and friendship concerns at work, Body Shop employees switched easily between task-oriented concerns and the more intimate self-disclosures that provide a basis for bounded emotionality. This shifting, which blurred distinctions between public and private concerns, was evident in observations of employees at all levels of BSI, in the relative privacy of tête-à-têtes, and in the more public arenas of meetings, casual conversations among tour guides, or chatter in a manufacturing plant.

We regularly heard employees discussing a wide range of emotional topics such as sexual orientation, violence in the home, and sadness and joy about work-related matters, as well as fears and psychiatric difficulties. Non-verbal communication was affectionate and intimate (although seldom obviously sexual), with hugs, kisses and touching evident in both public and private settings, to an extent that surprised us. Although we cannot offer verbal quotations of this more intimate, individualized material because of our promises of anonymity, the following quote suggests that intimacy was a way of life at work for many Body Shop employees: 'There's lots of gay men and women in the company. In all the shops we know the ins and outs of each other's personal lives' (Frederick, Shop Clerk, Company Shop, UK).



Such self-disclosure provides a basis for assessing the subjective state of an individual. The next step in enacting bounded emotionality, according to Putnam and Mumby, is to take that information into account and adjust one's task-related interaction to fit the other's emotional preferences and limitations. For example, one employee was having trouble being filmed for a Body Shop video: 'He fucked it up half way through, but he was so stressed out, I couldn't ask him to do it again. Really, I thought he would burst into tears' (Ursula, Lower Management, Headquarters, UK). Some Body Shop employees described their working relationships in terms that suggested such interpersonal emotional calibration was a habit. Sally, a middle manager in the marketing division (a pseudonym) in the UK, showed her understanding of one of her co-workers

William works in (our group). He sees things in terms of right and wrong, numbers, prices, quantities. There is no middle ground. Figures are either right or wrong. A staff situation right now, however, has William agonizing. Difficult feedback is needed. It will hurt a person. William worries; should he give feedback now, before his vacation? He worries that he wouldn't be there after the feedback, when the pieces will need picking up. William has a high degree of sensitivity for a man.

Another aspect of bounded emotionality involves recognizing a heterarchy of values, by allowing others to have a different set of values, or a different priority of values, from oneself, not giving precedence to either person's view. This is a difficult objective to attain, and even more difficult for a researcher to see. We did note, repeatedly, that Body Shop employees of both sexes tended to portray men and women as having stereotypically different emotional preferences and styles of interaction, differences which they tried to be sensitive to: 'There are differences between men and women. Women have more emotion; (it's) not just hidden in some corner. Guys use delaying tactics while women say, "Let's just go for it." A complete over-balance either way is a problem' (Winston, Upper Management, Headquarters, UK). Strong emphasis was placed, throughout the company, on informal subjective assessments of performance, sometimes supplemented by more formal evaluation procedures. Managers, in particular, were assessed on their emotional competency, which including letting work-related feelings emerge spontaneously. Here too sex, or sexual stereotypes, were seen as creating a heterarchy of values and goals in the emotional domain: 'I manage an all-female team. I was appraised as keeping well with women's emotions; I use empathy. Women have more tears, sensitivities, PMS (pre-menstrual syndrome), more personal conflicts' (Tim, Middle Management, Headquarters, UK). Other more individuated or less stereotypical ways of respecting a heterarchy of values reflected sensitivities to differences in job responsibilities, age and personal circumstances.

According to Mumby and Putnam, these practices of intimate self-disclosure, blurring boundaries between public and private, showing sensitivity to another person's subjective state, allowing work feelings to

emerge spontaneously, and respecting a heterarchy of values and goals should allow employees to feel a kind of authenticity at work. Some Body Shop employees reported such feelings:

BSI is nice because I don't feel like I have to fit some kind of mold . . . At BSI I feel I can be more myself. (Lorie, Shop Clerk, Company Shop, USA)

Emotion is not frowned on. People have no separate work personality. You are accepted as who you are. A 'normal' corporate culture requires that you put on the personality of the company while you are at work. Not here. There are negatives (associated with this); it makes management more difficult. There is no instant obedience. People debate, then agree about what needs to be done. There are also positive (effects); people own the decision. Emotional work is sometimes a negative. There are always compromises. It would be bad not to have it, though. (Winston, Upper Management, Headquarters, UK)

It is difficult to discern from such remarks whether these feelings of authenticity are, as Mumby and Putnam assert, reinforcing a sense of an integrated self. The prevalence of sex stereotyping suggests that it may be difficult to express some aspects of a fragmented self, particularly those aspects that contradict existing sex stereotypes. Taken as a whole, the data presented above suggest that many but not all elements of bounded emotionality were enacted at BSI.

#### *Coexistence of emotional labor and bounded emotionality*

At BSI, emotion was frequently managed for instrumental purposes, although it was difficult to decipher whether such instrumentality took priority over bounded emotionality. For example, shop staff were well trained to hide emotions that might impede a sale, using emotional labour techniques similar to those in previous studies of cashiers, flight attendants and bill collectors:

A customer wanted to buy two identical baskets of Body Shop products. Two similar baskets had already been made up, but they were not exactly the same; the washcloths were different colors. Karen said, 'OK, I'll make you one exactly the same.' As Karen turned away from the customer, she rolled her eyes and smiled at the observing researcher. (Researcher, Observation in Franchise Shop, USA)

Although this behaviour could indicate bounded emotionality if the shop clerk were worried that the customer might find it difficult to deal with the clerk's feelings about the extra work being required, the researcher observing this incident was assured, in a subsequent conversation, that the clerk was simply feeling impatient with the customer's demands.

The emotionally charged atmosphere of BSI was intensified by the firm's attempt to avoid bureaucratic modes of operation. Employees had to show extreme forms of emotion, positive and negative, in order to complete

essential tasks. As one manager told us, 'It's amazing because there are loads of things that stink. It's not a sharp organization. You can't get things done easily. You don't just make a proposal. You have to pitch it – be emotional and argue it. There aren't clear channels and structure' (Martha, Upper Management, Franchise and Company Shops, UK).

Emotional labour at BSI was used to further the firm's political and environmental objectives, as well as its productivity-related concerns. For example, Roddick (1991: 170–1) explained how she used emotions to encourage employees to join in the company's various community and political action projects.

Whenever we wanted to persuade our staff to support a particular project we always tried to break their hearts. At the next franchise holders' meeting we put on a real tear-jerking audio-visual presentation, with wonderful slides of the children against a background of Willie Nelson's version of 'Bridge over Troubled Water'. And to enable members of staff to experience what we had experienced, the next edition of 'Talking Shop', the monthly video distributed throughout BSI organization, was devoted to Boys' Town and what we could do there. The response was a joy. Everyone wanted to get involved in raising money and sponsoring boys, and from that moment onwards the International Boys' Town Trust more or less became an integral part of BSI's extended family.

Roddick also encouraged employees to use emotional expression for more conventional instrumental purposes, 'Sally doesn't support women much. But she's the one who breaks down in tears with frustration. She can cry so easily. I told her it has to be used. I said, "Here, cry at this point in the . . . meeting"' (Roddick, Interview, Researcher's house, 17 November 1993). Thus, Roddick and other Body Shop employees frequently and self-consciously used emotion management techniques for instrumental organizational purposes. This combination of emotional labour and bounded emotionality created a close knit, intimate community where employees were deeply involved with each other and passionately committed to their work. (Subcultural variations at the BSI are discussed in Martin et al., 1998.)

#### *Impediments to the implementation of bounded emotionality*

Several factors made it difficult to enact bounded emotionality consistently at BSI. Some of these factors stemmed from corporate policies, such as pursuing rapid international expansion, while others were environmental causes, such as characteristics of the labour market. Other difficulties stemmed from employees' internal states and preferences, which in turn were affected by their home circumstances.

*Effects of growth* Expanding into 42 countries in a short time created enormous logistical problems that strained the company's ability to enact bounded emotionality. This can be seen in a conversation among several

employees at a 'values meeting' convened to generate commitment to the company's mission and social change agenda:

'We have no time to meet. The department is run by phone and deadlines.'

'You can find time.'

'We don't have time. We don't.'

'Individuals are islands, sidetracked because we're so busy. Sad.'

'This is a normal effect of quick growth.'

'In the old days, we were moving just as fast.'

'Everyone had the same pressure then.'

'And cared for each other more.'

The company's commitment to avoiding bureaucratic red tape exacerbated the confusion caused by growth. New hires proliferated, jobs were changed, and offices and desks were shuffled. Emotional sensitivity to another's emotional needs or work feelings required, at the very least, a knowledge of who people were and what they were supposed to be doing. This crucial information sometimes was hard to find. '(We need) pictures and names in departments. They would help us know who people are. Now we're so big we don't know the people in our own department' (Lisa, Values meeting, Headquarters, UK). Sometimes the open expression of emotion, in the midst of all this ambiguity, was clearly insensitive to employees' emotional needs, as one employee reported: 'I got called a fucking dickhead the other day. I don't know people any more. There's less friendliness. I'm scared that I know less than half the people. We need a system to build social introductions to know people – not just a voice on the phone, but a person' (Chris, Values meeting, Headquarters, UK). Under such conditions, face-to-face interactions among all or even many employees were impossible and knowledge of the subjectivities of others was scarce, as so many of the others were now strangers. The lack of interpersonal closeness due to the company's growth made it more difficult to follow through on commitment to the company's espoused values of caring and nurturance, creating instead conditions which fostered impersonality. Although it is an achievement to enact the goal of bounded emotionality, even partially, in a large for-profit organization, it is clear that BSI's rapid growth placed strains on its ability to do so.

*Limitations of the labour market* These problems were exacerbated by the influx of new hires. Growth created a need to expand the managerial staff at the headquarters in Littlehampton, on the coast of southern England. There was a shortage of qualified candidates with the requisite managerial-level retailing experience who lived within commuting distance. Experienced female managers were said to be especially hard to find. And, given that employment at BSI entailed showing evidence of prior deep commitment to the company's political, community and environmental agendas, the local labour market had been exhausted. Some of the new hires, especially at the managerial level, were criticized as lacking some of the political commitments, gender sensitivity and emotional management skills of the 'old guard'

employees. When some employees complained about a growing lack of community at BSI, they attributed it not to a lack of time or to the pressure of work to be done, nor to growth *per se*, but rather to the influx of high-ranking men hired from more traditional retailing organizations:

Now more senior males have been brought in (from the outside) and it is more male macho, more 'go get it'. Some individuals and some of these outside hires do not have empathy. (In contrast) take George (an 'old guard' employee). Janet says, 'He's an honorary female.' As the company has grown, gender comes in. Men haven't got the feminine instinct that the company was founded on. They are brought up through the company by osmosis. Caring and sharing are expressed physically in the company. People give a hug and a kiss. This is anathema for certain individuals; they tend to be those who were brought in during the last couple of years. (Tim, Middle Management, Headquarters, UK)

*Dealing with emotional diversity* Those Body Shop employees who found intimate self-disclosure and emotional expressiveness at work to be comfortable and desirable were often unsympathetic when other employees, such as some new hires, had different emotional preferences. For example, in response to an observation about managers at other companies, who avoided getting really personal or emotional at work, Sally objected: 'That's a cop out. It's like refusing to love if you've been hurt once. Don't let anyone get too close? This is crazy. If good friends can and do work together, tough stuff comes up. It's something we can handle' (Sally, Middle Management, Marketing division, UK). Those who had difficulty complying with demands for emotional openness encountered verbal hints or informal requests for conformity; threats of punishment for refusing to comply were usually latent, such as the tacit threat of withdrawn warmth and friendliness.

There were also a few formal bureaucratic procedures that encouraged compliance. For example, part of the job application process at BSI was a group interview by a panel of current employees who sought evidence of the applicant's commitment to Body Shop values and its political agendas. Morris was a Body Shop manager who had suggested that one of his acquaintances be interviewed for a managerial job. According to Morris, the panel members interviewing his acquaintance had asked, 'If BSI doesn't offer you a job, would you take a job elsewhere if you didn't know the company's policies on human rights and the environment?' When the applicant answered affirmatively, the panellists rejected him, in part, according to Morris, because they thought that if he were really committed to BSI values, he would not accept a job anywhere without investigating the company's policies in these key areas. But Morris knew that his friend was too emotionally reserved to reveal that he would accept the other job because he needed money badly to support his wife and child. The child had a severe disability and needed constant, expensive care. The rejected job applicant had intense emotions about his son and wanted to keep these feelings private. The panellists, in contrast, considered the applicant's political commitments to be of paramount importance, so that self-disclosure about the applicant's intimate

problem became an essential prerequisite for becoming a Body Shop employee. The applicant's silence was congruent with his individual emotional preferences, but he was not hired. This kind of emotional diversity creates a contradiction for bounded emotionality. Compliance pressures are used to support bounded emotionality, by sanctioning or excluding those uncomfortable with its tenets. This process contradicts bounded emotionality, by requiring acts of intolerance that fail to recognize as legitimate the emotional preferences of people with differing subjectivities and values.

*Resistance* Some Body Shop employees enacted bounded emotionality, yet simultaneously expressed some limited discomfort with it. For example, some expressed impatience with the time required to respond to the needs of others:

At an afternoon meeting in Supply, a male warehouse packer complained passionately about PZP's (Peak Zone Pallets<sup>4</sup>). His manager responded, 'Don't get emotional; let's just deal with it.' (Mike, Warehouse Manager, Supply, UK)

Sometimes there is too much talk about emotion. Right now (I wish I could say), 'Let's get on with it', but I don't. Usually people use their boss as a confidant. They aren't constrained by (the lack of privacy in an office with) open space and desks. (Tim, Middle Management, Headquarters, UK)

Sometimes employees questioned whether intense emotional expression was authentic. A supervisor apologized for a mistake and his supervisor responded: 'Don't get over-contrite' (Researcher, Observation, Supply, UK). Other employees expressed discomfort with emotional practices by joking about them. For example, at an afternoon coordination meeting, one man's complaint was countered with an unsympathetic 'I'm an emotional man here; I'm welling up', as the speaker pretended to wipe an imaginary tear from his eye. These signs of resistance were observed most frequently among men, both non-managerial employees and high-ranking managers.

*Attempts to separate public and private* The company's emotional practices, including its advocacy of merging personal and working life, sometimes met with opposition from the families of Body Shop employees. Theresa, a middle manager in UK retail operations, told us: 'And my Mum said, "Don't let (BSI job) change your character".' Jeff, a manager of a company shop in the UK, had a similar reaction: 'When I started work (at BSI) my brother said, "Don't bring your leftist vegetarian bullshit home".' It is difficult to respond to intersections between work and home when members of a family have differing opinions about what is personally and politically desirable and when some family members want to separate home and work concerns.

*Stress at work* Whenever private emotional concerns are mixed with an organization's instrumental objectives, there is a danger – particularly in a firm struggling to survive in a highly competitive market – that instrumental concerns will take priority over an individual's personal or family needs (see for example Newton et al., 1995). Signs of physical and emotional stress were

evident at BSI, particularly in some parts of the headquarters, where claims of being understaffed and overworked were common. Although we heard complaints in various parts of the company, the problems of stress were particularly visible among the tour guides who scheduled and delivered tours of the headquarters. Their feet hurt, their necks ached, the phones were ringing off the hook, visitors were clamouring for attention, and everyone was very busy. Several tour guides talked openly about the physical and emotional effects of work stress. One told us: 'I was on the phone 22 hours between Monday morning and Wednesday night. Betty (a new employee) told another Body Shop employee to piss off, and she's only been here (a very short time).' Another reported, 'Nadine is the third person to hurt her foot. You get tired and fall over – just not concentrating.' Some employees felt that working very long hours, rather than demands for emotional expressiveness and self-disclosure, made their personal and work lives merge, to the detriment of the former. This problem was evident in some shops, as well as in headquarters and some other working sites. For example:

I have no personal life . . . Each of (these particular) shops is evacuated two times a week due to terrorist threats. Each time this happens I get phone calls. It's hard on marriage. There's no way I could do my job with a child . . . To do this you need a partner who understands. The quality of life is ridiculous. At 4 am I'm up north; at 11 pm I come home, but then I have two more hours of work to do at home. I work like a maniac during the week. On Saturday I watch (Body Shop videos) at home and go through the post. I put aside one hour for the post. Sunday I do my weekly report. I try to ignore it and keep clear, but I live with a dread of the phone because I'm always on call . . . When I'm in Littlehampton (headquarters) I can't get over their hours. It seems more relaxed. I resent it a bit. (Martha, Upper Management, Franchise and Company Shops, UK)

The company's concern about stress was sufficiently strong that the headquarters provided (anonymous) counselling for those employees who wished to take advantage of this resource. As noted in Meyerson's (1994) analysis of the work stress literature, though, however helpful such a counsellor may be, the implicit message is that the work stress is an abnormal response which must be 'fixed' by fixing the individual. The blame for the problem and the responsibility for fixing it resting primarily with the individual experiencing the stress. Such an analysis overstates the case in the BSI example, as the company took the initiative to relieve the organizational sources of stress, offering paid leave to some employees, providing child care on site for some employees, and sometimes adjusting work content and working hours. Allocation of these sources of help was facilitated by the company's norms of emotional openness and self-disclosure:

People know if you are sick (from stress) or depressed from nervous exhaustion. Someone is off the team now from stress and depression. The reaction was 'Take whatever time you need to re-evaluate your life.' (Question: 'Is she paid?') Of

course. Another company might say, 'If you can't take the heat get out of the kitchen.' We (at BSI) have a full-time counsellor for us overworked people. (Tim, Middle Management, Headquarters, UK)

Roddick openly and repeatedly discussed, with evident worry, signs of stress among Body Shop employees. She was particularly concerned about the disturbing number of female employees who reported violence at home. Whereas the employees generally attributed their stress to long hours of work, Roddick stressed that the company had provided an exciting, aesthetically pleasing and emotionally supportive environment which empowered employees, and in this, most of them agreed. Roddick believed that the empowerment of female employees – economically and personally – upset the balance of power at home.

The company talks about the body, having relaxed forms of interaction. (People are) frisky, touch, hug, kiss. Women are so excited by their work. They have an emotional support system. They are valued. They have new ways of communicating. The company counselor says that employees' worst problem is domestic violence. Littlehampton is a working class town, where there are few college degrees. The men aren't prepared for the changes their wives go through after working for us. After a full day of being valued and listened to at work, they want to be valued and listened to at home. I don't know what to do about it. What is never said: do women really need a domestic relationship? (Roddick, Interview, Researcher's house, 17 November 1993)

Whether caused by overwork or a discrepancy between an exciting, empowering work environment and a more mundane, less empowered home life, both male and female employees of BSI sometimes reported considerable emotional and physical work stress. Although BSI emphasized integrating emotional concerns into the working environment, in ways that were unusual and went beyond the usual 'act nice' or 'act tough' demands of instrumental emotional display, their version of bounded emotionality provided little protection from the experience of aversive emotional stress on the job.

## Conclusion

### *Enacting bounded emotionality*

We found considerable evidence of the enactment of bounded emotionality. The employees of BSI frequently discussed intimate personal issues with co-workers. Work feelings emerged spontaneously, often with no apparent instrumental motivation. Sensitivity to the emotional limitations of co-workers tempered the expression of these emotions, as did respect for a heterarchy of values. Ambiguity, primarily caused by the firm's disdain for standardized bureaucratic procedures, was tolerated, if not enjoyed, and



ensuing feelings of frustration were freely expressed. Employees often expressed delight at the extent they felt they could 'be themselves at work', reflecting a sense of personal authenticity, although we could not determine, from our data, whether this reflected an integrated or fragmented self. Although morale varied across individuals, across time, and across parts of the organization, most employees shared a strong sense of being part of the BSI community. Thus, we found all six of the elements of bounded emotionality enacted regularly, in a large for-profit organization. This approach to the management of emotion, then, is not too idealistic for implementation in a highly competitive, large scale business context.

#### *Conformity pressures*

This enactment of bounded emotionality, however, fell short of the ideal described by Putnam and Mumby. Sometimes, for example, employees failed to listen to each other's emotional concerns, or expressed impatience with emotional needs, thereby eroding mutual understanding and perhaps, to some extent, undermining the company's well developed sense of community. Such shortfalls, we believe, are inevitable in any interpersonal context, and are especially likely to occur in a task-oriented context, such as a corporation. Of greater theoretical interest are the ways that success in enacting bounded emotionality carried seeds of its own erosion, in that pressure to conform to the ideals of bounded emotionality paradoxically undermined some of its premises. Such pressures to conform came from Anita Roddick, in her role as leader of the company, from informal pressures to conform from other employees, and from the encapsulation of bounded emotionality in formalized rules and procedures. For example, job applicants were screened for value homogeneity in group interviews, performance appraisals included assessments of a manager's demonstrated ability to express emotional empathy and sensitivity within a sex-stereotypical heterarchy of values, and company-sponsored social events fostered community building. As a package, this mix of leadership, informal emergent practices, and formal bureaucratic mechanisms of control encouraged conformity with bounded emotionality norms.

Although bounded emotionality requires respect for individuals whose values differ, employees who preferred more restrained forms of emotion management were sometimes pressured to display more open emotionality. Sometimes these conformity pressures were relatively subtle (such as gentle jokes), but in other cases, the pressures were enforced by formal procedures. It was difficult for Body Shop employees to find a balance between commitment to a form of bounded emotionality and the needs of some employees who preferred more emotional distance. These conformity demands present a dilemma that is perhaps inherent in bounded emotionality: how can a variety of emotional preferences be honoured in a heterarchy of values, without eroding bounded emotionality itself?

*Coexistence of bounded emotionality and emotional labour*

Bounded emotionality did not displace more conventional forms of emotion management at BSI. Employees also freely and frequently engaged in emotional labour – for example, smiling to increase productivity or using tears to help get a task completed. In addition, even apparently non-instrumental behaviour at BSI may have indirectly served instrumental organizational purposes – for example, by increasing loyalty and commitment to the firm or by reinforcing the sense that this was a uniquely desirable place to work. In addition, it is likely that feelings of authenticity created productivity benefits for the company because of reactions such as: ‘I can do my best work when I can be myself.’ Although the bounded emotionality model draws a conceptual distinction between instrumental emotional labour and non-instrumental work feelings, in practice it is virtually impossible to maintain such separation, particularly in a high-commitment organization like BSI, where many employees expressed a deep satisfaction with their work and saw congruence between their values and those of the company. Mumby and Putnam draw attention to the possibility of such congruence, and in most parts of BSI we found that emotional labour and bounded emotionality were indeed hard to separate.

*Obstacles to implementing bounded emotionality*

Several factors threatened BSI’s ability to continue implementing bounded emotionality. The organization’s increased size had detrimental effects because it increased both the amount of work and the number of employees who did not know each other or each other’s job responsibilities. The company’s growth also made it more difficult to hire and retain a demographically and ideologically homogeneous group of employees from the local labour market. Many job applicants with the requisite retailing experience came from more traditional organizations, lacked an intense commitment to BSI’s political agenda, and were uncomfortable with the emotional expressiveness required by bounded emotionality. In addition, most of these job applicants were men, making it more difficult to maintain the company’s commitment to providing opportunities for managerial positions to women. Further, many of BSI’s long-term employees, who had been hired when they were young and single, were now married and anticipating caring for children or ageing parents. The goals and attributes of an ageing workforce did not mesh easily with the company’s predilection for extremely long working hours and high-pressure performance. Many of the long-term employees were women, a fact that exacerbated these anticipated difficulties, because women would do so much of the dependent care within the family. Such difficulties were intensified by the fact that BSI was subject to the pressures of a highly competitive marketplace. BSI’s financial success and public stock offering created demands for rapid growth, and that growth exacerbated the effects of local labour market limitations. BSI was in danger

of losing its distinctiveness and becoming imprisoned, with so many other formerly innovative organizations, in the iron cage of bureaucracy, with its traditional and normative emphases on impersonality and emotional labour.

Despite the obstacles, however, the company had so far managed to maintain two distinguishing features that may have facilitated the continued implementation of bounded emotionality: a relatively high proportion of women employees, some with high-level managerial positions, and a relatively strong ideological commitment to finding ways of doing business differently. The presence of one or both of these factors may be key to resisting bureaucratic isomorphism, at least in the domain of bounded emotionality. In large for-profit organizations, would the presence of a high proportion of women, with a significant minority at the highest ranks, be enough to sustain bounded emotionality? Or, would ideology alone suffice, perhaps in the firms that have joined the Social Venture Network, a network of organizations with ideologies similar, in some ways, to that of BSI? Or, because so many women do not seek to do business differently, must both factors be present? If studies addressing questions such as these could show that bounded emotionality is more pervasive than we thought, or that emotional labour need not be as pervasive as it is, such research would be an important contribution to organizational theory and practice.

*Bounded emotionality: a more dangerous form of control?*

Because this firm is, to a large extent, successful in enacting bounded emotionality, it provides an opportunity to question the desirability of this approach to managing emotions. Is bounded emotionality a better way of doing business, from employees' points of view, or is it a more effective, more invasive, and therefore potentially more dangerous control mechanism? Answers to this question represent a matter of opinion, and opinions will differ. Below we analyse both sides of the question and offer our own judgements.

A pro-bounded-emotionality interpretation of these data would echo Mumby and Putnam's enthusiasm for the advantages of personal authenticity at work. Generally, most Body Shop employees appreciated the chance to 'be themselves' at work, to share their personal joys and sadnesses, and to join in a community with others who shared their political and communitarian convictions, as well as intimate knowledge of their personal lives and emotional ups and downs. To the extent that BSI did not provide a perfect working environment, it was, in the eyes of most of the employees we studied, better than the available alternatives, where the same conflicts of interest between employee and employer might surface, often in a more alienating or exploitative form. When conflicts between individual and organizational interests did occur, the emotional and physical needs of employees were often given priority, as when stressed employees were given paid leave or tasks were left incomplete in order to spare an employee emotional turmoil.

An anti-bounded-emotionality interpretation would note that when organizational commitments to profit making conflicted with individual interests or other organizational interests that had been democratically chosen by employees, organizational tasks often took precedence over 'personal' concerns. For example, tour guides experienced physical as well as emotional work stress (their necks and feet ached), and some shop staff worked such long hours that their physical needs for sleep and relaxation, and their emotional needs for family life, were not met. When work encroached on family and personal time, BSI did not change organizational practices, for example by reducing chronic long hours; instead it provided formal mechanisms to alleviate the resulting stress on individuals, through private counselling, time off and day care, in effect blaming individuals for organization-caused difficulties (Meyerson, 1994). From this perspective, bounded emotionality can be interpreted as emotional exploitation.

There is no conclusive empirical means of disconfirming or supporting one of these interpretations at the expense of the other. The authors of this chapter differ in our opinions. One of us worries that, while most people at BSI sincerely believed in the company's espoused values, the rhetoric may have been stronger than the implementation. According to this co-author, sometimes the leftist political, environmental and humanitarian rhetoric (such as stated commitments to elements of bounded emotionality) seemed to be used primarily to sell cosmetics for a profit, living up to promises only when such promises did not conflict with commercial objectives. From this perspective, the physical and emotional signs of employee stress, outlined above, are convincing evidence of a lack of good faith.

The other two co-authors of this chapter take these signs of stress very seriously, and see them as an area meriting serious ameliorative action, but nevertheless believe that this company was trying hard to enact its ideals, including bounded emotionality. One of these co-authors feels that large firms in the private sector have more difficulty enacting bounded emotionality because such firms are more likely to employ people with divergent emotional preferences. In such contexts, bounded emotionality may also be more needed, because pressures for growth and profit may make emotional labour, and emotional exploitation, more likely. In comparison with other large firms in the private sector, this co-author thinks that BSI was more effective in enacting bounded emotionality. Many employees of BSI, including Anita Roddick, made a point of trying to respect differences in emotional preferences, in accord with bounded emotionality's emphasis on a heterarchy of values – perhaps the most difficult aspect of bounded emotionality to enact. However, BSI did not enact bounded emotionality as well as small, non-profit or feminist organizations have done. In part, this shortfall may have occurred because small, feminist organizations may attract and hire people with similar emotional preferences rather than people with a variety of emotional profiles. According to this co-author, bounded emotionality may represent an unattainable ideal for most large for-profit firms, unless they deliberately set out to hire people with similar emotional preferences – making respect

for individual differences in values less difficult to attain but also less needed.

The last of the co-authors did not disagree with these descriptions of the ways BSI failed to attain the ideal of bounded emotionality, but was more forgiving. She noted that the company had never set out to attain this, or any other emotional ideal, other than to be a 'caring' company where expressions of words like love would not be inappropriate. From this perspective, BSI was like Ivory soap – certainly not perfect but '98 percent pure'. Although our estimates of the purity of the company's motives varied, all three of us thought that the company deserved credit for its efforts to do business differently within the constraints of a highly competitive industry. In contrast to the constrained emotional expression norms of most large for-profit organizations, BSI was attempting to move, and to a substantial extent succeeded, toward a form of bounded emotionality – one that, perhaps inevitably, coexisted with conventional forms of emotional labour.

### Acknowledgements

Portions of the research reported here were supported by the Graduate School of Business, Stanford University and, for Kathy Knopoff, the Cate Muther Fellowship for doctoral research on women entrepreneurs. Exceptionally helpful comments were offered by Debra Meyerson, Robin Ely, and the reviewers and editor of this journal. We give special thanks to Anita Roddick and the employees of The Body Shop International. This chapter is based on an earlier article, entitled 'An alternative to bureaucratic impersonality and emotional labor: bounded emotionality at The Body Shop', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1998, 43: 429–69.

### Notes

- 1 There are studies that suggest that women are more likely than men to engage in self-disclosure, express a wider range of emotions, and seek ways to acknowledge the inseparability of work and personal lives without letting work concerns take priority over family needs (see for example Allen and Haccoun, 1976; Eagly and Johnson, 1990; Ely, 1995; Fletcher, 1995). A few researchers attribute such differences to biology, but most argue they are an effect of socially or culturally constructed differences – for example, differential socialization of men and women or differential recruitment and control mechanisms (see for example Ekman, 1973; Acker and Van Houten, 1974; Zajonc, 1985; Harding, 1993; Kitayama and Markus, 1996).
- 2 A brief description of feminist methodology might be useful in the context of this volume, as such methods are particularly helpful in studying emotions in field contexts. We used a variety of qualitative methods, some of which were more detached and traditional, such as observation, while others were more congruent with feminist approaches, such as the in-depth interviews described above. Feminist methodology requires that researchers not conduct themselves, or write,

as distanced, objective, neutral disembodied experts, but rather that they seek to establish mutual trust and understanding between researchers and study participants (see for example Oakley, 1981; McRobbie, 1982). We are white women, as were most of the study participants. According to feminist theory, intimacy, demographic similarity and subjective rapport with study participants should elicit more honest self-disclosure, an approach that some consider more ethical and more informative (such as Laws, 1978; Oakley, 1981) and others see as a manipulative way for researchers to collect better data (Stacey, 1996). Feminist methods allow the participant's experience to come through in her own voice (Laws, 1978), shifting the relationships between the researchers and participants toward mutual understanding (Bernard, 1982; McRobbie, 1982), and the prerogative of interpretation and analysis from the researcher to the participant (Graham, 1984). Such an approach evokes a more interactive, personalized and intense form of talk in which respondents become conversational partners, capable of structuring and directing the interviews more on their own terms. In accord with these premises, we began each scheduled interview with some information about ourselves, encouraging questions. After promising anonymity, we began with relatively non-threatening questions about the interviewee's career path in the company and current job responsibilities. As soon as possible (we watched for signs of self-disclosure, comfort and physical ease) we encouraged interviewees to tell stories about specific recent events. Graham (1984) argues, and we concur, that the self-structured format of story telling enables free-flowing narrative and can counter some of the privileging of the researchers' role in generating knowledge. To keep the conversation going, and to deepen our contextual understanding, we used planned, relatively non-directive probes for details (What happened next? Why? Who else was involved?) and then asked for emotional reactions (How did you feel about that? What problems did that cause?). After each specific event history, we probed for the meanings of events and processes, asking study participants for their interpretations (What did that mean to you? What lesson did you draw from that event?). If we had an interpretation, we would check with study participants to see if we had misunderstood or not fully comprehended their viewpoints. During the majority of the interviews, gender issues were raised spontaneously by the employee; when this did not happen, the investigators opened the subject at the end of the interview with a question tailored to the respondent's job and responsibilities.

- 3 The origins of an organization's practices regarding the management of emotion are difficult to decipher. Some researchers argue that leaders can control practices, even in such domains as emotion, by articulating goals and values that organizational members will come to share and enact (see for example Schein, 1985). Other scholars are sceptical of all claims about the power of managerial rhetoric and stress that members will react differently to leaders' value statements – some members 'buying in' and others reacting negatively or neutrally. From this point of view, organizational members develop and maintain their own goals, values and practices, with as much independence from managerial priorities as they can manage (see for example Van Maanen and Barley, 1984; Kunda, 1992). This conflict of views may be overdrawn, as there is evidence that cultural consensus can emerge from both top-down and bottom-up origins; in addition, it is important to distinguish managerial value rhetoric from employees' values and employees' practices, as these all may differ (see Martin, 1992, for a review).
- 4 Peak Zone Pallets are more readily accessible, containing high turnover products.

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