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Stress at Work, Gendered Dys-appearance and the Broken Body in Policing

Abstract

This paper explores how stress as a gendered mode of perception is characterized by processes that call the body to attention in ambiguous and incomplete ways – an experience Leder (1990) terms bodily dys-appearance. Extending Leder's work through an engagement with feminist accounts of embodiment, we show how stress, as constituted through a corporeal demand to pay attention to pain or discomfort, becomes negated or misrecognized through the sociocultural, organizational or occupational privileging of normative masculinity. Our analysis of twenty in-depth interviews with female police managers in England during 2011 explores the dys-appearance of stress in the context of policing, and the professional and bodily consequences of negotiating stress as a gendered mode of perception. This suggests the compulsion to make sense of bodily sensations cannot be separated from the systems, structures and ways of understanding that privilege masculinized knowledge claims. Questioning these claims may allow for a plurality of stress experiences to be recognized beyond patriarchal ways of organizing, and give voice to other body episodes that elude articulation or representation within normative organizational practices.

Introduction

In this article we advance contemporary understanding of the gendered body at work through exploring experiential absence as a key aspect of bodily existence. Drawing on Leder (1990), a philosopher of the body, we examine a ubiquitous contemporary organizational phenomenon – stress – as a mode of gendered dys-appearance, that is, the partial and incomplete re-emergence of the absent body into conscious perception 'at times of dysfunction or problematic operation' (Leder, 1990: 85). Due to the often vague bodily symptoms of and attributions to stress (Marcks and Weisberg, 2009), it presents an interesting site through which to explore how disruptive bodily episodes are enacted within occupational settings, exposing how the body at work is normally experienced as absent and 'away… from itself' (Leder, 1990: 89). At the same time, we argue that this partial and ambiguous emergence occurs through gendered modes of perception; that is, through 'particular *modalities* of the structure and conditions of the body's existence in the world' (Young, 1980: 141, original emphasis). Stress can therefore be understood as an expression of gendered dys-appearance, providing new gender-sensitive insights into the oft-heralded 'stress epidemic' of contemporary workplaces. In 2014/15, 234,000 self-reported new cases of workplace stress in the UK resulted in the loss of 9.9 million working days (Health and Safety Executive, 2015). Yet policy and academic accounts of stress usually downplay the importance of gender through positioning it as a variable that influences 'stressors' (Cooper et al., 2001; Howerton and van Gundy, 2009). By comparison, in this paper we suggest that stress must be understood as part of a gendered corporeality.

There is now a substantial body of scholarship conceptualizing the body as the primordial means of establishing being-in-the-world, and recognizing how embodiment is experienced and negotiated in organizations (e.g. Cunliffe and Coupland, 2012; Dale, 2001; Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2009). While providing a range of rich insights into how organizational

experience is one of gendered corporeality (e.g. Fotaki et al., 2014; Jyrkinen and McKie, 2012; Phillips, 2014; Pullen and Rhodes, 2014), extant research into embodied experience in organizations has mainly focussed on the vivacity of bodies; that is, expressions that are perceptible, locatable to one area of the body, or otherwise 'available' to us, such as through aspects of comportment or physical mannerisms. Developing the phenomenological position that our knowledge of the world stems from embodied engagement (Gärtner, 2013), we suggest that ambiguous experiences such as stress form part of women's bodily existence as both subjective and objectified (Young, 1980; 2002). This has profound consequences for conceptualizing how bodily experiences that lie beneath the 'body surface' (Leder, 1990: 86) are multifaceted or unpredictable in their emergence, and 'elude articulation' (Leder, 1990: 55).

Leder suggests that the lived body is generally marked by absence from consciousness due to its 'intrinsic tendencies towards self-concealment' (Leder, 1990: 3). However, during times of illness, this self-concealment is disrupted and our embodied subjectivity is called to attention – dys-appears – in ways that, we argue, are both constituted by, and constitute, gendered ways of being. As such, in this paper we argue that gender is an important aspect of theorizing the organizational 'broken' body; broken referring to both material bodily damage and the failure to live up to the expectation of an ever-functioning 'working' body. Specifically, we suggest that the workplace is central to the experience of dys-appearance through the institutional and organizational norms which legitimize particular professional masculine and feminine capacities. These structures and our encounters with them through our lived experience have material consequences for how the brokenness of the body is enacted. To develop this position further, we bring together Young's (1980; 2002) thesis on the gendered lived body and Oakley's (2007) autobiographical account of her arm injury as a corrective to Leder's gender-neutral theoretical position. Both scholars help to emphasize the

inherent vulnerability of dys-appearance as part of the feminine existential experience. Young (1980) helps to theorize fragility as an inherent part of a phenomenologically formed feminine subjectivity, while Oakley (2007: vi) emphasizes the 'intensely perilous status of our bodies: biologically given, but subject at any moment to all sorts of cultural whims'. Specifically, we argue that organizations play a political role in the constitution of gendered dys-appearance given that 'rules, relations and their material consequences produce privileges for some people that underlie an interest in their maintenance' (Young, 2002: 426).

Our approach contrasts with dominant narratives surrounding occupational stress that focus on specific work-related stimuli that lead to episodes of ill health or lessened welfare (Deaconu and Rasca, 2008). Stress management practices have taken a stimulus-response based approach (Cooper et al., 2001) which has important implications for conceptualizing occupational or work-related pain, illness or 'bad' health. Specifically, stress management often situates stress episodes as dysfunctional disruptions to an idealized normative functioning body, rather than as a consequence of our 'embodied inhabitation of the social world' (Hancock et al., 2015: 1716). To explore the latter we pose three questions. First, how is stress experienced as a mode of gendered dys-appearance for female police managers? Second, in what ways do organizational contexts inform the gendered dys-appearance of stress? Finally, to what extent can the gendered dys-appearance of stress inform thinking surrounding other experiences of organizational 'broken' bodies?

Our contribution to studies of embodiment at work is threefold. Theoretically, we work with Leder (1990), Young (1980; 2002) and Oakley (2007) as a means of redressing what the editors of this special issue call 'a tendency to escape the vulnerabilities, pain and awkwardness of the body through abstraction and meta-theoretical thinking' (Mik-Meyer et al., 2014: 1). Specifically, we suggest that looking beyond immediately perceptible bodily experiences allows us to theorize 'broken' body episodes (such as stress) as multifaceted,

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partial and expressed through gendered subjectivities within institutional and occupational practices. Conceptually, we develop the term *gendered dys-appearance* as an expression of this corporeality that emerges in the lived experience of stress for our participants. Finally, we draw empirical insights from the police service; an occupational setting subject to intense scrutiny of 'bodily conformity' (Williams and Bendelow, 1998: 5) and the renegotiation of traditional gendered orders through recent institutional changes (Silvestri, 2015). This makes it an apt setting for revealing how occupational contexts have particular sets of historical and institutional structures that inform the expression, articulation and legitimation of stress.

The next section provides a brief overview of Leder's (1990) thesis on bodily absence and dys-appearance, reflecting on how this might develop current bodies-at-work scholarship. In dialogue with Young (1980; 2002), we challenge Leder's implicit assumption of a primordial ungendered point of perceptual orientation, arguing how vulnerability is an important aspect of feminine modes of perception, as reflected in Oakley's (2007) autobiographical account of her broken arm. We then introduce our empirical setting of the UK Police Service before presenting our analysis of how gendered dys-appearance of stress emerges in this context. Our discussion suggests that gendered dys-appearance provides a lens through which to recognize gendered modes of corporeal experience as ambiguous, partial and diffuse in their embodied constitution.

The Gendered Dys-appearance of the Stressed Body

Similar to organizational scholars' exploration of corporeality (e.g. Dale and Latham, 2014; Hancock et al., 2015), Leder's (1990) work is situated among phenomenological accounts that emphasize our being-in-the-world as rooted in embodied experience. However, in his account, Leder sees disregard of the body ('the absent body') as an everyday, necessary condition of lived experience. This is because as we go about our daily tasks our awareness is

directed towards the surrounding world rather than how our body enables us to navigate it. In other words, as embodied subjects we have an intrinsic tendency to conceal aspects of ourselves, which is formative to how we come to know ourselves and the world. These 'forms of experiential absence' (Leder, 1990: 2) occur through two interconnected processes. First, Leder suggests that the majority of our embodied 'powers' such as sensory perception or movement 'cluster at or near the bodily surface' (p. 11). However, they disappear through an inability to be reflexively known (for example, I cannot 'see [myself] seeing' (p. 17)), or through otherwise receding from our awareness (for example, we are not normally conscious of the support our muscles lend us). The second dimension is related to internal sensations (such as intestinal movements) that make the body feel 'away from itself' due to residing deep in our bodies and being largely unknown to us, (p. 26).

As such, embodiment is normally constituted through 'corporeal absence' (p. 54). However, at times, this absence is disrupted, calling our bodily presence into consciousness, namely when 'the body seizes our awareness … at times of disturbance' (p. 70). Leder refers to this process as *dys-appearance*; a concept that helps to explain our corporeal existence. For example, given the shroud of 'forgetfulness' that characterizes embodiment, it is unsurprising that dys-appearance is also marked by ambiguity, partiality and ineffability. When sensations from our corporeal depths rise to the surface, they are difficult to pinpoint to one particular part of our physiology. For instance, although we may become aware of our digestive system through a rumbling stomach or sudden pain, 'there is no clear place where they begin or end, and no precise center' (Leder, 1990: 41). This aspect of dys-appearance is termed 'referred' (ibid.): elusive in its location or consistency of expression and experienced as a diffuse corporeal feeling. Similarly, we may experience dys-appearance through sensations that defy articulation or 'capture'. These characteristics of dys-appearance mean it is always

accompanied by what Leder (1990: 81) calls a 'telic demand for interpretation and repair' (p. 81). Telic demand refers to an embodied pull or compulsion to try and locate, understand, and rid ourselves of the discomfort or pain. This telic demand also requires us to (re)orientate ourselves in the context of our social world in order to make sense of the perceived bodily malfunction or unease, and subsequently constitutes an important aspect of our subjectivity. Exploring stress in terms of dys-appearance and its associated telic demand for repair thus helps articulate the lived experience of stress as not simply a chain of cause-and-effect, but as encompassing an ambiguous character that is constitutive of how we orientate ourselves in the world.

However, Leder understands bodily dys-appearance as emerging from a universal experiencing body that disregards the 'specificity of embodiment' (Dale, 2001: 65). This means that gender is implicated *after* an initial moment of perception; what Oksala (2006: 230) terms a principle of 'disembodied consciousness'. By comparison, feminist scholars of embodiment, such as Iris Young, suggest that our initial point of perception is not gender-neutral but grounded in 'a physical body acting and experiencing in a specific socio-cultural context; it is body-in-situation' (Young, 2002: 415). These primordial 'modalities of feminine bodily existence' (Young, 1980: 139-140) mean that a woman's projection out into the world is always bound up with the hegemonic (patriarchal) gaze. This means feminine embodiment simultaneously 'lives itself as an *object',* as well as a subject (Young, 1980: 151, original emphasis).

As a consequence, the feminine experience of being in the world is already marked by incapacity, inhibition and instability against a male norm before we even experience dys-appearance. For example, Young suggests that 'we often experience our bodies as a fragile encumbrance, rather than the media of the enactment of our aims' (Young, 1980: 144). Oakley's autobiographical study of her broken arm provides an empirical illustration of this,

articulating how her encounters with various physicians, lawyers and other institutional figures are inherently tied to her sexed body. This makes the task of maintaining what she terms bodily integrity – a coherent and legitimate sense of self – after her accident an even more complex endeavour. The surfacing or dys-appearance of the body is marked by a feminine situatedness, meaning any illness is experienced through a 'condition' of femininity (Oakley, 2007: 153) that Young would suggest is not simply culturally but ontologically gendered. We can therefore read Oakley's account of her broken body as highlighting the way in which gendered dys-appearance is premised on how a women come to know themselves as simultaneously object and subject.

In sum, an understanding of gendered dys-appearance shows how the dys-appearance of a broken body cannot be reduced to a physiological effect of a shattered bone. We seek to develop this position within the context of organizations in two ways. First, we argue that gendered dys-appearance has profound consequences for negating 'invisible' or partially visible bodily experiences (such as stress) that already contravene dominant occupational logics which privilege clear-cut, rational, and observable ways of thinking, feeling and doing. Second, Young (2002: 420) emphasizes that gendered dys-appearance as a mode of perception is always situated in 'the confluence of institutional rules and interactive routines, mobilization of resources, and physical structures'. Workplaces are therefore not only empirical sites where broken bodies are located, but are integral to how we experience stress as an expression of gendered dys-appearance, as emphasized in research exploring other aspects of organizational embodiment (e.g. Dale, 2001; Hancock et al. 2015; Riach et al., 2014). To further explore gendered dys-appearance as part of the lived experience of the broken body in organizations, we now turn to our empirical analyses of stress in policing.

Methodology

Our analysis draws on a qualitative interview study of twenty female senior police officers in management positions in one Police Service based in a metropolitan area of the UK. With 124,126 police officers across 43 police services in England and Wales in 2015 (Home Office, 2015), the Police Service represents a significant section of the UK labour force. The proportion of women amongst police officers in 2015 was 28.2% (Home Office, 2015), an increase from 27.9% the previous year (Home Office, 2014). Recently, the Police Service has been subject to institutional changes following the introduction of New Public Management (NPM) principles (Cockroft and Beattie, 2009), including a gender agenda (Laverick and Cain, 2015). Police work is traditionally framed as 'all-male and all-masculine' (McElhinny, 1994: 159), characterized by a culture of self-reliance, control, and 'being able to overcome life challenges without the help of others' (Chae and Boyle, 2013: 105). It is also viewed as inherently stressful (McCarty et al., 2007) because it includes dangerous tasks (Anshel, 2000), long and unsocial working hours, intensive work pressures and a requirement to be on call; characteristics which also affect stress levels in other high-intensity occupations, such as the medical profession (Walsh, 2013). Police research has framed stress as a consequence of experiences of interpersonal violence, confrontational interactions and emotionally charged encounters with victims of crimes and accidents (Johnson et al., 2005; Toch, 2002), causing acute stress reactions (Anshel et al., 1997; Dick, 2000; Leonard and Alison, 1999). However, Sigler and Wilson (1988) suggest these tasks may be viewed as little more than routine aspects of the job officers have chosen to do and that organizational rather than operational experiences result in stress. In this literature, gender is commonly viewed as one of many variables that can impact physical and psychological stress reactions in police work (e.g. He et al., 2002; McCarty et al., 2007).

Given the phenomenological sympathies of our study, it was vital to recognize that the purpose of our semi-structured interviews was not to discover the 'essence' of stress, but rather to elicit rich descriptions of the participants' embodied experiences of stress. It was crucial that both method and analysis were responsive to the phenomenon in question and to the dynamics between researcher and participant as the context of participants' descriptions of their felt experience, as recommended by Finlay (2009). The interviews were conducted face to face over the course of four months (June to September) in 2011. Twenty female police managers – a term used by participants themselves to self-identify their status at Sergeant, Inspector and Chief Inspector levels – participated in the study, recruited through purposive snowball sampling. The interviews (c. 45 minutes on average) mainly took place in the participants' workplaces, and were digitally recorded, transcribed and anonymized. Participants were aged 35 to 55, and had worked in the Police Service for between 10 and 35 years.

Analysis drew on elements of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), focussing on participants' descriptions of their embodied experiences (Brocki and Wearden, 2006). IPA allows the researcher to analyse broad themes of interest that cut across different people's accounts while allowing space to consider the unique processes that inform the participants' own experiences and life-worlds. Rather than following a traditional inductive coding process, our IPA approach encouraged us to generate codes from the data by moving between the participants' claims and our interpretations. First, the analysis involved close readings of the interview transcripts, assigning each item considered interesting or significant with an initial code. Following IPA praxis, at this stage codes included summarizing descriptions, associations or preliminary interpretations (Smith et al., 1999). Second order coding then identified connections and patterns between key themes, allowing us to focus on the connections and relationships between different expressions of the first order codes,

focussing particularly on relationships between the body, professional identity and expectations, gender and stress. This led to a third order of analysis where we identified themes that emergede across participants' accounts, focussing on tensions and contradictory perceptions, feelings and beliefs that appeared to be supporting the second order relations. In writing up the analysis, following Smith et al. (1999: 235) we sought to convey the participants' shared experiences whilst also accounting for 'the unique nature of each participant's experience' within the overarching themes.

Findings: Gendered Dys-appearance in the Police

We now introduce three interrelated tenets of gendered dys-appearance that emerged in our participants' accounts of stress. First, we introduce how gendered dys-appearance emerges in the context of occupational structures that are 'historically given and condition the action and consciousness of individual persons' (Young, 2002: 426). We then focus on how participants characterized their embodied experiences of stress, exploring how these partial expressions may be understood as modes of gendered dys-appearance. Finally, we pay attention to how participants navigated the 'telic demand' of stress and the corresponding experienced in attempting to resituate the body back into a recognized mode of professional capacity.

Situating Stress in the Context of Policing

We start by outlining how embodied experiences of stress were situated in particular institutional, historical and political circumstances of policing. Young (2002) emphasizes the importance of the sociocultural context in which gendered subjects experience their bodies. In this regard, it was clear that the participants' experiences of stress were located in the historical and political landscape of policing. Commonly framed by the participants as a heavily masculinized workplace (cf. McElhinny, 1994), the institutional context worked in

multiple ways to inform when and how stress might be experienced and expressed within the workplace.

Pointing to the gendered segregation of tasks, Hannah, an Inspector with twenty-five years' service, reflected on how women used to be confined to particular roles:

[Historically], certainly the male officers thought that women were just there to look after the babies, to go and deal with the rape victims, to make the tea and do things like that. … It's not like that now, but it was very like that, and you had to prove yourself on the shifts in those days. And until you'd done that, they wouldn't accept you.

Other participants discussed how traces of this historical legacy endured. For example, many participants recalled times when it was felt women fitted more or less 'naturally' in certain parts of the police service. Laura, a Sergeant (35 years old with 10 years in the Service), suggested that

You would tend to find that female sergeants, whether by choice or not, tend to find themselves in like the neighbourhood roles, like being a neighbourhood policing sergeant which is, I suppose, is viewed as like the fluffier kind... side of policing.

Female officers are seen as less aggressive and confrontational than their male counterparts, as possessing superior communication skills, and as having the ability to build 'trust and rapport with communities' (Silvestri, 2015: 60). These factors contributed to the patterns of occupational segregation identified by the participants. The positioning of women in 'fluffier' roles created challenging conditions the participants had to work against, while simultaneously closing down space to acknowledge that these jobs, or women's positioning

within them, could be stressful. In other words, gendered organizational regimes which placed women in particular roles shaped their perception of what was possible; an embodied situatedness meant that 'things can only present themselves from a particular angle' (Leder, 1990: 12). Our participants' experiential angle as both a fundamental aspect of embodiment and as constituted by institutional contexts and cultural ideologies (cf. Dale, 2001) thus informed participants' interpretations of what was possible and desirable, or conversely unachievable to them; what Young (1980: 146) describes as a simultaneous orientation of 'I can' with 'I cannot' as an existential condition.

Departures from 'masculine' patterns of work, such as working part-time, were understood by the women themselves as having '*little or no direction*' (Mary) in terms of career progression. This led to frustration and boredom, or a questioning of one's professional worth:

> *If you only work two days a week you're not given a stressful job to do. You can't*
> *be a shift sergeant, can you, on two days a week, so I know that sounds a bit*
> *unprofessional, but if you only work two days what can you do that is that*
> *important? (Kelly)*

Family-friendly working hours also carried the taint of a half-hearted commitment to policing, even though a number of other women officers worked part-time. This was accompanied by a correlation between hours worked and having the right to express stress. As a result it diminished the participants' ability to consider certain working circumstances as stress-inducing, even though they suggested women were more likely to experience the difficult task of juggling multiple work and non-work roles. This follows research which has shown that caring responsibilities constitute a barrier to career progression in policing (e.g. Laverick and Cain, 2015). As a result, women's position as historical outsiders often denied

them the right to claim they feel stressed in their organizational position, or to have their experiences of stress considered as valid as those holding masculinized, normalized positions in the organization.

Historical and institutional legacies thus constituted 'a set of structures that position persons' (Young 2002: 417), which seeped into the experience of being a female police officer in everyday work practices, and determined what could legitimately be claimed as stressful. These masculine organizational conditions became inculcated into how and when stress could be felt and acknowledged, especially in '*the environment you work in where people* [Officers] *just seem to think they shouldn't be affected by anything*' (Hannah); a sentiment which echoes the police work ethos of maintaining self-control (Chae and Boyle, 2013). As a result, mild bodily symptoms of stress at work, such as being '*scrunched up*' (Tracey), older injuries flaring up (Caroline) or twinges, aches and pains, were brushed off as unimportant, or became the subject of self-blame rather than institutional responsibility. In particular when an antecedent of stress was not institutionally recognized, it appeared that the dys-appearance of stress was experienced as being 'manifested everywhere and nowhere' (Leder, 1990: 42), and consequently dismissed. For example, Laura tried to explain how stress at work emerged while at the same time normalizing stressful working conditions and marginalizing her own feelings:

> *Daily rubbish, not like real serious worries, but just daily stuff, that just gets on your nerves ... like having to rush, it's that extra rush in the morning, and clock watching in the afternoon […] it's more niggly stuff, rather than an actual stress or a pressure really.*

When women occupied jobs that, although emotionally arduous, were professionally regarded as less demanding, they had trouble taking their own 'little niggles' seriously. This

was exacerbated by dominant institutional approaches to stress. For example, the focus on providing CISD (Critical Incident Stress Debriefing) after a significant incident, such as an explicitly violent event, promoted the idea that stress was attributable to an easily identified external episode. Yet many of our interview accounts suggested that participants viewed themselves as well-equipped for work of this kind, countering traditional perceptions of what are seen as the particularly stressful elements of police work (Anshel, 2000). Fran, a Chief Inspector, referred back to her previous operational jobs saying that police officers are expected to '*just naturally do it because it's our job; it's what we've been trained to do. We're trained to deal with emergencies, and so it's second nature*'. Similarly, Quinn, a Sergeant with 30 years' service, commented:

> *I think the time I was least stressed, was when I worked on what we call the tactical team and we were given a remit to basically gain intelligence and deal with it. We would have some information come in about drug dealing at a certain address and I was left with my team to go and research that, put a team together and go and bash a door down [...] that was a great job because there was no stress there and we had fun.*

Such accounts suggest that an embodied code of action – even when it contradicts what might be seen as a 'natural' self-preservation instinct – was an important part of policing identity. Fran's reference to these tasks being 'second nature' due to training, emphasize the importance of what Leder (1990: 31) terms incorporation – an important aspect of bodily absence. Here practised behaviour turns habitual and therefore recedes into 'experiential disappearance', no longer placing demands on our conscious awareness and therefore not experienced as taxing. However, since stress management interventions tended to focus on these physically demanding roles, other roles (such as administrative tasks) were not rendered stressful. This suggested a mismatch between work conditions that the participants found

most stressful due to gendered organizing, and the work conditions that were the focus of stress prevention and support programmes.

Stress as a Referred Experience in Everyday Policing

We now focus more specifically on the participants' embodied expressions of stress. When talking about their everyday work practices many participants emphasized extreme or excessive performances. This in turn normalized organizational expectations that encouraged pushing oneself. For example, several participants talked about thriving on the hectic pace of their working days and described the satisfaction of experiencing bodily reactions, which Paula and others referred to as a '*nice buzz'*:

> *I thrive on being pushed at times and actually probably function much better when I'm under pressure. (Rebecca)*

> *If I'm buzzing, which is what I call healthy stress, you know, I've got pressures on me. I need time scales, I know I've got things I've got to meet. It can generate sometimes a real productive period where I'm really focused. (Nicola)*

These accounts signal a value in extreme forms of working; a signature attribute of masculine working identities (Gascoigne et al., 2015). Heightened sensations were interpreted as evidence of doing a good job and subsequently demonstrating mastery over perceived bodily limits. Bodily control and busyness carry a desirable 'moral as well as physical quality' (Oakley, 2007: 25). Invoking this idea may be particularly important for making female organizational members feel indispensable in an organization where women have historically been unwelcome. This helps to understand why some participants seemed to crave some stress-related feelings where '*it's nice to have a little worry and then when you've done it you think oh, that's really good I've done that'* (Paula). Framing stress as a productive force

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commonly privileged biochemical articulations such as Belle's suggestion that '*stress keeps you going; it's the adrenaline rush*'. Viewing stress as a productivity-enhancing feature performed by a capable, chemically-driven body echoes dominant organizational narratives that conflate masculine modes of knowing with productivity and virility as critiqued by Phillips (2014). This in turn limits the ways in which stress can be experienced and expressed in the ways that women come to 'know' their bodies as stressed.

In these cases, dys-appearance was not necessarily disruptive or worrying. Instead, working to the brink of their bodily capacity was revered and sensually enjoyed by many participants. Each saw her body as capable of knowing its own limits, and as such as a material entity separate from the 'experiencing "I"' (Leder, 1990: 90). For example, Georgina referred to her body 'telling' her when it had had 'enough'. On the other hand, it may be that the enjoyment came from countering or refuting the gendered disposition of women to 'lack an entire trust in [their] bodies' to fulfil physical tasks (Young, 1980: 143). As women's gendered point of perception produces their bodies as marked by incapacity, the pushing of bodily limits may serve to both exert control over one's own body, and claim a different place in the world. This is affirmed by an organizational context where strength is seen as a desirable professional quality.

At the same time, participants recognized the impossibility of being able to tell precisely how far work demands could stretch their capacities, highlighting the precarity of a perceived mastery over their own bodies. As such, it was not always possible to locate a precise cause and effect type characteristic of stress. This is highlighted by Indie, who had been on sick leave and then worked restricted hours for a period of time after having experienced what she described as '*like a panic attack*':

They [Occupational Health] said to me, what's caused this? I said I don't know what's caused this... it's not like I've been to a car accident or a rail crash and it had been particularly traumatic. Nothing had triggered it that I'm aware of - it's just accumulative... trying to be too much for too long.

Women are socialized into being cognizant of their bodies due to regularly being called to account for their bodies and selves throughout their lives; what Oakley (2007: 67) refers to as 'embodiment disclosure'. Monitoring and appropriately addressing bodily functions and changes is inculcated in women, and instances of ambiguous bodily reactions which did not arise from specific events or injuries, as in Indie's case above, posed a mystery that needed to be explicated. Indie's conclusion that her panic attack was rooted in 'trying to be too much for too long' is not incidental. The feminine imperative to yield to others' needs results in women's disregard of their own bodily demands until a brute survival demands it (Oakley, 2007: 28). Combined with working to the brink of their capacities in order to compensate for perceived feminised limitations presented the danger of exceeding supposedly known bodily limits. For example, Nicola and Belle acknowledged that subjecting oneself to prolonged or continual excessive demands could result in irreparable damage:

It [productive stress] can tip, or something can tip it. You know, you can be teetering, I think, quite a lot and I think that teetering probably becomes unhealthy over a period of time or longevity really. (Nicola)

But then it's when it's all like... gets beyond, you know, gets beyond a point where it's [stress is beyond] reasonable […] I think most people, certainly at my level, have got to the point now where you just can't get any more stressed so you just either flip and fall over or you just back down. (Belle)

Rather than the limit being precisely locatable or predictable in terms of bodily symptoms, the idea of an undetermined 'tipping point' echoes Leder's (1990: 50) notion of self-perception as indirect; that is, '[bodily] perceptions are interpreted as disclosing processes themselves unperceived'. Many participants were unable to pinpoint a specific source or location of their bodily experiences of stress. Instead they talked about a general state of unease which felt just 'out of reach' of sanctioned understandings of rational cause-and-effect accounts of stress. The surfacing of stress through significant visceral symptoms was commonly interpreted as an indication of having ignored more subtle bodily expressions. For example, Belle suggested '…*and then when you get the physical symptoms, you know that you're sort of like you're so far over, but you think you always recognize stress'*. The participants' difficulty of finding acceptable means of expressing their experiences can be viewed in the light of how modes of expression associated with femininity tend to be negated by prevailing organizational norms that favour masculine, 'logical' forms of communication (Phillips, 2014). Given that 'organizations are shaped by gendered perceptions of bodily propriety' (Hancock et al., 2015: 1716), it is unsurprising that there are few opportunities to articulate the variegated experiences of stress within the dominant masculine context of the Police. This relegated women's experience of stress to one of undefinable unease.

Following the institutional norms discussed in the previous section, reasons for discomfort, anxiety or lack of energy were sought in clearly delineated, defined events. However, their experiences of stress were often impossible to account for in these terms. As such, participants' ineffable and peripatetic experiences of stress could not be expressed in organizationally sanctioned terms, which in turn exacerbated the experience of stress. However, even when experienced as a partial, inconsistent phenomenon, stress produced a set of conditions that demanded particular responses, as discussed next.

The Telic Demand of the Stressed Policing Body

The institutional structures and everyday practices of stress discussed previously emphasize how dys-appearance occurred against a landscape that often denied or negated women's embodied experiences of stress. We now turn to instances where the dys-appearance of stress exerted a telic demand. As discussed earlier, Leder (1990: 46) defines telic demand as the 'I must' of broken bodily engagement, whereby we are both forced to recognize our body's expressions of pain or suffering, and compelled to take action to address or ameliorate the situation. While this may occur at 'the tipping point' as discussed earlier, there were also more subtle and nuanced bodily feelings or expressions which produced a telic demand for interpretation and reorientation. In this context 'stress' was attributed to a variety of bodily dys-appearances:

> I'd put [issues with IBS] down to stress even if it wasn't that, because the pattern's formed that it's stress... And as long as I can work it out, then it's fine. I don't like it when I can't work it out. (Georgina)

> I have a long term injury...that interconnects [with stress] really, because if you're stressed then you hold yourself differently, and then my back goes... But then that stresses me, that my back's hurting as well. (Caroline)

A key theme in accounts in which the body dys-appeared in various ways was the seeking of rationalistic explanations and predictability, such as the patterns Georgina referred to. In Caroline's account a previously 'broken' (although not consistently ailing) body resurfaces in instances attributed to stress, when her posture involuntarily shifts. She subsequently 'holds herself differently' whereby muscular processes which normally remain outside her awareness suddenly dys-appear. At the same time, this interpretation of the dys-appearance 'can itself bring about dysfunction' (Leder, 1990: 85) in that anxiety may be exacerbated by

the fact of 'realizing' that one is stressed. The experience of dys-appearance means that although 'self-awareness can allow us to seek help and effect repair… it can also exacerbate problems, intensifying anxiety or a slump in performance' (ibid.). For example, Caroline explains that becoming aware of her back pains further intensifies her stress, demonstrating how identifying and attending to the discomfort does not necessarily result in emotional relief. Instead, she then worries that she is harming her body.

The telic demand of stress which required an attention to bodily experiences was held in tension with participants' tendency to dismiss debilitating or disorientating processes of dys-appearance. Stress was mentioned as something that was an inevitable part of work, while paradocxically seen as incompatible with successful occupational identities. For example, Emily suggested that stress is rarely discussed in day to day conversation, stating that '*in a male dominated organization they don't talk. They get on. They go and have a cigarette. They go and have a beer... it never gets dealt with'*. How embodied experiences came to the fore was also subject to cultural sanctions, such as stigma and being perceived as irreparably broken. The combination of suffering publically from stress and sustaining a successful occupational identity was seen as impossible, as explained by Kelly, who suggested that '*There is that kind of belief that once you've had a period of sickness off with stress you might as well say goodbye to your career'*. Poignant examples of such repercussions were found in accounts about those who had been diagnosed with stress or had taken time off work:

> *You don't say you're stressed in this job! You've probably heard that from other*
> *people as well. It's, no I mean we've got, bless him, one guy, who's lovely, I get*
> *on really well with him but he's known as... well, he's got a nickname basically,*
> *suggesting that he can't cope, but he can cope and he is good, there was just one*

occasion where he went off the rails if you like and that made him take time out

because it was too stressful for him (Tracey).

Such accounts echo research which shows that mental health issues – 'going off the rails' – continue to be a taboo subject in the Police Service (Bell and Eski, 2016). However positioning stress as a permanent and irreparable limitation on bodily capacity has particularly consequences for women whose bodies were always counter to the masculinized ideal of policing and thus situated in a more precarious position. Being identified as stressed incurred significant professional repercussions. Moreover, as Tracey's account above suggests, the inability to 'cope' with stress was such that men could also be subject to feminization that undermined their professional competency. Unsurprisingly, this meant that many participants expressed stress as something to be locked inside, even when they were aware of bodily signals. Tracey continued her story by reflecting on her own experiences of stress:

I suppose it's [stress] something that's within me, I wouldn't want them to see a

weakness in me because, oh she's a girl, she can't cope.

During her account, Tracey framed stress as integral to her, but which she must keep under control so as not to fall victim to gendered stereotypes that misaligned women and occupational norms of policing (Rabe-Hemp, 2009). This is a notion of stress as residing in one's 'corporeal depths' (Leder, 1990: 36) but as not necessarily appearing to others unless one is overpowered by a significant 'telic call' through debilitating corporeal episodes. As Georgina suggests:

It [stress] will just catch me at the right time, if that makes sense. It's almost

like illness, isn't it? You know, you have a little bit of a snuffle, most of the

time, you'll fight it off. If it's caught you at a weak moment, you'll get a cold

and that's what I find with stress.

In many ways, these accounts were particularly notable as they suggested that where reorientation became necessary, it may also carry the possibility of a more ontological transformation. When the 'business as usual' of bodily functioning was notably disrupted or threatened it was often kept as a private project of the self. Participants muddled through experiencing stress as simultaneously an external force attacking the body and an integral and intimate part of the self. On the one hand these aspects contributed to dys-appearance being experienced as a mode of bodily vulnerability situated in an occupational masculine normativity. On the other hand, there remained the possibility for dys-appearance to invoke a more 'I'-centred moment of subjectivity since the corporeal necessity of looking after the broken body means 'the art of survival drives them [women] past the land of coping to another more selfish place' (Oakley, 2007: 28). The dys-appearing body thus 'reorganizes the experiential field inwards' (Leder, 1990: 73) and reconfigures lived experience.

Discussion

In this paper we have conceptualized the complex embodied character of stress as a mode of gendered dys-appearance. This departs from dominant conceptions of stress as concerned with psychological and physical reactions to a particular environment (e.g. Deaconu and Rasca, 2008; Selye, 1956; Walters and Denton, 1997). Our analysis suggests that experiences of stress are constitutive of both the situatedness of our physical bodies in a gendered organizational landscape and the way 'facts of embodiment, social and physical environment appear in light of the project a person has' (Young, 2002: 415). Together these enable or conversely preclude particular articulations of organizational stress through gendered lines of recognition and perception: a phenomenon which our participants show is experienced in the

vicissitudes of their bodies and occupational lives. As our analysis suggests, this is not simply woven into discourses surrounding masculinity and femininity but is also realized through situated bodily knowledge. The body, then, is conceptualized not as 'a grouping of fixed features but a being in process undergoing … transformations' (Leder, 1990: 57). This emphasizes the complexities of thinking about stressed bodies as 'both material objects and the site of human experience' (Oakley, 2007: 15). Stress cannot be viewed as a temporary dysfunctional discrepancy to the normally functioning body, but must instead be understood as an integral aspect of one's corporeal orientation. Returning to our research questions, we attempt to develop this position through discussing how our findings further extend an understanding of gendered bodies at work.

First, our findings suggest that stress as a mode of gendered dys-appearance is a multifaceted experience for female police managers. In many ways the available articulations of stress worked as a corporeally situated referential guide that sets the boundaries and definitions of how one may recognize and legitimately experience stress within the police setting. Just as 'objective' images of one's body such as x-rays enact 'the most definitive answer possible to questions about one's health' (Oakley, 2007: 12), organizationally sanctioned expressions of stress invariably limit the ways in which stress is recognized, sensually experienced, and articulated. For example, various bodily experiences dys-appeared in unpredictable, ambiguous and inconvenient ways that were unaccountable in organizational terms. What was striking was the force with which our participant's affective expressions had to battle the professional and occupational expectations of a limitless body which not only survives but thrives under exertion and endurance. Experiences of dys-appearance are always situated within powerful and complex knowledge systems that assume complete bodily control and sovereignty. This has particular consequences for organizational gendered subjectivities given that 'feminine bodily existence is an *inhibited intentionality*' to begin with (Young,

1980: 146, original emphasis) that 'calls for hypervigilance' (Oakley, 2007: 69) in its expressions. When stress dys-appeared for our participants, it resulted in increased (but not new) forms of self-regulation, exacerbating the *already* stressful body experience that comes from being women in a masculinized organization.

Dys-appearance provides a valuable concept for exploring how corporeal experiences of stress are simultaneously mobilized through, and constitutive of, embodied gendered subjectivities. Expressions and styles of stress appear to be gendered in order to be recognized through modes of masculinity and femininity. Expectations of an ever-performing body are in some senses contrary to our participants' experiences of the body as materially susceptible to excess. However, as Oakley (2007: 67) suggests, 'what is unrealistic can also be normal'. A double bind thus emerged. On the one hand participants felt that monitoring their bodies for stress could make them vulnerable in terms of questioning their capability as police professionals, given the need to counter cultural interpretations of female bodies as fragile or complicated. On the other hand, ignoring bodily expressions may make them more vulnerable and susceptible to stress-related harm.

Second, our findings suggest that organizational contexts serve to enact gendered dys-appearance in a variety of ways that are felt through the stylization of stress as an embodied experience. For our participants the gendered dys-appearance of stress was a culmination of inculcated cultural expectations, expressions of professional belonging and everyday performances that evidence one's value and contribution to organizational practice. Occupational stress as dys-appearance presented particular gendered possibilities and was fundamental to how participants experienced stress in and through a feeling of bodily capacity. For example, although addressing issues of stress has some organizational acceptability, occupational narratives and policies such as CISD (Critical Incident Stress Debriefing) encourage police officers to objectify their own bodies. This jarred with

participants' bodily experiences of stress that were neither monolithic nor unambiguous. In this environment, the dys-appearance of stress frustrated women's attempts to align themselves with policing norms, leaving them to negotiate the 'intrinsic puzzle of how we can't do without the body, but would often like to' (Oakley, 2007: v).

Policing practices also influenced how our participants came to recognize their own bodily expressions, highlighting how gender is intertwined with broken body episodes. Experiencing stress was at times powerful and even pleasurable, appearing to diminish concerns about it. For example, it could be interpreted as a sign of doing a good job by correctly responding to organizational demands. However, narratives centring on the complex nature of this affirming experience vis-à-vis debilitating aspects highlight a precarious interrelationship. Specifically, they point to the ongoing and unstable negotiation between 'productive' and 'incapacitating' stress experiences as both an integral part of experiencing one's bodily capacities, and as a proxy for making meaning surrounding the emergence of aches, pains and injuries.

Third, understanding stress as gendered dys-appearance may help to inform thinking surrounding other experiences of organizational broken bodies. As discussed at the beginning of the paper, the broken body is experienced through a coming together of the physical, sensual and sociocultural. Stress as one example of a broken body can be considered as an experience that is often 'affectively charged' (Leder, 1990: 40); defined through its inability to be fully perceived, represented or located. Moreover, the referral of dys-appearance for women is further complicated as it occurs as part of gendered bodily existence that itself is 'self-referred'. As Young (1980: 148) suggests, women's existence is one of simultaneous closeness and distancing since they are always being 'looked at and acted upon' (ibid). The referred experience, both in terms of internal bodily sensations and social objectification, means that 'we have to build on this faulty ground a new sense of our embodied selves'

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(Oakley, 2007: 69). We would argue that the faulty ground that arises from this process of double referral means that episodes that threaten being 'experts of our own bodies' (Oakley, 2007: 61) make us increasingly susceptible or receptive to organizational expectations as a way of making sense of what is happening to us. Somewhat ironically, we come to rely heavily on dominant narratives about preferable ways of being, even if they are part of the negating process that is part of broken body experiences. However, ignoring or repressing these bodily expressions is not an option: dys-appearance shows the compulsion to make meaning of bodily sensations. As Tarr and Thomas (2011: 152) suggest in their discussion of pain, broken body episodes 'exert a telic demand; it must be explained and mastered in order to bring it to an end'. However, the experience of negotiating the telic demand of dys-appearance – with all its ambiguity and unpredictability – alongside organizational demands was far from 'mastered'. Instead it was a careful and often imperfect navigation between professional gendered identities and gendered bodily orientation in the quest to find some way of making day to day working life bearable.

Conceptualizing the gendered dys-appearance of stress also highlights how 'broken' bodies are part of the organizational social fabric even when their 'injuries' are not observable on the surface or available for articulation. Echoing Northoff et al. (1992: 141) we can say that stress is similar to other experiences of illness in the sense that it is 'always already located in the world as well as in the body'. If bodily experiences of stress are conditioned on a gendered corporeality, then a radical departure from traditional approaches to stress is needed, moving away from a normalized homeostasis within which a stressed employee appears as an aberration. Dys-appearance may provide one way of moving beyond victimized or medically defined accounts of stress or other broken body episodes which are dominant in workforce policy. For example, the focus on cognitive or visible causes not only comes from occupational policing cultures but is influenced by larger dominant masculinist knowledge

claims. This is supported by wider institutional systems (such as Western medicine) that promote the reliability of cause and effect through a focus on motor functions, complicit with modes of rational knowledge claims (Oakley, 2007: 91). Contrary to approaches that emphasize the biomedical functioning of the body, dys-appearance highlights how stress is always part of our participants' ongoing subjective experience of work. Accepting that stress may constantly haunt the periphery of our organizational experiences may require fundamental changes in how we understand the organizational subject.

Conclusion

Gendered dys-appearance as a way of understanding the experience of the broken body at work not only helps to recognize the importance of gender within the constitutive experience of stress, but may also provide possibilities for considering how other bodily in/capacities are enacted in the workplace more broadly. Our conceptualization points to a potential tension between the experiences of organizational members and prescribed organizational knowledge claims that surround stress, as evidenced by the effect policies have regarding the objectivization of the body which renders it calculable, predictable and ever-productive. On a practical level, the negation of particular embodied experiences may be exacerbated by organizational practices; something which needs to change in order to enable a fuller register of recognised organizational health experiences and means of supporting them. Bodily episodes that are erratic, ambiguous and never fully knowable are all too easy to dismiss or oversimplify in settings where rationalism dominates, as they simply cannot be captured in their complexity or entirety. However, the gendered dys-appearance of the stressed body gives voice to the experience of navigating the pull towards professional conformity and continuance (even if this means negating our own experiences), and the simultaneous telic demand of our lived bodies.

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