

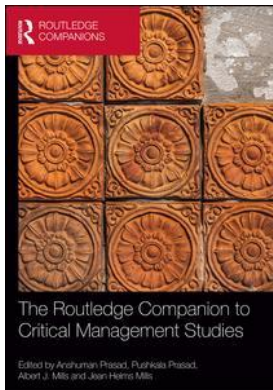
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 27 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Companion to Critical Management Studies

Anshuman Prasad, Pushkala Prasad, Albert J. Mills, Jean Helms Mills

An ethic of care within Critical Management Studies?

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315889818.ch3>

Emma Bell, Susan Meriläinen, Scott Taylor, Janne Tienari

Published online on: 08 Sep 2015

How to cite :- Emma Bell, Susan Meriläinen, Scott Taylor, Janne Tienari. 08 Sep 2015, *An ethic of care within Critical Management Studies?* from: The Routledge Companion to Critical Management Studies Routledge

Accessed on: 27 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315889818.ch3>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

An ethic of care within Critical Management Studies?

Emma Bell, Susan Meriläinen, Scott Taylor and Janne Tienari

Introduction

As this book and others make clear, critical analyses of management constitute a wide field where researchers draw from different theoretical traditions. This variety notwithstanding, Alvesson & Deetz (2000) suggest that Critical Management Studies (CMS) is primarily concerned with the ways in which powerful actors contribute to freezing social reality for the benefit of certain sectional interests at the expense of others. Although the community of scholars who associate themselves with CMS is as broad as the theoretical range, a sense of social justice is perhaps something that unites them/us, especially when contrasted with their more managerialist colleagues. In addition, the reflexive recognition that knowledge has a politics brings together critical scholars, again, relative to their mainstream fellow academics (Parker & Thomas, 2011). Overall, this ethic of social justice and epistemological sensitivity can be seen as the central characteristics of critical management scholarship (Wray-Bliss, 2003).

As might be expected in a community founded in part on reflexivity, debating what CMS is and might be has become an academic discussion in its own right (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Fournier & Grey, 2000; Wray-Bliss, 2003; Grey, 2004; Grey & Willmott, 2005; Adler, Forbes & Willmott, 2007; Spicer, Alvesson & Karreman, 2009; Alvesson, Bridgman & Willmott, 2009; Rowlinson & Hassard, 2011; Tatli, 2011). For some, it is now fashionable to predict the demise of CMS and to think beyond it. Much of this discussion has been led by a handful of influential CMS scholars. It focuses on what being critical means and what CMS is as a theoretical and political project, rather than envisioning what it could be as a sociocultural community.

There have been attempts to rebalance this conversation by shifting attention towards reflection on the power relations associated with embodied academic practices, especially with regard to gender (Katila & Meriläinen, 2002; Maclaren, Miller, Parsons & Surman, 2009; Bell & King, 2010; Ford & Harding, 2010). For these writers and community members, CMS must be understood as an organization like any other, where processes of domination, subordination and resistance may be observed and critiqued. Despite the sensitivity of CMS scholars to analysis of power relations and dominant rationalities in the organizational contexts we study, and despite the increasing presence of reflexive accounts of the cultures of CMS, we still cannot help but feel that the CMS community does not always embody the principles it preaches.

For this reason, we explore here how ideas about what is expected of a CMS academic have become sedimented into a particular set of established rationalities that constitute the basis for a body of thought – and how these ideas have also become a means of determining which bodies can legitimately participate in academic work (Townley, 2008). Analysing how we as active critical management scholars take part in reproducing such rationalities, we focus on the intellectual and physical ways in which the ethics of being critical are constructed within the CMS project. In doing this, we are aiming, first, to bring the dominant embodied rationalities that characterize CMS as a social community (and are used to frame this intellectual and political project) into an analytical space; second, to analyse how the centre of CMS is constructed relative to its margins; and, third, to present some alternatives to this by introducing the possibility of enacting a feminist ethic of care (Held, 2006).

Our principal aim is to suggest that an ethic of care may be seen as a complement to the ethic of justice which has traditionally formed the *raison d'être* for CMS. Through this we explore the possibility of being different, as well as thinking and acting differently (Burrell, 2009). Our analysis can be read as an exploration of how self and social (Thomas, 2009) might be better aligned in a productive way, rather than providing yet another resigned contemplation of the 'horror of the tensions' (Burrell, 2009: 557) and contradictions involved in embodying CMS and its values. We realize that this might be considered naïve and idealistic and that parts of our account are dangerously close to whining or grumbling, but for us an inherent part of belonging to the CMS community involves contemplating the construction of not yet existing, yet closer to ideal worlds.

The chapter is organized as a conversation among the four authors, through which we highlight the importance of relationships in constructing community within CMS. This dialogue is grounded in sharing our experiences of participating in the knowledge production process from a variety of positions: journal editor, author, lecturer, PhD supervisor or examiner, reviewer, conference participant. The opportunity to write together about these issues came about when one of us was invited to contribute a chapter to this edited collection and subsequently invited the others to collaborate on it. Having agreed to write the chapter together, we undertook collectively to talk, think and write, with the aim of generating autoethnographic data based on our experiences within CMS (Parry & Boyle, 2009; Snyder-Young, 2011).

The inset sections come from dialogues between the authors. They are deliberately not attributed to any one individual. Although that has implications for the reader's ability to contextualize the experiences described, we would like the story to be considered as extracts from a single narrative that we have all contributed to. We present it as a 'story for consideration' (Sparkes, 2007) made up of, and from, moments that we have lived through, in our human bodies, over time and in various spaces. Having written this piece, we will now try to remain living in the story, reflecting and becoming, changing and being changed as we try to create meaning in and through our academic work.

Throughout the chapter, we write as 'we'. This means four scholars and teachers who share a belief in social justice but differ in terms of positions and interests as academics at the time of writing (Thomas, Tienari, Davies & Meriläinen, 2009). Emma was a happy, recently appointed professor at Keele University in the U.K., who had contributed to and drawn on CMS for most of her academic working life. Susan was a professor at the University of Lapland in Finland and feels a stronger sense of belonging to feminist communities than to Critical Management Studies. Scott had recently taken up the position of reader at University of Birmingham; he enjoys working at home and would be bereft if CMS disappeared. Janne was a professor at Aalto University in Finland. For him, the critical is about challenging the 'taken-for-granted' and self-evident, and he feels that CMS has provided great opportunities for doing so. We are very clear that, both independently and as a group of four, we take part in reproducing practices and conventions in

the CMS field and do not imply that we are somehow beyond the issues that we reflect upon in this chapter. We are, as we all are, only human . . .

The emergence of dominant rationalities

He [the ideal critical scholar] is well published and publishing more all the time, furiously active and mobile – always on the move to prove his theoretical elegance and up-to-date-and-beyond knowledge to significant other critical scholars. Talking, writing, publishing. A lot. This is how muscle is built: living up to the hyperactive ‘ideal’. I’m whining again because I have problems with this, playing the role of that kind of ‘ideal’ critical scholar. My physique and mental capacity are not geared to constant fiery-eyed argumentation and elbowing those who come in my way. Moreover, I was raised in a society where the building of consensus and welfare for all was considered to be a smart idea, rather than pitting groups of people against each other.

This chapter began with the shared understanding that there is an ideal critical scholar, an academic star, whom we are unlikely, perhaps unable, definitely unwilling, to become. We believe that certain forms of reasoning have been constructed and inscribed as rational and reasonable within CMS and therefore see a need to examine how the community constructs itself as a rationalized field of knowledge production. In thinking about this, we returned to an analytical frame that we have found helpful in thinking about the organizations we study and teach about every day: Townley’s (2008) argument that practical reasoning and rationality form the basis for the construction of knowledge. Townley (2008: 9) argues that what organizational members and analysts understand as rational ‘needs to be examined for its power effects and power for its inscription in rationality’. She is interested in exploring the interstices generated when we practise rationalities, to question the assumption that rationality inheres in certain tools, policies or actions. Instead, she argues, reason is always ascribed so that anything we understand as rational qualifies as such only *in context*. In other words, rationalities can only be an active human production.

It seems to us, as active members of CMS, that axes of power (knowledge, discipline and subjectivity) regulate the organization of the community and are underpinned by dominant and suppressed rationalities. However, the practised embodiment of these rationalities in which ‘the location of reason within the physical body of the reasoning subject . . . [and recognition of] the importance of the tacit, emotional and psychoanalytical as dimensions which inform the rational’ (Townley, 2008: 15) is something that is conspicuous by its absence, both when we practise community and when we write about it. As the opening quote from our conversations indicates, the degree of embeddedness that we experience in relation to CMS ‘has implications for how it constructs the individual and produces different subject positions from which to speak’ (Townley, 2008: 207).

How much is enough?

The big boys of “critical management studies” are big for a reason. They’ve developed muscles, and they know how to take care of themselves. I like to whine about this, but see some of the symptoms in myself. Perhaps I have become too preoccupied with getting stuff published . . . and I guess that part of my recent disappointments is that I realize that I don’t carry any weight . . . I feel inadequate. I don’t have muscle.

As we thought about the critical community, we returned again and again to the idea and practice of publishing. Putting ideas and arguments into print is surely the purest form of disembedded

rationality within academic work (Townley, 2008). It is also a key means of satisfying performance measures that we are all subject to. For most of us, it involves constructing arguments based on Enlightenment rationalities to try to contribute to establishing universal truths about organizing and managing. In principle, we often also reason that we publish because we feel we have something to say, to make a contribution to problematizing existing inadequate knowledge, to create greater understanding or insight – reasoning from within our professional community ideals. In practice, it appears we publish as a result of a variety of economic, bureaucratic, or even technocratic rationalities that encourage reasoning from a disembedded object-oriented position.

The recognition and appreciation of fellow critical scholars is a central preoccupation for us because the community would not exist without public statements of position and difference. However, our conversations are woven through with doubts about the process of publishing, the effects its prominence has on career progress and personhood and the feelings of adequacy or inadequacy that publishing can produce. We read this preoccupation as a symptom of a deeply ingrained sense of what it means to be a convincing academic in the eyes of others. Although we sometimes like to think otherwise, there is no escape for critical *scholars* from an institutionalized preoccupation with publishing in the ‘right’ journals. In order to achieve in the eyes of our employers, to be legitimate in our community, it seems we are destined to reproduce ways of practising our profession that we say we despise. As we complain about the dominance of publishing in constructing community relations, as we recognize that these practices construct and reconstruct an ideal subject, which is at the same time attainable and elusive, something that can never be truly achieved – we strive to publish our work.

The metaphor of muscles that we used as we wrote this chapter was intended to signify the competitive, often masculine ethos that pervades contemporary academia. Our experience suggests that those who publish a lot gain a much higher degree of legitimacy to speak in the name of critical scholarship. In particular, agenda-setting and territorializing statements about CMS tend to be written by members of the community with ‘big muscles’ (or aspirations to develop them), publishing in the right places, time and again.

But as we all know, writing itself and working through the publishing process are extremely time-consuming. For those of us who publish three, four, five or even more pieces of work each year, sometimes all in ‘high-level’ journals, how does this work? Obviously we choose our orientation when we decide to do academic work; the traditional binary of ‘teaching oriented’ or ‘research focused’ can be complemented by a desire to do institutional labour as programme director, providing pastoral care for students or taking responsibility for accreditation.

Task orientation of this kind is, however, a choice with significant ethical implications. While the popular image of the lone scholar hunched over a desk may not be as valid today as in medieval times, publishing work remains a largely self-contained activity, even when pursued through collaboration. It excludes much other academic work simply in terms of time and effort required. As well as reducing the ability to contribute to institutional maintenance or student development, we think it also has implications for the enactment of an ethic of care.

The dominant rationality of publishing has a tendency to disembed us from everyday social norms of behaving humanely towards colleagues with whom we build our profession:

I’ve been working on a journal paper with a colleague who is not ‘REF-ready’. She has been funded by her university to develop this piece of work, on the understanding that it would result in a highly ranked journal paper. We submitted it to a ‘good’ journal, and ensured it would speak to the journal’s readership. It went through two reviews and was then rejected by the editor . . . but the important thing was how we worked together during the process – my colleague seemed to be under a very high degree of pressure throughout, emailing and

phoning in ways to make me concerned about her. Oddly, since the paper was rejected, she's become much more calm and amiable.

We have come to think that a desire to be appreciated within our academic community in relation to publishing, through our publication, can produce feelings of insecurity, make us less calm and amiable. The audit cultures that many of us work within (Sparkes, 2007) and the practices of publishing inevitably encourage us to compete with each other – including, perhaps especially, our fellow critical scholars. We become each other's calculative enemies. To appreciate, support and help one another more, in whatever form that takes, would involve a lot of courage, especially if we think we are challenging a well-developed set of cultural norms.

As part of our multiple roles, we are also observing disembedded rationalities, ethics of un-care, from the other side of the publishing fence when acting as a reviewer:

About a year ago I was asked by a critical journal to review a paper. I noticed from the document name when I downloaded it that the paper was at the third revision stage. I read the paper, didn't like it, thought about it, read it again, liked it even less, and thought some more. Finally I wrote a two-page review, structuring it by saying that I was going to recommend acceptance because I didn't think it was very ethical to recommend rejection of a paper at this stage, especially coming to the review process so late in the game. However, to satisfy my own feelings about the paper I wrote a very careful outline of why I disliked it and felt it should not be published.

A few weeks later the editor's decision came to my inbox. The paper had been rejected. I felt pleased. There were three reviews – mine, another recommending acceptance with very minor revisions, and a third recommending rejection for many of the same reasons I had objected to the paper.

Then an odd thing happened. I was looking for a paper that I wanted on the journal's early publication page. As I did [this], I found the paper I had reviewed and that had been rejected – this was around 4 months after the rejection. I read it; it was the same paper, a full paper, and it even incorporated some of the comments I had written, word for word in some cases. I was puzzled, a little unhappy, and curious – but what could I do? It was published. I was only a referee, and a minor referee at that. What would you do? I did nothing, for about 3 months. Then I decided to write to the associate editor and ask about it, offering the option not to respond. To his great credit, he replied at length. [It seems] the paper's authors had protested, perhaps loudly. This worries me. Especially as I now know who the paper's authors are – they have a reputation for . . . their approach to publishing, playing the game. The final irony? The paper is about reflexivity. I also feel that there's something else going on here, which relates to a desire to take up journal space.

None of us labors under the illusion that peer reviewing is a 'pure' process, and we benefit from our location within the community in being granted voice (as in this chapter). However, we are concerned if a willingness to exercise voice during the peer review process for journal publishing, on which our professional standing and positions depend, can become a route to presence in this way. At conferences or in seminars, we might be more accepting of this kind of vocalizing, even if we don't like it when the same people are given space to speak, again and again.

But what if those with voice are just as insecure and vulnerable as the rest of us? Perhaps they, too, feel pressured to publish all the time in a competitive space where yesterday's heroes are just that, gone and forgotten. When do they decide that they have done (or had) enough, that they are safe or secure? Perhaps when they publish a paper in every issue of every journal. . . .

Embodied masculinism

In trying to think through the ways our community practices giving and denying voice and the associated rationalities, we are confronted with the inevitable observation that both are closely bound together with modernist masculinities. Masculinism often materializes in assertive and aggressive behavior. Is it wrong—unreasonable—to note that this is a significant dynamic within the CMS community?

There are many masculinities, of which informalism and careerism are two, as David Collinson and Jeff Hearn remind us. In my experience, these building blocks make up a powerful contemporary, apparently easy-going, but very competitive masculinity. And yes, we have witnessed that this can take a macho-critical form. Macho-critters . . . beat their chests in seminars and conferences, and through text as authors, editors and reviewers.

When apparently amiable critical scholars suddenly burst out in aggressive criticism of others' work, the experience is uncomfortable and scary. The feeling is very physical in seminars and conferences where presenters are humiliated in front of their peers; shoulders drop, faces and necks redden, sweat begins to appear. The same practice is reproduced, from a safe and anonymous distance, in texts such as reviewer statements. Young aspiring scholars learn the practice of humiliation from their more senior idols:

Is masculinity necessarily contextual? Becoming part of the community, the in-group, the gang, is crucial for individuals in playing the critical management academic, like it is for any social group. And like in any social group, chieftains, medicine men, totems and rituals emerge over time, and start forming the context that then informs and affects the ways in which individuals think that they are expected to behave to be appreciated and to be able to climb the group hierarchy. A particular form of masculinity becomes part of the (re)production of the context as well as us, a self-fulfilling process, perhaps.

Animalistic competition and survival of the fittest become the name of the masculinist game. It seems that, despite all of our reflexivity and desire to promote social justice in other communities, we continue to act according to the rationality we feel that we somehow must embody:

A couple of weeks ago [we] had a presentation in a doctoral seminar at [my colleague's] department. There were about 10–15 people present. Many of them were our colleagues (as well as good friends). We did the presentation in English because we knew that one of our friends was bringing her colleague from abroad to the seminar. Very soon after we had started (I guess it was when we showed our second slide, in which we described the aim of our study) one of our colleagues stopped us and said that she couldn't understand what we were doing. We tried to give her an answer, but again she interrupted us and said that she still didn't understand what we are doing and asked us to explain what we meant by sensorial cues, sensorial way of knowing, etc. We did our best to answer but she was still not satisfied. And this continued almost until the end of our presentation. I was very unhappy after the seminar. Perhaps this was because the situation reminded me of things that [I] wrote about in the mid-1990s, i.e. about the aggressive atmosphere in the doctoral seminars. When I told about my feelings to one of my female colleagues after the seminar she said that her interpretation of the situation was quite different. She thought that this was the way we always communicate with each other, calling into question each other's viewpoints, being

straightforward and even aggressive when expressing our own opinions. To be quite honest, many of the critical management scholars whom I know . . . are a bit like this. Their behaviour could be described as unfriendly. Of course this does not apply to everyone, but perhaps it is characteristic at least to some of the CMS scholars. Here I refer especially to conference behaviour and especially the ways in which they behave in the official situations like when commenting on others' presentations. I also paid attention to the bodily postures and facial expressions of my CMS friends during our seminar presentation. The facial expression of some of them signalled 'I couldn't care less' or 'how boring' or 'there is nothing new in what you are saying'. It is quite difficult to describe on which kind of bodily postures and facial expressions my interpretations are based, but let me try. Imagine a person sitting slightly aside, looking a bit grumpy (sour?) and arms across, or another person sitting in the second row, gaze wandering around and restless bodily movements.

Masculinism materializes in assertive and aggressive behaviour for women just as much as for men (as in this story). Humiliating others is a *practice*, and playing the intellectual sophistication game is one of its forms – often through professing a lack of understanding of what the speaker is trying to do. Critical scholars seem to have an urge to revert to their theoretical sophistication when they feel a need to question and challenge (and sometimes humiliate) others. But there is always someone who has read one more book than you.

At the same time as we are critical of others, our own behaviours are also open to the same interpretation:

Both I and [a male colleague] served as pre-examiners in this process [of examining a PhD]. However, [my male colleague] was the one who was also invited to serve as the external examiner [in the viva]. I guess this was a bit of a surprise for both of us because we thought that a female examiner would be a more politically correct choice. When [we] talked about this we both had different explanations for such a choice. I thought that [he] was chosen because he comes from a much more prestigious university than I do. [My male colleague] in turn thought that it was because he is a milder (more tolerant/permissive) person than I am. To put it in another way, he thought that I might be thought of as a too-critical person and, thus, would ask too difficult questions of the doctoral student. I have to admit that for my taste [he] behaved far too gently [during the viva]. He did not ask any difficult questions directly. On the contrary, when he had a more difficult question in mind he talked about the issue for a while before asking the question, kind of softening the way for the doctoral student. And when the doctoral student was not answering soon enough, he either said 'I am not even expecting an answer to this question' or started to answer it himself. When reflecting on this now I realize that I kind of associate criticality to being straightforward, i.e. going straight to the point. One of the rituals in the [post-viva] is that the doctoral student gives a speech after the main course and everybody (s)he mentions in her/his speech is supposed to answer to this speech. I was a bit surprised when the doctoral student spoke to me (after first thanking the external examiner and the [main supervisor]) and said that for some reason she was a little bit afraid of receiving my assessment in the pre-examination phase. I thought, 'Oh my god! Am I that scary?'

Formality is an important aspect of academic work, critical or otherwise. We construct and maintain our communities through ritual, symbolism and beliefs. We might think that being critical would involve challenging such conventions, problematizing them, resisting them, perhaps through informality. This is certainly one way to work around damaging modernist rationalities, inasmuch as it provides more space for 'being nice' and embodying an ethic that provides

an alternative to public humiliation and the creation of physically threatening conflict. However, an ethic of care does not simply involve being friendly or asking only easy questions of people; rather, it suggests a way of being that brings together human care with good thinking – care-full analysis, perhaps.

These forms of embodied masculinism run through our work in many contexts. Two of us presented the work in this chapter at an international conference. We received encouragement from some of the 10 or so people in the room:

One person in the audience, who has recently got his PhD and is in his first [academic] post, said that he liked our writing because it drew attention to the normality of these experiences, enabling him to feel that he was not alone/abnormal; he saw this kind of confession as a form of resistance.

Following this, however, the conversation took a different turn:

The comments were, I felt, mostly supportive and constructive – but I didn't enjoy the few minutes when [a prominent critical scholar] spoke; it seemed to be very directed and a little angry. Thinking about the comments now, and my physical and cognitive response to them (nervous and fearful, respectively), I could relate it to status within the community (I see this person as very status-ful) – or I could relate it to the way that the comments challenged the purpose of our analysis, in the 'where is this going?' question (I finally came up with a response to this, 2 days later – for me, it's going towards practice, in that I hope to be able to enact/embody an ethic of care) – or I could relate it to my realisation, stimulated by the overall theme of the session, that there are limits to my (desire for) reflexivity (and perhaps should be).

Oh, and to the very belated realisation that we're all four writing about our marginality – three full professors/one reader working at good universities, two white men, four white people, two native English speakers and two Scandinavian English speakers, four people who are demonstrably successful in publishing and well regarded as teachers, four able-bodied people, one [until recently] editor of a very well regarded journal, two Academy CMS Division co-chairs. . . our individual and collective achievements are many! So I feel like anyone would be justified in saying 'Analyse that!' as the saying goes.

It is interesting to think, months after this discomfiting experience, that the comments made were helpful in developing our analysis further. However, the approach, the ethic enacted in the moment, still rankles for the person who made the presentation. The day came to a good end, though, when this happened:

Later on that day, there was a session [about future possibilities for CMS]. It was a panel discussion involving [five men] as presenters; the room was full. I only caught the end of it but I gathered that there was some unhappiness in the audience about the extent to which the time had been used by presenters to talk and others had been able to contribute. A woman whom I recognised from our earlier session came up to me and said, 'You could use this as a story for your paper, it illustrates what you've been talking about perfectly'.

'Ideal' bodies

It has become clear to us, as we have told each other stories, talked and written together, that academic work provides a cultural setting for the development of security, insecurity,

celebrity, obscurity and experiences of work that are sometimes bizarre but always meaningful in multiple ways. Although we have read many accounts of organization and work that analyse dynamics of embodiment, meaning or injustice, we remain surprised (and perhaps disturbed) that our own professional community is host to practices that we would condemn in other contexts. It seems that strength is power, size matters and bodies are simply carriers for the intellect.

We have returned again and again in our conversations to the idea of embodiment, in different variations. It is also present in Townley's (2008) categories of rationality; her third variety of reason's enactment rests on the notion that we all act, think and reason in and through our bodies. This can make some of us uncomfortable, especially if we aspire to an ideal type of disembodied scholarly practice. Despite this reluctance, in conversation we have gradually come to talk about embodiment, ours and others', and what we see as the ideal body of a CMS scholar. Someone like this:

CMS is a man's game, I think, in terms of body counting and also in relation to modes of working, interaction, theory . . . I think it helps a lot to be tall, have a loud speaking voice, and an ability to put at least one, preferably three, obscure conceptual terms in each sentence. I wonder why I think of theory as masculine, though.

This ideal subject, (re)constructed in and through practices of conferencing and publishing, does not react with the body—at least in showing any weakness. However, the experience of academic work is always a bodily one. This was evident in the international conference where we presented our work:

Anyways, after the session I did the usual things – went to the toilet, drank some water, wished I still smoked, wandered around – then I decided to go visit another part of the conference altogether.

I woke up a couple of times the night after the presentation, with beautifully crafted elegant sentences on the tip of my tongue. During the presentation I mostly spoke in short, blunt sentences. I think I communicated the key issues of a) the need for cultural and ethical reflexivity, b) the need to think about our community in the ways we think about other social groups and organizations, and c) the need to consider the rationalities and ethics of care we practice. But I really don't know.

It seems that the ideal subject that is (re)constructed in the practices of conferencing, and publishing, and cannot show vulnerability in front of others. In this sense, critical scholars are probably no different from more mainstream colleagues. But perhaps the notion of an '*ideal critical body*' is specific to our community; it emerged from a thread in our conversation when we began to fantasize about an ideal business school context. Apart from being bodily different, it relates to the clothes we cover our bodies with:

It seems that a person who is interested in business is condemned to be an ally with those in power. And it does not help at all if you are wearing clothes that are too stylish (clean-cut) to a critical scholar who should rather have a more casual (this applies especially to the faculty of social sciences of which management is part) or artistic outfit (this applies especially to the faculty of arts which is one of the four faculties at [my university]). I have had quite concrete experiences of how you are judged based on your clothing.

This can be especially striking at conferences when hundreds of self-identified critical scholars come together:

[A] few years ago I noticed a trend about critical scholars wearing black clothes at conferences, perhaps as a marker of difference from the mainstream. When I asked colleagues about this I got some quite different answers. Several women spoke of how black work wear signified professionalism, career commitment, gravitas and also how for them it potentially hid, minimised or detracted attention away from the body which was sometimes a good thing for women in a professional context. This latter part I find interesting because it seems to confirm the mind/body dichotomy as alive and well in CMS, with the intellectual mind being of importance and the physical body as something to be hidden. When I asked critical male colleagues why they wore black, they claimed it was not significant as an identity marker.

Some do challenge the ‘critical uniform’, although in our experience this tends to be women rather than men:

I went to Australia last year, to visit [a well-known critical female scholar]. When I met with her soon after I arrived she had been teaching and she was wearing a fitted sleeveless dress and high heel white pointed toe shoes. It was not what I expected, I guess in relation to her feminist/critical identity. I liked her for it though, because I felt she was saying ‘this is me, my body and I am happy to draw attention to it!’

In these moments, many of the available possibilities for exclusion and participation come together, as cultural experience, gender, physicality and academic positionality intersect with the reflex of critical distance. We, like many others, attempt to respond to the ideal while simultaneously finding it problematic in its context of practice. In this respect, we do not see ourselves as outsiders; rather, we sometimes embody aspiration to the ideal (as far as we can), making use of what cultural, academic, and physical resources we have – but ultimately we fail, as we suspect all of us do.

An ethic of care within CMS?

Should “critical” scholars somehow behave differently from others (whoever these others may be)? Should they act as if they were not greedy and vain?

For me the dilemma is how to be critical about gendered power relations in a way which might keep the audience that you want to reach engaged. Whether that is in teaching or in research. So when I teach I try to avoid referring to gender or the ‘f’ word – feminism – in the lecture title. I try instead to work gender through all the content. However in research it is harder . . . [on one] occasion I presented a paper at a business ethics conference. There were lots of critical male scholars at the conference. The paper I presented had the word ‘feminist’ in the title. There were two tracks running simultaneously and virtually all the men attended the other paper session. In the room where I presented the audience was almost exclusively women.

We are conscious that here and elsewhere we have presented CMS as a relatively uncaring community, as a culture that is more individualistic than collective and that promotes a masculine

ideal intellectually and physically. This is how we have experienced CMS, over more than a decade of writing, teaching, attending conferences and working to support or promote the community. The stories we have told each other reinforce this as we have considered our own actions and the behaviours of others in more detail. We have chosen, as Sparkes (2007) emphasises in his account of academic work in the U.K., a way of approaching the analysis of one's own working context that is best concluded by offering it as just one chapter in a continuing constructive narration of our working lives, and perhaps yours. However, we also want to raise one final possibility that has become more and more convincing to us as we have written this chapter: the feasibility of a community based on an ethic of care.

This idea is controversial within feminist thinking, where it originated, and in the wider academy. It is founded on the possibility of a morality that is based on relationality of care, rather than the impartial rationality entailed in theories of right action offered by Kantian and utilitarian moral philosophies; as one scholar put it, 'when justice is the guiding value, it requires that individual rights be respected' whereas care invites consideration of 'the relatedness that constitutes a social group and is needed to hold it together' (Held, 2006: 41–42). Thus, instead of being based on the notion of the autonomous, independent, rational, atomistic individual, 'an ethic of care focuses on attentiveness, trust, responsiveness to need, narrative nuance and cultivating caring relations' (Held, 2006: 15).

Drawing on aspects of feminist thought, an ethic of care further asserts that reason should not leave behind all that belongs to emotion and the body (Held, 2006: 60). Care also involves skill and requires work and energy on the part of the persons who are doing the caring. As a postpatriarchal ethic, care can be adopted by both men and women through the development of relationships in which carer and cared-for share an interest in their mutual well-being. This perspective moves us away from seeing care as a virtue that is the possession of the individual and towards a view of care as based on interdependence and careful attention to context. Consequently, it invites consideration of the values such as sensitivity, trust, mutual concern, attentiveness and the commitment to see issues from a variety of different perspectives. The challenges of trying to encourage this approach to working in the collective of CMS – of even thinking of the community as a collective – are illustrated in this ambivalent extract:

I suppose being critical for me characterised a degree of uncertainty and separation and about being OK with that . . . Not disengaged and disconnected necessarily, but not really belonging to an organization that has a fixed identity. I don't really understand 'critters' who say that participating in critical events such as conferences is about belonging, which they don't feel when they are in the mainstream of the business school . . . I don't feel that belonging is really the basis of my criticality, even if that involves belonging to a critical community or group. It just feels a bit too comfortable somehow. Instead I feel that if I can create a balance between separation and connectedness, invisibility and visibility, I have a better chance of maintaining my criticality.

This perhaps is one possibility that is different from the current (as we see and experience it) somewhat damaging ethic that CMS embodies.

In conclusion

I think I'm starting to dislike reflexivity, in this very personalised way. I love it as a methodological approach; I like the philosophical basis of the practice; and I value what its practice encourages. But I'm not sure I want to write about it anymore in relation to my professional

self and professional community. But . . . we still as a community do and tolerate crap stupid things, which should be written about. [I'm pretty tired so my everyday language is leaking into the academic bit of my brain. . . .]

In this chapter we have explored how ideas about what is expected of a CMS academic become cemented into a particular set of established rationalities (Townley, 2008) that constitute the basis for a body of thought and that can also become a means of determining which bodies can legitimately participate in academic work in the particular field. We have sought to practise the kind of reflexivity that some within CMS, we think rightly, encourage (Wray-Bliss, 2003). Reflexive writing encourages affective and emotive engagement with how we work, enabling empathy among members of a community rather than just sympathy (Parry & Boyle, 2009).

We have also tried to understand better the effects of our own practices through examining how we ourselves contribute to the construction of disciplined knowledge and embodied identity within CMS. Seeing ourselves, looking at ourselves, in this way enables interrogation of the social bases of knowledge, the ethical aspirations and political practices we engage in and the forms of otherness (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004) that norms of embodied participation generate. Although we might sometimes like to think of ourselves as marginal within CMS, between us we hold a significant amount of structural power and responsibility, for example through occupying relatively high-status positions within the academic career hierarchy and by taking on roles in editing journals, writing articles, reviewing others' work and organizing conferences.

As contributors to the social project that CMS was founded on, we have become acutely conscious of the gaps between the aspirations our writing and teaching promote and the cultural conditions in which we produce our knowledge. Is it too much to ask that members of this research community might become more conscious of the systems of power that are used to regulate our own organizational practice and become more sensitive and responsive to the embodied experiences of members? We have suggested drawing on a feminist ethic of care (Held, 2006) as an alternative moral basis through which we might think about the relationships between members of the community, as well as its moral structures, as a way of complementing the ethics of justice which has traditionally characterized CMS.

We feel that an ethic of care could provide a valuable complement to the ethics of justice and virtue which have traditionally dominated intellectual and political debates within CMS. This would enable CMS members/us to engage in the process of constituting a more diverse notion of academic subjectivity that more effectively includes marginalised groups, especially (but not limited to) women. It would also invite sensitivity to the development of caring relations and could be used to promote a model of community building as relational and interdependent. Emotional values of sympathy, empathy, sensitivity and responsiveness to others would be seen as feelings to be reflected on and educated with. This might entail reconfiguration of the traditional moral divide between the public and private spheres of community members, inasmuch as the latter as well as the former could also be seen as relevant to the development of morality within the community.

Finally, an ethic of care could also have implications for the theoretical and political development of CMS, as well as for the organization of the community, as the formation of caring relations between persons and imposing limits on the markets that undermine them could be seen as the basis for engagement with members of other, non-academic organizations. In so doing, an ethic of care could provide an alternative to the liberal individualism and rational self-interest that characterise normative engagement within academic communities and could open up spaces for different forms of organizing within CMS and beyond.

References

- Adler, P., Forbes, L., & Willmott, H. (2007). Critical management studies. *Academy of Management Annals*, 1: 119–179.
- Alvesson, M., & Deetz, S. (2000). *Doing critical management research*. London: Sage.
- Alvesson, M., Bridgman, T., & Willmott, H. (Eds.). (2009). *The Oxford handbook of critical management studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Alvesson, M., & Willmott, H. (1992). *Critical management studies*. London: Sage.
- Bell, E., & King, D. (2010). The elephant in the room: Critical management studies conferences as a site of body pedagogics. *Management Learning*, 41(4): 429–442.
- Burrell, G. (2009). Handbooks, swarms, and living dangerously. In M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman & H. Willmott (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of critical management studies*; 551–562. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fawcett, B., & Hearn, J. (2004). Researching others. *International Journal of Social Research*, 7(3): 201–218.
- Ford, J., & Harding, N. (2010). Get back into that kitchen, woman: Management conferences and the making of the female professional worker. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 17(5): 503–520.
- Fournier, V., & Grey, C. (2000). At the critical moment: Conditions and prospects for critical management studies. *Human Relations*, 53(1): 7–32.
- Glassner, B., & Hertz, R. (Eds.). (2003). *Our studies, ourselves: Sociologists' lives and work*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Grey, C. (2004). Reinventing business schools: The contribution of critical management education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 3(2): 178–186.
- Grey, C., & Willmott, H. (2005). *Critical management studies: A reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Held, V. (2006). *The ethic of care: Personal, political, and global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Katila, S., & Meriläinen, S. (2002). Metamorphosis. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 9(3): 336–354.
- Maclaren, P., Miller, C., Parsons, L., & Surman, E. (2009). Praxis or performance: Does critical marketing have a gender blind-spot? *Journal of Marketing Management*, 25(7–8): 713–728.
- Parker, M., & Thomas, R. (2011). What is a critical journal? *Organization*, 18(4): 419–427.
- Parry, K., & Boyle, M. 2009. Organizational autoethnography. In D. Buchanan & A. Bryman (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational research methods*: 690–702. London: Sage.
- Rowlinson, M., & Hassard, J. (2011). How come the critters came to be teaching in business schools? Contradictions in the institutionalization of critical management studies. *Organization*, 18(5): 673–689.
- Snyder-Young, D. (2011). Here to tell her story: Analyzing the autoethnographic performances of others. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17(10): 943–951.
- Sparkes, A. C. (2007). Embodiment, academics, and the audit culture. *Qualitative Research*, 7(4): 521–550.
- Spicer, A., Alvesson, M., & Karreman, D. (2009). Critical performativity: The unfinished business of critical management studies. *Human Relations*, 62(4): 537–560.
- Tatli, A. (2011). On the power and poverty of critical (self) reflection in Critical Management Studies: A comment on Ford, Harding and Learmonth. *British Journal of Management* forthcoming [doi: 10.1111/j.1467–8551.2011.00746.x].
- Thomas, R. (2009). Critical management studies on identity: Mapping the terrain. In M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman & H. Willmott (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of critical management studies*: 166–185. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thomas, R., Tienari, J., Davies, A., & Meriläinen, S. (2009). Let's talk about 'us': A reflexive account of a cross-cultural research collaboration. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 18(4): 313–324.
- Townley, B. (2008). *Reason's neglect: Rationality and organizing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wray-Bliss, E. (2003). Research subjects/research subjections: Exploring the ethics and politics of critical research. *Organization*, 10: 307–325.