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Holding true or caving in? Academics' values, emotions, and behaviors in response to higher education reforms

Abstract

Higher education (HE) in many countries has been characterized by increased marketization, external accountability and managerialism. This article examines how academics feel about and respond to HE reforms in Cyprus, a country whose HE sector is heavily commercialized and affected by austerity measures. We analyzed interviews with twenty-three Cypriot academics in four universities, who had been working in business schools from three to twenty-nine years. Interviewees described experiences of being an academic in Cyprus, highlighting contextual factors that triggered emotional events in their day-to-day lives. Integrating previous literature, we present six different behavioral responses to the events they described, including compliance, resistance and flight. We explain how academics chose different responses at different times based on their interpretations of value congruence/incongruence, their felt emotions, and the need to comply with emotional display rules. Considering these elements together, highlighted the emotional labor associated with various behavioral responses. The study contributes theoretically by showing how values, perceived emotional demands within particular events, and emotions influence behavior, including different types of emotional labor. We suggest that further research on academics' responses to HE reforms should focus on particular events and on particular contested academic values, such as autonomy or collegiality.

Keywords: emotions; emotional labor; values; faculty; marketization

Introduction

Higher education (HE) institutions are increasingly contriving themselves in market-oriented,

managerialist terms in the face of constrained resources. Scholars in various countries have considered

how managerial cultures, commercialization of degrees, and a focus on profit – often on the basis of

imposed quantifiable financial targets (Deem et al., 2008; Winter, 2009) – are at odds with traditional

academic values of autonomy, integrity, and collegial governance (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016; Kallio

et al., 2016; Lynch and Ivancheva, 2015; Winter, 2009).

This value conflict or incongruence has been associated with academics experiencing negative emotions (Kallio and Kallio, 2014), including feeling 'annoyed' and 'disillusioned' (Ylijoki and Ursin, 2013), 'demoralized', stressed (Franco Santos et al., 2017) or 'paralyzed' (Clarke et al., 2012). However, other research has shown that academics' emotional responses are not always negative (Bryson, 2004; Teelken, 2012; Ylijoki and Ursin, 2013; Lund and Tienari, 2019). Likewise, analyses of academics' behavioral responses suggest varying responses from academics. Existing HE studies offer accounts of resistance (Anderson, 2008; Bryson, 2004; Clarke et al., 2018), compliance and pragmatism (Teelken, 2012), and changing ethos or practice (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014; Kallio et al., 2016; Feigenbaum and Iqani, 2015) in response to HE reforms.

To reconcile these disparate findings, we demonstrate how individual academics respond emotionally and behaviorally in specific episodes and the role that academic values play in those responses. We ask how academics experience HE reforms and how their values, emotions and readings of emotional display rules (Wetherell, 2013) influence their behaviors. Behaviors are assumed to include particular emotional displays, which involve emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983, 2).

Values in HE

Academic practice is an inherently values-based activity, not least in relation to teaching (Quinlan, 2016, 2019). We draw on Henkel's (2005) conceptualization of values as constructed and negotiated within social interactions that are continuously reshaped and redefined through time and changing contexts.

As HE institutions have become marketized, academics have been expected to conform to business-related values and profit-making ideals. Yet, commercialization and control imperatives of a corporate management system contradict traditional academic values such as autonomy, collegiality and excellence, creating potential conflicts for academics (Brown and Humphreys, 2006; Lynch and Ivancheva, 2015; Skelton, 2012; Winter, 2009). In this fractured work context, academics may experience an 'academic paradox' in which they need to constantly resolve tensions between academic and business values (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016). They may separate their inner selves from an outer organizational self that serves commercial principles and practices (Winter, 2009).

Emotions

An emotion is a short-lived, affective experience combined with cognitive, physiological, expressive and motivational components (Shuman and Scherer, 2014). We refer to an emotion as 'felt' or 'genuine' to distinguish it from a 'displayed' emotion that is generated through emotional labor discussed below. Felt emotions arise from a person's subjective appraisals of their values – how important they consider a given goal - as well as how much control they feel over the achievement of that goal (Pekrun and Perry, 2014). When someone is thwarted from an important goal or value, negative activating emotions, such as anger or anxiety are expected (Pekrun and Perry, 2014). Existing research suggests that HE reforms have created anxiety, anger, fear and demoralization among some academics (Bryson, 2004; Franco-Santos et al., 2017; Kallio et al., 2016; Knights and Clarke, 2014; Ylijoki and Ursin, 2013; Lund and Tienari, 2019), consistent with reports of value conflict (Brown and Humphreys, 2006; Lynch and Ivancheva, 2015; Skelton, 2012; Winter, 2009). However, emotional responses are not uniformly negative (Bryson, 2004; Teelken 2012; Ylijoki and Ursin, 2013; Lund and Tienari, 2019), suggesting that not all academics experience value conflicts.

Emotional Display Rules and Emotional Labor

In various occupations, staff are expected to display socially-desired emotions during work transactions to achieve customer satisfaction and profit (Hochschild, 1983). This kind of emotional performance or display is termed 'emotional labor' (EL); businesses depend upon it just as they do other forms of labor. To determine what socially-desired emotions to display, academics must read the organization's expected emotional display rules (Wetherell, 2013) and assess the extent to which they need to demonstrate the desired emotional state for colleagues, managers and students (Constanti and Gibbs, 2004).

Hochschild (1983) identified two types of EL: *surface* (deliberately controlling and changing expressions of emotions and behavior after an emotion is felt) and *deep acting* (deliberately changing a situation or appraisals to modify feelings). A third type is *suppres*sing expression of emotional responses that are inconsistent with the organization's emotional display rules (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). More recent research proposed a fourth type of EL: *genuine* emotional labor, the effortful expression of naturally felt emotions portrayed in socially correct ways (Diefendorff et al., 2005; Humphrey et al., 2015).

Both deep acting and genuine emotional labor yield authentic emotional displays congruent with organizational display rules (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). However, genuine emotional labor does not involve a deliberate effort to change emotions as it uses strategies that are unconsciously activated and automatically performed (Diefendorff et al., 2005). Surface acting and suppression - EL that involves conflict between an individual's authentic felt emotions and his/her displayed emotions - are

associated with harmful psychological and health consequences. Moral stress, caused by acting in conflict with one's own conscience (Colnerud, 2015), is a particular hazard of surface acting in the face of ethical dilemmas (Winter, 2009). In contrast, forms of EL that are congruent between felt and displayed emotions (e.g. deep acting, genuine emotional labor) do not incur harmful outcomes (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). Genuine emotional expressions that are inconsistent with an organization's emotional display rules do not fall within the framework of EL as they do not serve the interests of the organization. When a worker does not engage in the labor expected of them (including EL), they are at risk of organizational sanctions.

Emotional labor (EL) is gendered insofar as women are more likely to hold positions that involve interactions with people that require EL, and they are more likely to hide anger, irritation and nervousness (Erickson and Ritter, 2001). Even when performing the same roles, lower status individuals, including women, have 'a weaker "status shield" against the displaced feelings of others' (Hochschild 1983, 163). That is, they are more likely to be on the receiving end of others' anger and frustration, without the structural resources to respond. In academia, roles requiring caring and cooperation, such as teaching and service are feminized and lower status (Bellas, 1999). Those roles require performance of enthusiasm and cooperativity. When operating in management roles, women are trapped between expectations of femininity and expectations of masculine discourses of management, leading them to engage in various forms of EL, including charming and coaxing, self-monitoring, and relationship 'repair' work (Hort et al., 2001). Just as the ideal manager is a gendered (masculinized) construct, so is the 'ideal academic' as one who publishes in top journals (Lund, 2012). In the neoliberal university, the emotion of 'passion' for one's work has been co-opted as part of this 'ideal' internationally-oriented individualistic academic, while feminized 'care' is associated with

lower status, institutionally-bound activities (Lund and Tienari, 2019). To demonstrate academic potential, junior researchers are under pressure to perform this particular kind of individualized, masculinized 'passion', while eschewing unrewarded 'caring' (Lund and Tiernari, 2019). Taken together, these studies suggest that the emotional display rules of neoliberal universities are gendered.

Behavioral responses to HE Reform

The different types of EL are particularly helpful in understanding academics' responses to particular events in their academic life. This approach helps us understand different documented behavioral responses to increasing HE demands. Academics may *actively comply* with the demands of the new HE context, adopting 'formal instrumentality' (Teelken, 2012) by uncritically relying on formal arrangements, or creating 'progressive storylines' (Ylijoki and Ursin, 2013) in which they embrace new opportunities for success and upward movement. The values of these groups are or become aligned with the managerial discourse, allowing them to embrace activities that reflect corporate imperatives (Deem et al., 2008; Winter, 2009). They engage in *genuine emotional labor* (Diefendorff et al., 2005; Humphrey et al., 2015). Thus, they may experience stress associated with burgeoning workloads and adjustment to new working patterns, but not moral stress (Colnerud, 2005).

Much of the writing about HE reforms, though, assumes that academics experience value clashes (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016; Chandler et al., 2002; Deem et al., 2008; Henkel, 2005; Kallio et al., 2017). When faced with values-incongruent demands, academics can hold true to their values internally to accrue personal advantage, although they disagree philosophically with the system's principles. This strategy is variously called *complying cynically* (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016; Clarke and Knights, 2015), *professional pragmatism* (Teelken, 2012), and *strategic compromise* (Skelton,

2012) and involves *deep acting* (Hochschild, 1983) in which academics adjust their thoughts and expectations in line with new contexts. Alternatively, they may suppress their emotions and engage in *coerced compliance*, or *complicitous silence* (Sparkes, 2003) in which fear of repercussions forces them to go along with values-incongruent managerial requests.

Finally, academics can resist erosion of valued aspects of their work, rejecting new ideologies (Anderson, 2008) through various forms of resistance. *Hidden resistance* happens when academics symbolically comply (Teelken, 2012) without actually following through, performing privately according to their own values. Hidden resistance involves suppressing their opposition and real feelings by pretending excitement through surface acting (Hochschild, 1983). In other forms of *resistance* (e.g.infractions of rules and advocacy for change) (Anderson, 2008) academics refuse to go along with the request *and* refuse to engage in the expected emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983), which may result in leaving the profession (Skelton, 2012).

Different subsets of these responses to HE reforms have been highlighted in different studies. We synthesize these different responses in an analysis of particular emotional events in the lives of academics in a particular context.

Study context

Cypriot HE offers an ideal case for exploring academics' emotions, values and behaviors in the face of reforms. The 2005 Private Universities Law, by which private universities were accredited and allowed to operate and award degrees under a special license, was particularly significant. Cyprus has seen a massive expansion in HE student numbers, coupled with greater managerial power and an emphasis on

profit generation, with academics becoming front-line employees who must add value to the business (Constanti and Gibbs, 2004). Cyprus' three public universities are funded by the government and by post-graduate student fees, whereas the five private universities receive most of their funding through student fees and private sources.

Furthermore, following the 2008 financial crisis, Cyprus entered a prolonged recession, leading to an international bailout in 2013 and reduction in public spending. Public expenditure on tertiary education is one of the lowest amongst EU member states, decreasing from 1.2% of GDP in 2010 to 0.7% in 2012 (Eurostat, 2018). Nonetheless, driven by a high societal value of education for its own sake and enhanced employment prospects (Menon, 1998), Cyprus has one of the highest rates of HE participation, with 61.6% of native-born people attending HE compared to the EU average of 39.9% (European Commission, 2017). Thus, while Cyprus' HE system is similar to many European countries, it presents an extreme case of massification, marketization, and financial austerity.

Methods

Using semi-structured interviews, the study explored academics' perceptions of their workplace emotional experiences. The study was approved by the first author's institutional ethics review board; pseudonyms are used throughout.

Participants

Participants were 23 academics from business schools in four private and two public Cypriot universities (Table 1). Initially, a random selection of two academics (one male, one female) from each university were contacted by email. Academics were informed about the study's aim to explore

what it feels like to be an academic in the context of HE reforms. All the identified participants agreed to participate and made further referrals to other academics. Data collection ceased when new informants did not offer new insights (Benner, 1994).

Data collection

The first author conducted semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions that invited participants to discuss specific emotional events *they* felt were relevant to their role, and their responses in those situations (e.g.'Can you describe an emotional event capturing what it's like to work in Cypriot academia?', 'How did you respond?'). Participants were prompted to discuss multiple stories. The interviews focused on participants' *own* interpretations of their emotions, values and responses through their stories (Englander, 2012). In their stories, participants often revealed situations that involved ethically questionable behavior, either on their part or their colleagues. Our role was to report participants' *own* perspectives and explanations, not to condemn or condone reported behaviors.

Data analysis

Data analysis focused initially within-participant, on the claims and concerns of the participants, emphasizing their lived experiences and the meaning participants attributed to them (Benner, 1994). The analysis continued by repeatedly reading the transcripts to characterize participants' emotions, values, choices of action, and triggering factors for each of their narrated events. Emotions were inductively analyzed thematically for each event story, relying on participants' words as much as possible.

We then inductively, thematically analyzed the values underpinning the emotions for each event, subsequently comparing participants' accounts with existing literature on academic values to arrive at a common set of value labels. Values emerged as participants explained *why* they felt a certain way.

The behavioral response to each event was characterized initially by emergent categories and refined through reference to theoretical categories identified in previous literature. The enacted behavioral responses of each individual were summarised in Table 1, where we also looked for any possible patterns of demographics associated with different responses. While all participants theoretically had access to any of the possible responses, we list only those that they actually enacted in the stories they told. Finally, we studied each event-story to classify the emotional labor associated with each behavioral response. As we had asked participants to describe 'emotional' incidents, participants described both their felt emotion and their displayed emotion.

TABLE 1

To retain the connections between the study's key constructs we needed to retain a within-event focus. Yet, we also wanted to draw out common themes across participants. Constructing multiple iterations of Table 2 helped us trace the connections between emotions, values and responses across multiple cases. To contextualize the participants' stories, we also summarized the contextual factors participants said triggered their emotional events. These factors varied from broad policy shifts such as funding cuts and pressure to increase student numbers down to particular interactions in academics' local contexts such as disagreements with colleagues and challenging student behavior.

Findings

We have divided the findings into three sections, reporting on each of the constructs - emotions, values, and behavioral responses - thematically across cases. Table 2 shows how emotions, values, and behavioral responses were associated with contextual factors that participants say triggered their emotional events. The same type of trigger appears more than once if it was associated with different responses.

TABLE 2

Emotions

Participants' stories frequently involved anger and frustration. These emotions were often triggered by threats to academic values, as described below. Fear or insecurity were experienced in the face of threats of redundancies and casualization of employment prompted by funding cuts. Some participants mainly focused on workload stress, rather than anger or fear, though their stories were often characterized by excitement about new opportunities under the reforms. We provide examples and quotes in the values section below.

Values

As shown in Table 2, angry, frustrated or fearful emotional experiences were underpinned by threats to four main academic values, which we briefly describe here. When the emotion was primarily workload-related stress or excitement, academics typically did not describe compromising their academic values.

Autonomy and educational standards

Many triggering factors were associated with threats to autonomy or educational standards. Several examples included pressure from management about marking student work. James felt 'trapped by expectations of a marketized system' when his manager, refusing to accept James' moderation of students' work that he thought had been over-generously marked, said 'they have to pass'. Emily also explained, 'I remember failing some students and my manager had the audacity to ask me to pass them. She kept insisting, '"You can't fail them"…It's money over truth. They give them degrees they don't deserve. This frustrates me immensely.' Henry interpreted the pressure to give inflated marks as managers accepting, 'mediocrity, they love mediocrity. They don't like any creativity or innovation. They talk about it, but they don't mean it.' Thus, many of the academics experienced negative emotions when managers prioritized student satisfaction over academics' autonomy to set and enforce academic standards.

Respect between students and academics

A number of triggering factors related to academics' interpretation of students' behavior as challenging and disrespectful. Participants mentioned students making offensive comments about their teaching style, or making unreasonable requests. Charlotte was 'angered' and 'offended' that a student offered to pay her for coursework help. James said, 'students see us as their employees, who ought to please their demands. They make me feel like their servant. They send me rude emails demanding extensions. They ask to meet outside normal working hours.' Rudeness was sometimes gendered, with three female participants giving examples of verbal sexual harassment from students. Academics' anger was rooted in the erosion of respect between students and teachers.

Collegiality

Fear and anger were also linked to erosion of collegiality among academics and between academics and managers. Anger was evident when participants from both public and private sectors spoke about unsupportive, even bullying, managers and colleagues. For instance, Charlotte described an incident during a group presentation assessment when a senior colleague stood up, threw down the papers and shouted, '"That's a piece of shit. You should feel lucky you work here, others would pay to get this job!" He humiliated me, claiming I don't know how to do my job and that the students' work made no sense…I was furious!' Fear of being moved to part-time or hourly-paid contracts increased competition amongst staff. As Costas said, some academics 'belittle or sabotage their colleagues' by publicly criticizing their opinions and sniping at them in private. Clara, an experienced public-sector professor, also lamented increased competition and erosion of collegiality, 'Education has changed. It's more competitive, especially when it comes to research, the pressure from senior management is huge…I have colleagues who act jealously and refuse to do any favors…I try not to ask anything from them, and when they ask me, I refuse to help.'

Intellectual pursuit

Declines in state funding left many public university participants insecure, even devastated, because developing new projects was no longer feasible, stymying intellectual pursuit. For example, Catherine found it 'distressing' when she wanted to develop a new module about gender inequality and host a subsequent conference, but 'funding for such initiatives was cut, so I'm meant to be working on cheap science that doesn't need funding. That's what has happened since the recession hit.' Likewise, Ares was denied attendance in an international conference and given a heavier teaching load:

Austerity made it challenging to research. Even the most research active staff are being given

bigger teaching loads. I'm feeling isolated from other colleagues, without having the time for

research. I had to take my research ideas for future projects and put them in the bin.

Responses to HE reforms

Most participants blamed marketization and austerity for their anger, disillusionment, fear and stress,

and made various choices about how to respond based on their feelings, whether they experienced

value conflict, and their reading of the need to comply with external demands. In this section, we

document the development of six responses to external demands and their associated emotional labor:

active compliance with genuine emotional labor, *cynical compliance* with deep acting, *coerced*

compliance with emotional suppression, *hidden resistance* with surface acting, *resistance* and *flight.*

For each category, we present findings and discuss them in relation to relevant literature. We show

how values (in)congruence underlies emotions, and behavioral responses. We extend existing research

by highlighting the types of emotional labor associated with each behavioral response. Value

misalignment could occur around any of the values described in the previous section.

Active compliance with genuine emotional labor

Five participants did not feel their values were threatened. Harry, Nadia and Paula from the public

sector, and Alexander and Despina from the private sector simply adopted the values of the new HE

context. Whilst they recognized there were significant changes in their jobs, they did not describe

moral stress or threat to their academic values. Nadia said:

> I'd be lying if I said that my workload isn't overwhelming or that students aren't over-
>
> demanding. But all generations are different. I don't expect today's students to behave the

way I did when I was their age. I can't expect my managers to have the same expectations

from 10 years ago. I see the 'publish or perish' climate in the institution but I don't blame

them. It's our job, and we have to go with it.

Similarly Paula argued that 'austerity did not threaten my job or values, but my work has hugely

expanded to be able to sustain a research active profile', while Harry recognized that his stress stems

from his 'juggle with intense research excellence, teaching and seeing students for endless hours'. Yet,

they both attributed changes to business school norms internationally, to which they sought to conform.

Alexander appeared to spontaneously internalize the new, corporate imperatives:

It's because of this expansion of students that I was promoted to departmental deputy head, as

we needed another manager. It's because of these changes that I now get to travel to attract

more students.

Despina admitted that she had to sacrifice personal time but justified this as, 'trying to achieve as much

as possible for the university'. Her excitement to help the institution achieve its goals appeared to be

sincere, exemplifying expression of naturally felt emotions in accordance with *genuine emotional

labor*.

Active compliance is consistent with what Winter (2009) called 'academic managers', a new breed of

academics who define themselves in terms of the corporate discourse. Their responses did not create

emotional inauthenticity (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012), therefore requiring only *genuine emotional

labor* (Diefendorff et al., 2005). All five of these academics had 15 to 28 years of experience in HE,

and four held senior positions. Our study corroborates other findings that older workers are more likely to use *genuine emotional labour* (Humphrey et al., 2015), whether through greater experience or through attrition of those in disagreement with corporate policies. The findings contradict Kallio and colleagues' (2016) arguments that early-career academics who have been socialized into 'new' market-oriented values are more likely to adopt new managerial diktats. These five academics reported increased workloads and workload-related stress, but not values-incongruence or moral stress (Colnerud, 2015), perhaps explaining inconsistent survey findings about the well-being of academic leaders under control governance structures (Franco-Santos et al., 2017).

Cynical compliance with deep acting

Four respondents adopted *cynical compliance*. Unlike *active compliance*, adopting *cynical compliance* involves deliberately aligning one's thoughts and goals to make the best of the situation. Although these respondents experienced anger and said that marketization ideas were morally wrong in the educational context, they still found ways to play the game for their personal benefit. For example, James, despite feeling 'trapped', played for money. He benefitted financially from overtime payment for additional teaching hours he was given: 'Financially speaking, staff redundancies benefitted me, as I earn more than before the crisis. When they offered me additional teaching, I thought "I could pay off my mortgage!"'.

Similarly, Andy appeared to condemn but comply with managerial demands:

> I'm against this whole system. I can't believe we have a CEO…with the university's strategy to increase students, we launched distance-learning courses and I'm leading one of them. There is

strong push to internationalize and digitalize. It's an enormous job, but I'm given the opportunity to earn and travel more to attract international audiences.

Some participants pragmatically exploited new possibilities. Aphrodite, despite recognizing and even condemning the tremendous difficulties that austerity measures brought to her job, agreed to provide consultancy to a local firm, in exchange for funding her research. Others explained how their institution's expansion gave them opportunities for promotion or media contact.

In EL terms (Hochschild, 1983), these individuals engaged in *deep acting* insofar as they were still critical of the system philosophically, but were willing to realign their thinking to reap individual rewards. They not only displayed the appropriate emotions, but actively aligned their own thoughts and goals with organizationally mandated requirements to reduce initial frustration, replacing it with, in some cases, excitement.

Our findings are consistent with others studies documenting *cynical compliance* (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014; Teelken, 2012; Ylijoki and Ursin, 2013) in which academics largely complied with, rather than resisted, managerial demands (Clarke and Knights, 2015). Participants exemplifying this response were critical of the corporate values embedded in the system yet they actively sought career opportunities and found ways to align their goals with the context. They engaged in a different form of EL, *deep acting* (Hochschild, 1983).

The remaining 14 participants all experienced conflicts between their academic values and the HE context, marked by feelings of anger and/or fear. Although Winter (2009) called all values-incongruent

academics "managed academics", we found four different responses among that group, as we describe below. The first group experienced *coerced compliance*. But many participants resisted. Anderson (2008) emphasized that resistance can take various forms, including various passive strategies. We describe three forms of resistance.

Coerced compliance with emotional suppression

Five academics reported *coerced compliance* – when academics went against their own values to comply with managerial diktats. When Emily's manager asked her to pass students she had initially failed, she hid her disagreement and changed the marks, describing an overall regime in which it was hard not to comply. Emily's managers created a climate of fear, showing 'preferential behavior to those people who do their favors, so resistance is not tolerated'. Likewise, when Alice faced an offensive student remark, she explained 'management wants students happy, so I concealed my anger and carried on my class like nothing happened'. Participants thought senior management expected them to control their emotions with students.

Describing fear of reprisals and the need to appear professional, these participants retreated into defensive silence and *emotional suppression*. For example, Deborah complied when the Dean personally asked her to help a student with his assignment outside normal work hours:

> We are not allowed to be frustrated or stressed. If I say something, I will look weak, that I'm not resilient enough. If I leave, they [management] will get 50 applications to fill my role. If a promotion comes out, they won't consider me if I shout all the time. It's the job. We have to do it and not complain about it.

Similarly, when Ria's manager informed her about funding cuts she 'tried to stay calm, not to show any sign of shock, and tried to find the right words to show I'm okay with it'. *Coerced compliance* was associated with *emotional suppression* in which academics hid how upset they were to fit in with organizational emotional display rules (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012) and avoid economic repercussions (Constanti and Gibbs, 2004). These situations brought on the greatest moral stress. *Coerced compliance* was more common amongst the female participants (see Table 1), consistent with extant literature on emotional labor, which emphasizes the prevalence of women needing to suppress anger and irritation (Hochschild, 1983; Erickson and Ritter, 2001).

Hidden resistance with surface acting

Sometimes academics hid their resistance through feigning compliance. We called this form of passive resistance *hidden resistance* while Teelken (2012) called it symbolic compliance. In these cases, participants appeared to comply to avoid reprisals, but actually did not do as they were asked. Examples included participants who re-assured their managers that they would be more lenient with their marking, but remained firm, or agreed to moderate student work, but ultimately did not change any marks. Catherine exemplified this approach:

> A student came in tears begging for a re-mark of his work. He even went to the Departmental Head to complain. So, what I did was to reassure my manager that I will show his work to other colleagues. I never did. It's offensive to interfere with my autonomy.

Other participants feigned compliance by showing interest when managers announced news about student number increases, internationalization plans, or ideas about more attractive courses, but did nothing to contribute to those initiatives. Participants explained mismatches between appearance and

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action as remaining faithful to their traditional values of academic excellence. Thus, their excitement was feigned to appear to go along with managerial priorities. This discordant emotional labor strategy is a form of *surface acting,* in which individuals display the organizationally desired emotion even though it conflicts with their authentic feelings.

Hidden resistance was also found by Anderson (2008) in Australia, Bryson (2004) in the UK, and Clarke and colleagues (2018) in Ireland. These academics shaped their opposition and resistance to HE reforms by holding true to traditional academic values, often using their discursive strengths or forging partnerships with students behind closed doors. To sustain it, academics engaged in *surface acting* (Hochschild, 1983) to feign interest in or willingness to adopt managerialist practices, but did not follow through in their actions. Nonetheless, these academics still exercised choice about their behavior.

Resistance

Ten participants actively resisted requests they considered unethical. When Charlotte's manager criticized her guidance on her students' work in front of students, she questioned his approach and demanded his apology, which she received. Likewise, Theresa refused to mediate between the Dean of School and an underachieving student who wanted a recommendation for a masters. She then visited the Dean to protest about 'being used' by students and interfering in her job.

Other participants resisted by raising students' awareness and negotiating different educational relationships with them. Ria spoke to her students about the reduced funding and increased seminar sizes, challenging a system that casts them as 'customers':

I never accept the argument "I pay you nine thousand". Instead, I sit with them and explain how their behavior as customers jeopardizes their studies. We need to trust each other, we are partners.

Others resisted by avoiding or 'walking away' from departmental meetings when discussions about marketing strategies occurred, as a signal of rejecting such regimes. In one case, Oskar described his objection in a departmental meeting about introducing distance-learning. In developing this critique, he argued for quality in educational standards and the importance of the human dimensions of education as understood within traditional academic values of excellence. He refused to be involved in the development of distance-learning programs, although he knew that managers would disapprove. Costas mounted a similar boycott by responding to his institution's staff satisfaction survey with a substantive letter explaining why he would not complete it.

Strikingly absent were examples of collective resistance. All of the examples of *resistance* and *hidden resistance* were individual decisions, linked to individual emotions and values. Participants described an erosion of collegiality that may have prevented them from acting collectively. The climate of fear and anger that led academics into *coerced compliance* may also have contributed to a retreat to individualistic competition (Chandler et al., 2002).

Flight

An extreme form of resistance was illustrated when two participants resigned from their positions rather than live under new impositions. Henry had a contract to start a new job soon, after suffering from heart aneurysm due to stress in his current institution, which he attributed to managerial diktats.

Phillip was due to start a new job in a national research institute, where he could 'do my research without having to put up with the system's ideology'.

Leavers have limited attention in empirical studies (Skelton, 2012), perhaps because samples of academics only capture those who choose to stay in academia. Antoniadou and Quinlan (2020), though, researched academics who immigrated to the UK in order to maximize opportunities for intellectual pursuit. Taken together, these two studies suggest the risk of 'brain drain'. Leavers, therefore, warrant further study.

Within-participant analyses

By examining multiple stories from each academic, we found that four participants described more than one response, something that Alvesson and Spicer (2016) theorized as part of the 'game' that academics use to cope with their work pressures, allowing them to preserve energy and their sense of self for other activities (see Table 1). Emily and Deborah showed both *hidden resistance* and *coerced compliance* (Teelken, 2012). Ria and Alice experienced *coerced compliance* in front of managers, and *resistance* when working with their students, showing how 'coercive power' could prompt different behaviors depending upon the constraints, consequences, and display rules of a given context. These findings lend empirical support to what Alvesson and Spicer (2016) call a *paradox* of academic practice, with academics shuttling between compliance and resistance.

Conclusion

In the previous section, we documented academics' emotions, the values-based concerns underpinning those emotions, and their responses to HE reforms by examining lived experiences of Cypriot

academics in two public and four private universities. This study investigated responses to specific emotional events that arose under new policy mandates. Some participants reported primarily anger and frustration, while others reported positive emotions such as excitement. We traced these differing emotions to whether a situational demand was seen to threaten their core academic values. Participants valued autonomy in maintaining educational standards, respect between students and teachers, collegiality, and intellectual pursuit. Situations in which participants were thwarted from pursuing any of those values (situations of value-incongruence) provoked anger and frustration, consistent with a control-value theory of emotion (Pekrun and Parry, 2014). These findings are also consistent with previous research that argues that neoliberal reforms are incongruent with academic values and are associated with negative emotions.

When faced with values-incongruence and feeling associated anger, participants chose between complying under coercion (*coercive compliance*), staying in their job and resisting either openly (*resistance*) or in hiding (*hidden resistance*) or leaving their jobs (*flight*). Their choices depended upon their reading of organizational constraints (e.g. consequences of dissent, such as job loss) and emotional display rules. Different responses resulted in the performance of different types of emotional labor (EL). The emotional labor associated with particular responses to HE reforms has not always been made explicit or separated from academics' felt emotions. Those who engaged in *coercive compliance* also engaged in *emotional suppression*, a form of emotional labor that is typically seen as more damaging to well-being. As expected from the EL literature (Hochschild, 1983; Erickson and Ritter, 2001), women in our sample were more likely to respond this way. Those who engaged in *hidden resistance* used *surface acting* in front of managers.

In contrast, five of the participants did not report these negative emotions, nor did they report values-incongruence in response to the same kinds of triggering factors and situations. They accepted the changes in the HE landscape, engaging in *active compliance* with *genuine emotional labor.* Notably, these academics did acknowledge additional workload and stress associated with longer working hours and greater demands, but we distinguish workload stress from the added moral stress (Colnerud, 2015) experienced by participants in value-incongruent situations. This distinction is important in considering the effects of HE reforms on academics, particularly because moral stress is associated with qualitatively different types of emotional labor (*suppression* vs *genuine emotional labor*). These academics pointed not just to Cypriot HE policy changes, but to changing international norms about expectations of the 'ideal academic' (Lund, 2012). Finally, some participants engaged in *cynical compliance* with *deep acting*. These participants saw the ways in which reforms compromised academic values, but their EL consisted of actively realigning their thinking with new mandates, citing other values and individual benefits they could gain, such as higher salaries or travel opportunities. In justifying either actively or cynically complying, academics showed how they (re)constructed their values in the face of changing circumstances (Henkel, 2005).

Our findings lend empirical support to theorized academic identity schisms (Deem et al., 2008; Winter, 2009), between academic managers (*active compliance*, *cynical compliance*), and managed academics (*coerced compliance, hidden resistance, resistance, flight*). However, we add nuance about the impact of HE reforms on academic life by differentiating a wider range of individual responses, derived from analysis of experiences in particular situations. Thus, we show that academic values have not merely been 'unconditionally surrendered' (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016). Some academics are still holding true to their values through *hidden resistance*, *resistance* and *flight*. Flight did not involve changing the

system, but was still a refusal to comply. Our findings also help explain why different academics respond differently by showing how participants' responses were based on values-congruence, their emotions, and their reading of organizational constraints and emotional display rules. Addressing each of these constructs and the way values-(in)congruence underlies the others, we are able to explain disparate reports on academics' emotional responses to HE reforms.

Given that academics may respond differently in different particular episodes (e.g.coerced compliance in some situations, resistance in others), future research might focus around either respondent-generated or researcher-provided events to better characterize the specific pressure points (e.g. marking decisions; recruitment activities; research agendas) where academic values are challenged in HE contexts. Lund and Tienari (2019), for example, examined particular emotions (passion vs eros) in the context of publishing.

Focusing on *specific* academic tasks and common scenarios in academic life may offer us a richer understanding of how the broad contexts of HE and HE policy play out on the ground. The findings suggested different impacts on the value of autonomy than collegiality, as evidenced by individual but not collective resistance. Future research might investigate effects of changing academic contexts on particular academic values, following studies that focused on values such as excellence (Butler and Spoestra, 2014) and autonomy (Kolsaker, 2008). Research on collegiality might investigate examples of collective resistance, such as motivations for participation in and results of industrial action. As our small sample included only one professor, further research might also investigate the differences between academics at different stages of their career.

In sum, while academics in many countries are affected by new HE reforms, their behavioral responses, including the EL associated with different responses, are influenced by their values, emotions and readings of emotional display rules. Emotions and the type of EL consequently required are both connected with the degree of value-congruence in a given incident. By asking academics to describe particular events, we were able to show how academics engaged in a continual process of appraising their environments in relation to values, which may yield different responses, and different forms of EL, at different times. Thus, we offer an explanation that highlights the factors that underpinned academics' choices, thereby contributing to future research that unpacks the relationship between policy contexts and academics' responses. Value-congruence is key to wellbeing and should be considered at the individual level in further research on the impacts of policy reforms on academics.

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