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**Ethical Issues Concerning the Experience of
Representational Predicaments at Work**

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Ethical Issues Concerning the Experience of Representational Predicaments at Work

ABSTRACT

Representational predicaments refer to situations in which job incumbents believe that dominant authorities are holding incomplete or otherwise incorrect work-related assumptions about them. We carried out qualitative interviews with a diverse and gender-balanced sample of 55 Hong Kong Chinese job incumbents, from whose perspective we identified three broad categories of representational predicament: (1) doing unvalued work; (2) doing thankless work; and (3) being subject to distorted representation. Each category of representational predicament was reported both by female and male informants, with females reporting more representational predicaments than males. Stories of unvalued work referred either to unnoticed and unvalued work, which entailed voluntary care work, or to noticed but unvalued work. Stories of thankless work fell into four subcategories: carrying out a superior's request believed to be illegitimate; pacifying uncivil service recipients; dealing with subterranean internal obstacles; and conducting informal negotiations with troublesome service recipients/suppliers. Stories about being subject to distorted representation fell into six subcategories: being publicly ridiculed or humiliated; having flaws spotlighted but merits downplayed; receiving misattributed blame; being subject to false or misleading uncorrected allegations; suffering prejudicial stereotyping; and receiving reprimands perceived as unfounded. All but two of the representational predicament stories alleged or implied at least one type of ethical problem that concerned breaches of interpersonal justice; violations of, or threats to procedural justice; or indifference toward, or neglect of, the ethics of care. It is inferred that representational predicaments are symptoms of poor ethical climates.

Key Words: qualitative, ethics, moral, care, interpersonal justice, procedural justice, representational predicaments.

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines “representational predicaments” and the ethical problems that may be associated with them. We define representational predicaments as situations in which job incumbents believe that assumptions about their work, about their competence, and/or about their performance, which are held by dominant authorities such as key line managers, are unfavourably incomplete, inaccurate or distorted, i.e., are not ontologically authentic. Although the term “representational predicament” has not been used by other authors in business ethics or organization studies, it has been used elsewhere, in cultural studies, to refer to the not-dissimilar issue of the trivialization of a person’s life, aspirations, impact and achievements (Steele, 2001). By “dominant authority”, we mean a leader or power bloc, responsible for human management decisions that affect the focal job incumbent (Sun and Permuth, 2007). We assume that job incumbents are concerned about the veracity of the assumptions about their work that are held by dominant authorities, as these are likely to affect their prospects for remuneration, job retention, and career advancement. Representational predicaments may reflect gaps between job incumbents and dominant authorities in terms of work-related communication (Dansereau and Markham, 1987), social distance (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939, pp. 365-366), work experiences, work values and work priorities (Orr, 2006; Schein, 1996).

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. First, we explain four criteria for judging ethical problems. Second, we refer to these ethical criteria in conjunction with a review of literature about various types of representational predicament. Third, we describe the methodology of a qualitative study of representational predicaments that we conducted in Hong Kong, and fourth, we present our research findings. Fifth, we compare the categories of representational predicaments identified in our research with those identified in the literature review. Sixth, we summarise our overall findings. Seventh, we offer ideas for practice and further research. Eighth, we acknowledge limitations of the research.

CRITERIA FOR JUDGING ETHICAL PROBLEMS ATTENDING REPRESENTATIONAL PREDICAMENTS

We shall now explain four main ethical principles: distributive justice, interpersonal justice, procedural justice, and care, which will be reference points in our discussions of the ethical issues that may be associated with representational predicaments.

Distributive Justice

Distributive justice is concerned with whether benefits or burdens are distributed fairly (Deutsch, 1985; Rescher, 1966; Tyler and Smith, 1998). Regarding benefits, job incumbents desire that their contributions to the organization's mission and goals should be recognized (Brinkerhoff and Kanter, 1980, p. 9), and the "principle of contribution" (Velasquez, 1996) stipulates that remuneration received should reflect the work contributed. Burdens may be physical or psychological, and we shall consider the psychological burdens, such as obstacles to achieving work tasks, and the need to perform emotional labour (Korczynski, 2003), which employers might be expected to alleviate, compensate for, or make due allowances for.

Interpersonal Justice

We shall assume that interpersonal justice is a major component, along with informational justice, of the wider concept of interactional justice, which requires that the manner in which people are being treated should meet with requisite standards of demeanour and consideration (Bies, 1987, 2001; Bies and Moag, 1986; Solomon, 1998; Tyler and Bies, 1990). Interpersonal justice specifically concerns standards of interpersonal respect, dignity and sensitivity (Greenberg, 1993). Arguably, these standards derive from the categorical imperative of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), one formulation of which is: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end" (Kant, 1964, p. 96).

We concur with Borowski's (1998, p. 1627) inference: "all parties should be treated with mutual respect because we as people deserve it". We also concur with Folger (2004, p. 41), who holds that the requisite standards of demeanour and consideration include "categorically imperative prohibitions against degrading, demeaning, abusively uncivil

misconduct toward others – no matter their rank”. Interpersonal justice may be jeopardized if dominant authorities fail to recognize that their employees are exposed to incivility or abuse by third parties, such as service recipients or other employees.

Procedural Justice

Procedural justice may be defined as the fairness of the means through which allocation decisions are made (Tepper et al., 2006, p. 103), which we shall consider in the context of human resource management. Thus we assume that job incumbents desire that the means by which dominant authorities judge their conduct and performance should reflect six hallmarks of procedural justice (Dolan et al., 2007; Leventhal, 1976; Lind and Taylor, 1988, pp. 131-132). These are: opportunity for voice; neutrality of decision makers, i.e., impartiality and lack of bias; consistency of assessment criteria across persons and time; accuracy of information used; correctability, i.e., the right of appeal; and transparency of the decision process. An alternative formulation of “accuracy of information”, especially salient in the context of representational predicaments, is “the perceived depth of knowledge shown by the decision-maker about the individual’s situation” (Greenberg, 1986; Saxby et al., 2000, p. 208). We regard procedural justice as subsuming due process, defined as the fairness of the processes by which benefits or sanctions are derived and implemented (Smith, 1983).

Ethics of Care

The ethics of care focuses on responsiveness to the needs of others and involves nurturing others as well as oneself (Derry, 1989; Gilligan, 1982). Caring may be defined as a process of taking others’ interests as one’s own (Solomon, 1998), and is closely related to compassion, which may be defined as concern for others who face a serious or grave predicament worse than one’s own (Blum, 1980). Although justice and care are typically viewed as alternatives (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984), we shall assume that the ethics of care may be supportive of justice, rather than in tension with it, by providing moral impetus to attend to the details and nuances of human resource problems (Solomon, 1998; Ladkin, 2006).

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON REPRESENTATIONAL PREDICAMENTS AT WORK

Although prior literatures on business ethics and organization studies have not referred directly to the concept of representational predicaments, they have mentioned phenomena that we shall interpret as two main types of representational predicament, along with various subtypes. The first main type occurs when a job incumbent believes that he/she is doing necessary work that goes unappreciated by dominant authorities, who, from the perspective of the incumbent, appear to have an erroneous or incomplete picture of the nature of the work and its context. The second occurs when job incumbents believe that their competence or performance is subject to misperception or misattribution by dominant authorities. We shall now identify these types and discuss them in relation to the above ethical principles.

Doing Necessary but Unappreciated Work

Prior literature identifies three contexts in which job incumbents believe that dominant authorities do not appreciate their work, because of perceived lack of understanding by the latter about their work situation. These are: (1) underestimation of skill requirements; (2) exclusive preoccupation with outcomes; and (3) undervaluing of care and compassion work.

Underestimation of skill requirements. In the first of these contexts, job incumbents believe that their work requires complex skills of problem solving, cognition, and improvisation, but believe also that managerial authorities are representing these as nothing but a set of routine and commonsense procedures (Brown, 1998; Brown and Duguid, 1991; Star and Strauss, 1999). Orr's (1990, 1996, 1998, 2006) study of photocopy repair technicians operating remotely from dominant authorities exemplified how the latter's "canonical" perspectives on the work may differ from job incumbents' own "non-canonical" perspectives. Subsequent studies have also suggested that the depth and complexity of the skills of reasoning and problem solving required in the work of laboratory technicians (Shapin, 1989), hospital nurses (Bolton, 2004; Bowker et al., 1995, Pang et al., 2000; Tang et al., 2007), office clerks or secretaries (Ogasawara, 1998), litigation support personnel (Blomberg et al., 1996), and miscellaneous administrators (Blomberg et al., 1993) have also been underestimated, despite their relatively close working proximity to dominant authorities. It is

possible that perceived underestimation of skill requirements may lead job incumbents to develop a sense of distributive injustice in relation to the principle of contribution.

Exclusive preoccupation with outcomes. The second context, identified in prior literature, for doing necessary but unappreciated work, is when job incumbents believe that dominant authorities are relying extensively on standardization of work outputs as a means of control, apparently with little or no attempt to monitor actual work processes. Standardization of work outputs involves canonical output indicators of profitability, productivity, sales volume, etc., as bases for judging the effectiveness of subordinate units, groups or individuals, and for making decisions about future resource allocations (Mintzberg, 1983). Dominant authorities may regard standardized indicators of work outputs as convenient means to reduce the complexity of their own decision making processes, but job incumbents may believe that they fail to take account of unique local contingencies (Argyris, 1978).

Individuals and groups located at or near the “front line” may encounter miscellaneous contingencies, such as: fluctuations in the availability, quality, and compatibility of supplies; the need for *ad hoc* repairs to or replacement of broken or obsolescent technology; changes in consumer tastes; variations in economic conditions; and requests, complaints or queries from service recipients. In response, they may need to perform implicit “articulation work” that is invisible to, and cannot be predicted by, canonical models of work and organization (Strauss, 1993; Star and Strauss, 1999, p. 10). Articulation work serves, informally, to link together, coordinate and integrate the activities of various parties, and may involve soliciting and allocating resources, developing and implementing schedules, negotiation, and conflict resolution (Strauss, 1985). Employees may, in addition, be required to handle emotionally taxing incidents involving service recipients (Hochschild, 1983; Korczynski, 2003; O’Donohoe and Turley, 2006; Tang et al, 2007).

This analysis suggests that perceived exclusive preoccupation by dominant authorities with outcomes may be associated with three ethical problems. First, if job incumbents believe that the effort and skills that they contribute through invisible articulation work are not taken into account, they may develop a sense of distributive injustice in relation to the principle of contribution. Second, they may also perceive there to be distributive injustice if they receive no support or compensation for the burden of necessary emotional labour. Third, if job incumbents believe that dominant authorities are focusing on outcomes to the exclusion of all

else, they may consider them to be unconcerned with their needs and thus indifferent to the ethics of care, as in the call centres studied by Korczynski (2003).

Undervaluing of care and compassion work. The third context for doing unappreciated work that is identified in the literature is when female incumbents believe that traditional gender stereotypes require them to provide care, compassion, empathy, nurturance, emotional support, and other help to others (Gherardi, 1994; Townley, 1994), but believe also that such work is undervalued. In a USA based study of female engineers, Fletcher (1995, 1998, 1999) identified various relational practices that the women performed. While, from the women's perspective, these relational practices constituted contextual performance (Motowidlo, 2000), others attributed them to personality or gender rather than to professionalism, and they "got disappeared" from descriptions of important and desirable work.

Fletcher found also that the women were caught in a double-bind, in that although performing relational practices was not considered advantageous in terms of career advancement, failure to perform them attracted disapproval and gave rise to stigmatization because such refusal violated gender-role expectations. The extent to which this kind of representational predicament, involving a form of "thankless" work, persists in contemporary organizations, is unclear. Holt and Ellis (1998) found evidence from the USA that traditional masculine and feminine gender role stereotypes, which might underpin gendered expectations to perform invisible care work, were weakening, while in Taiwan, Peng (2006) found considerable work-related role similarities between males and females and Peng and Wang (2006) found signs of movement toward gender status equalization.

It remains possible, nonetheless, that despite apparent convergence in some societies regarding gender roles, and despite apparent improvements in the status of women, care work, whether performed by men or by women, continues to go underappreciated. Notably, job evaluation systems tend to undervalue care work, regardless of whether this is performed by males or females (Steinberg, 1999), while Derry (1989, p. 859) found that the "the voice of care... does not have a major role in corporate culture".

Being Subject to Distorted Representation

From prior literature, we identified five contexts in which job incumbents may believe that they are subject to distorted representation regarding the particular nature of their performance or conduct. These five contexts involve perceptions by job incumbents that: (1) they are being publicly ridiculed or humiliated; (2) they are receiving misattributed blame; (3) their flaws are being spotlighted but their merits are being downplayed; (4) they are subject to false or misleading uncorrected allegations; (5) they are subject to “persecutory spotlighting”, i.e., that dominant authorities are striving to “frame” them or “pin” blame on them. The first two contexts, and possibly also the last three, match with descriptions of abusive supervision/management (Tepper, 2007; Tepper et al., 2006; Zellars et al., 2002), while all five may reflect social undermining by superiors (Duffy et al., 2002).

Regarding the first context, public ridicule or humiliation implies violation of interpersonal justice, by breaching norms of appropriate demeanour and consideration. Ridiculing mistakes may be regarded as a contra-indicator of transformational leadership (Bass and Avolio, 1994), as a barrier to a positive learning climate (Antonacopoulou, 1999; Retna and Tee, 2006, p. 149), as a source of lack of team cohesiveness (Turman, 2003), and as part of an atmosphere of intimidation and reprisals, in which fraudulent behaviour is likely to flourish (Wang and Kleiner, 2005). Such workplace incivility can “spiral” in intensity (Andersson and Pearson, 1999), until it entails toxic verbal and physical abuse (Frost, 2002).

The second context involves a job incumbent’s belief that he or she is being unfairly blamed by a superior (Bell and Tetlock, 1989). Incumbents may regard this as an indication that future judgements about them are unlikely to be based on accurate information, and thus as a threat to procedural justice. Such cases are likely to damage trust (Landesberg, 1996), and may make incumbents less likely to report problems (Pfeffer and Fong, 2005, p. 382).

The third context reflects job incumbents’ belief that dominant authorities are highlighting their mistakes while overlooking good work. Incumbents may accordingly doubt the neutrality of those making judgements about them, and thus the likelihood of procedural justice. In some cases, perceived emphasis on “fault-finding” or “nit-picking” may reflect a superior’s management style (Brinkerhoff and Kanter, 1980, p. 11), and the high frequency of

the inclusion of such behaviour as a topic in upward performance appraisal indicates its salience for, and unpopularity among, subordinates (Hall et al., 1996, p. 225).

The fourth context is where job incumbents believe that they are being falsely accused of misdemeanours, mistakes, or omissions by dominant authorities, as illustrated by d'Iribarne (2002, p. 253). In such circumstances, incumbents may lack confidence in the neutrality of decision makers, may doubt that future judgements about them would be based on accurate information, and thus may regard procedural justice as unlikely.

The fifth context, persecutory spotlighting, refers to when job incumbents believe that dominant authorities are singling them out in searches for incriminating evidence. Physical searches may be carried out on a job incumbent's body, vehicle or office, implying strong suspicion that he or she has violated organizational rules. Such searches may reflect prejudicial stereotyping of racial or other characteristics (Halcrow, 2002). Job incumbents may regard them as violating procedural injustice, because of the implication that judgements about them have not been exercised with neutrality and absence of bias. In such cases, an additional indicator of procedural justice or injustice is whether incumbents believe that they could initiate a grievance claim that would be fairly investigated and arbitrated (Fryxell, 1992; Lind and Tyler, 1988; Nielsen, 1996). Coercive searches may also be perceived as violations of interpersonal injustice, in that they may invade privacy, entail false imprisonment, and cause emotional distress (Tidwell, 1989).

THE RESEARCH

Research Questions

We addressed the following research questions, regarding representational predicaments experienced by job incumbents in Hong Kong:

- RQ1. What manifestations are there of (1) doing necessary but unappreciated work and (2) being subject to distorted representation about performance or conduct?
- RQ2. What other forms of representational predicament, if any, are there?
- RQ3. What are the ethical problems that are associated with the various forms of representational predicament?

RQ4. What differences are there, if any, between males and females regarding the above?

Research Design

Our focus on the perspective of the job incumbent implied the need for a phenomenological research design (Polkinghorne, 1989), focusing on life-worlds of individual informants. We based our data collection and analysis on subjective realities as perceived by informants, rather than seeking to establish rights or wrongs based on objective measures or inter-subjective accounts (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Creswell, 1994, 1998).

Another emphasis in our research design was to remove barriers to access. Since workplace ethics is a sensitive topic (Brannen, 1988), and because Chinese informants tend to be concerned with “face” (Bond and Hwang, 1987), and can be reluctant to disclose personal viewpoints and experiences to strangers (Shenkar, 1994), when recruiting informants, we attempted to build a network of trust, building our sample through snowballing, starting out by interviewing people who knew one or more of the authors, and asking them to nominate other potential informants (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981; Hornby and Symon, 1994: 169-170). Also, in order to encourage participation in the research, we chose what we believed would be perceived as a relatively uncontroversial caption for the research, “Interpersonal Skills at Work”. Through appropriate questioning during the research interviews, this initial theme provided an entry point for investigating representational predicaments and the ethical issues associated with them.

Data Collection

Between November 2002 and August 2003, one of the authors interviewed 55 informants (27 males, 28 females), occupying various levels of seniority and based at 54 different sites in 45 different organizations. To facilitate generalizability of findings regarding RQ1-RQ3, a heterogeneous sample was sought, in terms of occupation, industry sector, organization size, age and educational background. To facilitate investigation of RQ4, roughly equal numbers of males and females were interviewed. Informants came from 5 different departments of the Hong Kong Government; plus 6 other public sector organizations; 21 multinational corporations (11 of which were headquartered in the West; 6 of which were based in Hong Kong, and 4 of which were headquartered elsewhere in Asia); 2

Western-invested joint venture companies; and 15 locally-owned companies with headcounts of 200 or less. Industry sectors included: construction; financial services; garment sourcing, distribution and retail; printing; legal services; logistics; manufacturing; post-compulsory education; property leasing, sales and management; supermarkets; trading and sourcing; and utilities. Reflecting the geographical location of the study (Government of the Hong Kong SAR, 2007), 98% of the sample were Hong Kong Chinese and all spoke fluent Cantonese. Other demographic characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table I.

INSERT TABLE I ABOUT HERE

The interviews were conducted in Cantonese, and each lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours. Informants were assured that their data would be treated confidentially. Each interview began with demographic questions, followed by asking the informant to describe and comment on the formal or informal performance evaluation systems that applied to him or her. The main section of the interviews was structured to focus on interpersonal encounters as potential sources of or settings for representational predicaments, and probed informants' perceptions, attributions, and assumptions regarding whether and how their work performance was noticed and appreciated, or evaluated fairly, by dominant authorities, in relation to 4 types of critical incident:

- a difficult interaction with a service recipient or supplier regarding a sensitive issue about which the other party appeared to feel strongly and badly about;
- an important contribution at a workplace meeting;
- a difficult interaction with a supervisor or subordinate; and
- a difficult interaction with a co-worker or colleague.

Some informants spontaneously described other types of critical incident, involving non-market stakeholders, and also technically-oriented work, which previous literature (Orr, 1996) suggested might also entail representational predicaments. Open-ended questioning was used to encourage descriptive narration about each incident (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Informants were also asked to rate the amount of recognition received from managerial authorities for the work undertaken or trouble endured during each critical incident (i.e., none/

a little bit/ nearly enough/ enough/ more than enough). The interviews were open to critical incidents featuring work that informants believed had been noticed and appreciated by superiors, and thus we did not assume that every critical incident described by informants would involve a representational predicament.

Analysis

Interviews were transcribed into English, and were analyzed by means of a grounded theory approach, focusing on critical incidents concerning representational predicaments that informants reported having personally faced at work. All categorizations and category labels were based on the apparent standpoint of the respective job incumbents, such that we suspended judgment regarding whether or not their subjective accounts were accurate and truthful reflections of “objective reality” (Spiegelberg, 1978). The analysis involved ongoing discussions among us, and proceeded in tandem with the interviews, so that analysis of the earlier interviews helped to sharpen the focus of subsequent interviews (Kvale, 1996). Themes and their interrelationships emerged through constant comparisons between various items of data and between the data and emerging theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). By the end of the analysis, a clear set of inter-related categories had been identified, which accommodated all relevant data (Glaser, 1978).

FINDINGS

Among the 55 informants, 32 (18 females, 14 males) reported a total of 52 stories of representational predicaments. All stories except one referred to representational predicaments that the respective informants claimed to have personally experienced. In some cases, these were reported as being specific to the respective informant, while in other cases they were reportedly shared with one or more colleagues. We distinguished three main categories of representational predicament: (1) doing unvalued work; (2) doing thankless work; and (3) being subject to distorted representation. These, along with various subcategories, are summarized in Table II.

The next three sub-sections explain each category of representational predicament, along with illustrative stories and explanations of their subcategories and sub-subcategories,

and we identify ethical problems that informants implied or alleged were associated with these. Male informants are identified as M1, M2, etc., and female informants as F1, F2, etc.

INSERT TABLE II ABOUT HERE

Doing Unvalued Work

There were 12 stories about doing unvalued work, referring to activities that informants believed had been necessary, and which they judged also to have been valuable for their organization and/or for service recipients, but which, they believed, dominant authorities had not regarded as necessary. While incumbents construed these activities as a matter of moral and practical rationality (Townley, 2002), they also saw them as discretionary in terms of formal organizational obligations, thus constituting a form of organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Organ, 1988). As shown in Table III, we identified two subcategories: (1) doing unnoticed and unvalued work; and (2) doing noticed but unvalued work.

INSERT TABLE III ABOUT HERE

Doing Unnoticed and Unvalued Work

There were 8 stories (4 by females, 4 by males) about doing unnoticed and unvalued work, which informants believed would not have been valued by dominant authorities even if it had been noticed. Of these stories, 5 involved counselling service recipients, 2 involved counselling subordinates, and one involved sharing task-related intelligence with colleagues. In these stories, informants claimed that they had provided necessary help to others, who in most cases had benefited from their help. They perceived, however, that dominant authorities had been unconcerned about such work, and were, by implication, indifferent to the ethics of care. This is illustrated in a story told by M7, a former lecturer in a higher education

institution, about helping graduating students to find alternative careers at a time when the job market in their specialist area had been saturated:

“Usually they were unhappy and I had to comfort them, and showed my sympathy. Then I would offer advice, suggesting that they could consider other alternatives or continue their studies. They would ask me to write reference letters. I might have helped to reduce dissatisfaction and prevent adverse impact on student recruitment. My boss didn’t care about this because the senior management didn’t regard student placement as part of our duties, but I regarded student counselling as part of my job. I was willing to help students with problems and I got a sense of job satisfaction because I helped students. For me, this was a basic principle of ethics.” [M7].

Doing Noticed but Unvalued Work

There were 4 stories about females doing work that addressed organizational needs, and which dominant authorities had noticed but not valued. Of these stories, 3 referred to task activities, while the other one referred to the making of proposals and suggestions. It appeared that interpersonal injustice, rather than distributive injustice, was at issue in these stories, reflecting the informants’ feelings that the management had not given due respect for initiatives taken. For example, F14, an assistant manager in the logistics department of a Western-headquartered multinational medical supplies company, claimed to have introduced an appraisal system that she believed had greatly improved discipline, morale and performance among her subordinates:

“The Director was not impressed as he thought that the system was unnecessary because the Hong Kong office is so small.” [F14].

Doing Thankless Work

There were 20 stories (10 by females, 10 by males) about doing “thankless” work. This differed in two key respects from unvalued work. First, informants regarded thankless work as obligatory, extorted by proximal stakeholders such as service recipients or immediate superiors. Hence, from their point of view, thankless work was not OCB as originally conceived by Organ (1988), whereas unvalued work, being discretionary, was OCB. Second,

informants believed that dominant authorities would attend to thankless work, but only if there was some indication that it had been performed badly or inappropriately, or had not been done when it should have been done.

As indicated in Table IV, we found 4 subcategories of thankless work. These were: (1) carrying out a superior's request believed to be illegitimate; (2) pacifying abusive or otherwise uncivil service recipients; (3) extra work arising from subterranean internal obstacles or poor overall coordination; and (4) informal negotiations with troublesome service recipients or suppliers. We now explain these, and their associated ethical problems.

INSERT TABLE IV ABOUT HERE

Carrying out A Superior's Request Believed to be Illegitimate

There were 2 stories, both by males, about separate incidents, in which they carried out unfair dismissals at the behest of their respective immediate superiors, thereby violating procedural justice. One of the stories was told, as follows, by M17, an operations officer in a property management company that employed around 500 people:

“My superior is having an extra-marital affair with a female caretaker [B], who is very lazy and doesn't do her work well. She just relies on her relationship with my boss. Another female caretaker [C] was an enemy of [B]. My superior told me to fire [C]. He called in sick on the day when I had to fire [C]. ...

I told [C] that she didn't listen to her supervisor's orders, which was an excuse because she hadn't actually done anything wrong in her work, and I told her that she had to leave immediately. The proper procedure should have been that the supervisor writes a report and a warning letter is issued.

[C] then became very emotional, yelling and screaming.... On leaving the office, [C] told me, 'You've cheated me today...' She filed a complaint to the HR department in the head office, and my superior had to send in a report....

I just treated this as my job. I had to do this because of my position. I just implemented the order.... There was no benefit to the company because we had to hire

another person. The company incurred extra costs for administration, recruitment, training and provision of a uniform. The incident also caused embarrassment and disturbance to customers.... The boss never said a word to me about this incident. The company didn't handle [C's] complaint properly because as far as I know my boss never had to go to head office to explain." [M17].

Both this and the other unfair dismissal story described the respective informants' active involvement in the violation of procedural justice, and in facing the outrage of their "victims". The stories appeared to reflect exploitation by their superiors of power asymmetries vis-à-vis them as subordinates (Ashforth, 1994; Bies and Tripp, 1998; Vredenburg and Brender, 1998). They implied that they had no protection from this, and that the respective organizational cultures were not characterized by caring about people.

Pacifying Abusive or Otherwise Uncivil Service Recipients

There were 8 stories (7 by females, one by a male), in which informants alleged that they had been on the receiving end of abusive or otherwise uncivil behaviour from service recipients and had been required to perform emotional labour when dealing with such incidents. These stories resembled those of the customer service representatives in Korczynski's (2003) study of call centres, in that they implied that dominant authorities had provided insufficient protection against incivility and had failed to alleviate the associated burden of emotional labour, thereby both allowing interpersonal injustice and demonstrating lack of care. We distinguished two closely related sub-subcategories: (1) declining impossible or unwarranted service recipient requests; and (2) serving as a scapegoat for angry service recipients.

Declining impossible or unwarranted service recipient requests. In 6 of the stories (5 by females, one by a male), informants described facing incivility when declining demands for what they regarded as unwarranted privileges, or when declining requests that they believed had been impossible to deliver. The latter type is illustrated by the following story by F3, an insurance agent, attached to a foreign-headquartered multinational corporation:

"There are 'orphan' clients, whose original agents have left the company. I had followed up on an orphan client who wanted to discontinue two plans for his children.

My secretary had then forgotten to submit his cancellation to head office and the bank had auto-debited his account and levied a \$HK 300 penalty charge (\$HK 100 per plan + \$HK 100 for his plan) since he didn't have enough money in his bank account.

He called me and was very angry, yelling at me on the phone. At that time, I had no idea what had happened. I was very unhappy, as I was holding my baby daughter and it was after 1 p.m. on Saturday and the bank was already closed. I felt he was infringing my privacy. I suppressed my emotions and tried to be rational. I explained to him that I needed to investigate the problem before I talked to him again. I apologized politely, but explained that it was not possible to check with the bank at that time and that I could only get back to him earliest the following Monday.

But the client was very emotional. Ten minutes later, he called me again. He seemed to have lost all sense of reason and wanted me to get the answer immediately. All I could do was repeat what I said in the first conversation. He threatened to complain to *Next* magazine. I feared that if the complaint was not handled well, the client might actually bring the case to the media and this could have affected the company's image, and my image within the company.

Eventually I sorted out the problem to his satisfaction. I had been scolded by the client, but since our company would never reimburse clients for things like this, I still needed to reimburse him the \$HK 300 from my own pocket. My boss found out about the case and realized that it was the secretary's fault, but he still regarded the mistake as my responsibility, and he gave me no recognition for sorting out the complaint." [F3].

Serving as a scapegoat for angry service recipients. There were two stories about serving as a scapegoat for angry service recipients. Both were reported by F24, a trading officer in a securities company, who alleged that she and her female co-workers endured verbal abuse when service recipients (many of them female) telephoned in to vent anger, direct blame, and extort apologies after incurring losses that F24 attributed to the limitations of the trading platform or to company policy. F24 claimed that superiors knew about such complaints, but that they did not appear to care about the interpersonal injustice endured and emotional labour required when pacifying abusive service recipients.

“My immediate reaction is to explain the reasons to the customers. But they usually don’t listen. So I just let them yell at me until they finish relieving their anger. I keep on apologizing in the meantime. Then I explain the facts to them again. Some customers even hang up suddenly. We let them relieve their discontent and anger.... On rare occasions, with especially difficult customers, we will ask them to come to the outlet to listen to the audio-tape recording and to show the record of the time of their order and the time when we input their order into the system. This shows them that it’s not our fault. There is no recognition for such work. The company considers that it’s part of our responsibilities.” [F24].

Extra Work Rising from Subterranean Internal Obstacles or Poor Overall Coordination

In 7 stories (2 by females, 5 by males), informants claimed that they had been required to undertake articulation work or repeat work, arising from perceived communication breakdown elsewhere in the organization, and/or from perceived failures by colleagues or subordinates to engage in cooperative behaviour. In 2 of the 7 stories, the respective informants (one female, one male) appeared to derive intrinsic satisfaction from improvising *ad hoc* solutions. However, in the other 5 stories, the informants (one female, 4 males) expressed dissatisfaction, powerlessness, and a sense of not being cared about, associated with facing the consequences of underlying organizational problems, which they believed they could not do anything about, which they believed dominant authorities could prevent, but which they believed would not interest dominant authorities. For example, M21, a human resources officer in a mainland-headquartered supermarket chain, related the following story:

“One of the duties of a particular female clerk, who was a subordinate, was to fetch the work uniforms for newly-appointed staff from the warehouse. She hated this duty, because the warehouse was dirty and infested with rats. When called upon to do it, she usually made excuses and put it off for as long as possible. I felt I had no choice but to force her to do it. I would say to her that she was lucky to receive a salary: ‘Either you do it or not, but if you don’t do it, you will be fired’.... The company didn’t care about how the staff were feeling. The clerk would get the uniforms eventually, but would scowl at me. She seemed to hate me and the company, and would play tricks on her colleagues regarding some routine tasks. Because she was so uncooperative and because my own boss held me responsible, I often had to clean up whatever mess she

had created. But at least I could get her to do some work, which helped to keep my boss off my back.” [M21].

Informal Negotiations with Troublesome Service Recipients or Suppliers

There were three stories (one by a female, 2 by males), in which informants described informal negotiations with service recipients or suppliers, whom they believed were on the point of renegeing on their agreements. These informants alleged that their superiors failed to make allowances for the extra articulation work and emotional labour that they needed to perform in such contexts and implied, accordingly, that dominant authorities did not appear to care about the difficulties that they faced.

Two of the stories involved articulation work relating to property letting in the context of a depressed market and economic deflation, where superiors were preoccupied with maintaining financial performance, measured by total monthly rental income. Both stories involved mid-contract renegotiations with distressed tenants, and both informants explained that they sought to reach informal agreements by giving leeway in the timing of rental payments or by providing extra services. They claimed that although superiors were not authorized to approve such agreements, they were prepared to turn a blind eye to them.

The third informant, M23, an assistant foreman in a construction company, told a story about performing emotional labour in order to persuade a subcontractor to carry out necessary rectification work, and avoid being blamed for late and substandard work.

“He was very thick-skinned. When the foreman, my immediate boss, met the contractor, he scolded him harshly, even mocking his personality and using foul language. The contractor was like a huge snake, while I and the other assistant foreman were just like puppies biting him, and the foreman was like a Doberman. If we couldn’t get the contractor to rectify the work, the foreman would scold us and the said that the management would hold us accountable.” [M23].

Being Subject to Distorted Representation

There were 20 stories (15 by females, 5 by males) in which informants alleged that

they had been subject to distorted representation regarding their competence or performance. As indicated in Table V, we identified two subcategories: being subject to “negative slanting” and being subject to “negative embroidery”, terms that we explain below.

INSERT TABLE V ABOUT HERE

Being Subject to Negative Slanting

There were 5 stories of negative slanting (4 by females, one by a male), in which informants alleged that dominant authorities had exaggerated negative aspects of their performance while ignoring or downplaying positive aspects thereof. We identified two sub-subcategories, both corresponding to prior literature: (1) being publicly ridiculed or humiliated; and (2) having flaws spotlighted but merits downplayed.

Being publicly ridiculed or humiliated. There were two stories in which informants (one female, one male) alleged that this had happened after they had made mistakes that they regarded as worthy of forgiveness, under circumstances that they claimed had been difficult. In both stories, one of which was related by F6, senior administrative officer in a property management company with over 200 employees, and the other by M23 (another story from whom appears above), the informants alleged that their superiors failed to respect their dignity, thus implying that they incurred interpersonal injustice:

“I was very upset by his sarcasm and I had to suppress my tears in front of everyone. I then went to the toilet to cry.” [F6].

“They used me as a laughing stock. They always laughed at me about my mistake. This soured my relationship with my immediate superior, and except for work-related matters, I wouldn’t talk to him. I felt very distressed about it.” [M23].

Having flaws spotlighted but merits downplayed. There were three stories about this phenomenon, all by female informants, which appeared to undermine their trust in the integrity of procedural justice within their organization, and, reflecting prior literature (Hall et

al., 1996, p. 225), appeared to have a strong negative impact on their morale. For example, F7, a human resource administrator in a Western-headquartered OEM company, stated that on one occasion she advised two superiors (both senior managers) that an information system that one of them had proposed would contravene a newly-enacted government ordinance. She alleged that after being asked to get documentary proof of this, she obtained a letter from the relevant government body, but was then reprimanded by the other superior:

“He asked me why I hadn’t sought his approval before sending the email to the Commission. I admitted that I might have committed an oversight in this respect, but I thought it was a standard way to get the evidence and had gone ahead because I had been asked to get documentary proof... I was on the verge of tears but I swallowed the unhappiness because I need to survive in this company. I can’t quit my job because I need to support my family and mother. I’ve tried to leave but I haven’t found another job yet because of the poor economy. I’m really unhappy working here.” [F7].

Implying that this episode might be a symptom of an underlying climate of procedural injustice (Naumann and Bennett, 2000), F7 added:

“There is a big variation in salary increases for staff doing similar jobs. For example, one had a 15% pay rise, whereas another just got 2%. You need to brown-nose and please the senior managers. You have to entertain their point of view and make them happy even though they might not be right about an issue. They like people who please them ... and don’t argue with them ...” [F7].

Being Subject to Negative Embroidery

Negative embroidery is a metaphorical term, denoting superimposition of fictitious and unfavourable details (“embroidery”) onto the “fabric” of actual events. There were 15 stories of negative embroidery (11 by females, 4 by males), in which informants alleged that dominant authorities had held mistaken and unfavourable assumptions about their conduct, performance or ability. We identified four sub-subcategories: (1) being subject to false or misleading uncorrected allegations; (2) receiving misattributed blame; (3) receiving reprimands perceived to be unfounded; and (4) suffering prejudicial stereotyping. All subcategories apart from (3) corresponded to prior literature. In each of the 15 stories,

informants alleged or implied that they had either been subject to a violation of procedural justice, or that they faced a threat to procedural justice.

Being subject to false or misleading uncorrected allegations. There were 4 stories (one by a female, 3 by males) in which informants claimed that false or misleading allegations about their incompetence or misconduct had been channelled to dominant authorities. Informants implied that these allegations had stood uncorrected over a substantial or indefinite period of time, thereby constituting a threat to procedural justice in relation to subsequent human resource decisions about them. For example, M18, a teacher in a tertiary education institute, claimed that after he had declined a request by a group of students to increase their marks, they submitted what he regarded as an unfavourably biased end-of-term evaluation of his teaching performance:

“The comments were personal attacks on me. The poor evaluation gave a bad impression to the management about my performance and also lowered the overall performance of the department.” [M18].

Receiving misattributed blame. There were 5 stories (4 by females, one by a male), in which informants alleged that their superiors had blamed them for supposed mistakes that they had not committed but which others had allegedly made, thus implying threats to procedural justice regarding lack of neutrality and use of inaccurate information. For example, F26, who worked for a distribution agency that employed nearly 1,000 people, alleged that during the installation of new system, she had noticed a serious anomaly and had reported it to her superiors, along with a suggested solution. She alleged that her superiors continued to ignore the anomaly for several months until her senior line manager finally noticed:

“She acted as if she hadn’t previously known about the problem and that it was my responsibility for not having dealt with the problem. I was a bit shocked, as I had already pointed out the problem to this manager at a much earlier stage and had also offered her a solution. Maybe she had been too busy with other things at the time, and had forgotten.” [F26].

Receiving reprimands perceived to be unfounded. There were 4 stories, all by female informants, who alleged that their respective superiors had reprimanded them for supposed

misconduct or mistakes that they claimed that they had not actually committed, thus implying procedural injustice, associated with use of inaccurate information, lack of neutrality, and lack of voice. For example, F17, senior procurement assistant in an engineering services company employing around 700 staff, alleged that on one occasion her senior line manager had assumed, on the basis of rumours, that F17 had committed the company to unfavourable terms proposed by a particular supplier, whereas F17 claimed that she had merely asked colleagues for explanations of and opinions about that supplier's request:

“[My senior line manager] didn't actually know what had happened and had had no opportunity to hear my side of the story. When she saw me she told me straight away that I was too junior to handle the case and blamed me for poor negotiating skills. I had to listen to her instructions and accept them. I understood that she felt the need to vent anger at me but I had to suppress my own anger.” [F17].

Suffering prejudicial stereotyping. There were two stories, both reported by female informants, alleging that dominant authorities had based unfavourable judgements about their competence or performance on co-incidental demographic characteristics rather than on factual evidence. One story claimed that the alleged prejudicial stereotyping was part of a process leading to “constructive dismissal” on the grounds of pregnancy, and therefore also entailed persecutory spotlighting. In the other story, F1, a former senior merchandising manager for a Western-owned garment company employing 80 people, claimed that the director in charge unfairly rejected a favourable appraisal report by her immediate line manager. F1 thereby implied that a violation of procedural justice had taken place, relating to perceived lack of neutrality, use of inaccurate information, and lack of voice:

“She simply asserted that nobody could perform that well within one year of joining the company. ... She didn't do any observation and had no grounds for rejecting my good performance appraisal, while my immediate line manager saw how I worked on a day-to-day basis.” [F1].

Statistical Summary

As indicated in Table VI, representational predicaments reported in the study featured females as subjects (36 stories) more often than males (16 stories). Differences in the number

of stories about doing unvalued work (9 about females, 3 about males), and being subject to distorted representation (15 about females, 5 about males), suggests that there may have been a gender-related basis to some types of representational predicaments. However, since the male and female samples were slightly imbalanced in terms of education, with 43% of the females having no post secondary school qualifications, the possible influence of educational attainment cannot be discounted.

INSERT TABLE VI ABOUT HERE

CONCLUSIONS

Figure I compares the categories and subcategories of representational predicament identified in the current research with those identified in prior literature. The categories and subcategories identified in the literature review appear at or near the top of Figure I. In the research, we identified 3 categories of representational predicament: 1) doing unvalued work; (2) doing thankless work; and (3) being subject to distorted representation. These, along with their subcategories and sub-subcategories, appear in the lower half or around the middle of Figure I. Subcategories and sub-subcategories linking the current research to the literature review are indicated by arrows.

INSERT FIGURE I ABOUT HERE

Nearly all the subcategories, or their equivalents, that were identified in the literature review, were also identified in the research. However, the research did not find examples of (1) under-estimation of skill requirements or of (2) double-bind regarding relational practices by women. The first omission may reflect the heterogeneity of the sample of informants, which did not allow detailed examination of the skill-sets of particular occupational groups. The second omission may reflect that when the interviews solicited critical incidents

involving interactions with colleagues, these were labelled “difficult”, which is likely to have discouraged the reporting of interactions of a more harmonious nature, which might have been more likely to feature relational practices.

In relation to the broader category of necessary but unappreciated work that was identified in the literature review, the research distinguished unvalued work, which informants perceived as discretionary, and which they assumed dominant authorities would consider irrelevant, from thankless work (and several subcategories thereof), which informants regarded as obligatory and assumed to be subject to attention by dominant authorities in the event that something were deemed to have gone amiss.

The subcategories of being subject to distorted representation that were identified in the research broadly corresponded to the literature review, except that the research identified additional higher-order subcategories of negative slanting and negative embroidery.

All but two of the representational predicament stories mentioned or implied at least one type of ethical problem that concerned breaches of interpersonal justice, violations of or threats to procedural justice, or indifference toward or neglect of the ethics of care.

Contrary to prior expectations based on our literature review, the issue of distributive injustice did not appear to be a major concern in any of the critical incidents. For example, informants who reported thankless work appeared to be concerned about the implied lack of care for people on the part of dominant authorities, and appeared to desire that the organization should find ways to reduce, alleviate or transform such work, rather than that they should receive compensation for it.

While female informants reported more representational predicaments than did male informants, each of the three main types of representational predicament was reported by males as well as by females, and it remains a possibility that the higher number of representational predicaments may reflect the lower overall level of educational attainment among the females in our sample (see Table I).

Ideas for Practice and Research

While research on the role of organizational arrangements in reducing representational predicaments is outside the scope of this paper, relevant ideas may be found within existing literature. Frost et al. (2006) recommended sharing narratives about individual and collective responses to pain as means to build compassionate identities and to understand multiple voices; along with the development of policies and procedures that legitimize and facilitate spontaneous coordination of compassion work. Similar processes might serve to increase the recognition of the currently undervalued work of counselling and sharing.

Regarding the transformation of thankless work into organizational development work, Revans (1982) suggested that senior managers should make themselves approachable, should delegate maximum authority to subordinates, and should undertake to respond positively to problems referred upwards by subordinates, so long as the latter can offer (a) explanations why particular problems cannot be resolved at their own level and (b) proposals concerning how systems should be changed to rectify problems or prevent their recurrence.

We envisage that significant reduction of cases where job incumbents feel subject to distorted representation is unlikely to happen without formal arrangements for upward performance appraisal and feedback (Miller, 2001), preceded by extensive training, beginning at the very top of an organization (Tourish and Robson, 2003). This may depend on leadership of good character, demonstrated in action through respectful day to day treatment of job incumbents (Badaracco and Webb, 1995; Gini, 2004).

We envisage that further research might investigate relationships between representational predicaments and ethical climates; the latter defined as prevailing perceptions within an organization about what is regarded as appropriate or permissible moral conduct among members (Victor and Cullen, 1988; Vidaver-Cohen, 1998). Since representational predicaments appear to reflect the perceived stance of dominant authorities regarding the ethics of care and regarding various forms of justice, they may be key indicators of ethical climates. If so, then detecting and understanding representational predicaments may constitute an important aspect of the diagnostic and evaluation phases of organizational ethics improvement programmes.

Limitations of the Research

Besides those limitations that have already been noted above, the research was subject to 4 additional limitations. First, more critical incident accounts of representational predicaments might have been obtained if the interviews had solicited these directly. However, an indirect approach was preferred, in order not to deter informants from taking part in the research. Second, some representational predicaments reported by informants might reflect organizational norms, such as deference to superiors, large power distance (Wong and Birnbaum-Moore, 1994; Schwartz, 1999; Leung, 2002) and reluctance to exercise voice (Ngo et al., 2002), which are strong in Hong Kong (Ip, 1996, 1999), but which may be weaker elsewhere. However, the literature review yielded substantial evidence that various types of representational predicament reported by informants are also found in other cultural settings. Third, because each critical incident account was provided by single informants, claims about inter-subjective or objective reality were suspended during data analysis. However, because of the sensitivity of the topic, opportunities to obtain accounts from multiple stakeholders about each (alleged) representational predicament may be extremely rare.

A fourth limitation refers to the omission from this paper of job incumbents' responses to representational predicaments in terms of exit, voice, loyalty and neglect (EVLN) (Hirschman, 1970; Withey and Cooper, 1989). It may be argued, after Velasquez (2006, p. 82), that since employees are free to exit the organization, those who experience representational predicaments but who choose not to exit are indicating that they do not regard any associated injustice or lack of care as significantly problematic. Thus it may be claimed that our failure to investigate EVLN weakens the implications of our findings. Yet it may also be argued that employees' freedom to exit is constrained by various factors, such as contractual notice periods, the need to provide references to the next employer, possession of context-specific skills that may not readily transfer to other sites, and scarcity of employment alternatives. Further research might therefore examine the impact of representational predicaments on affective commitment (Meyer et al., 1993).

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Table I. Characteristics of the sample

	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>All</i>
No. of informants	28	27	55
Age range	21-46	26-55	21-55
Median age	34	38	36
Range of years of working experience	4-29	5-35	4-35
Median years of working experience	13	17	13
Median years tenure with current employer	5	6	5
No. (%) identifying themselves as 'senior' in rank	5 (18%)	7 (26%)	12 (22%)
No. (%) identifying themselves as 'middle' in rank	18 (64%)	15 (56%)	33 (60%)
No. (%) identifying themselves as 'junior' in rank	5 (18%)	5 (19%)	10 (18%)
No. (%) with undergrad. or postgrad. qualification	9 (32%)	19 (70%)	28 (51%)
No. (%) with post school non degree qualification	7 (25%)	7 (26%)	14 (25%)
No. (%) without post-secondary school qualification	12 (43%)	1 (4%)	13 (24%)

Table II. Categories and subcategories of representational predicament

Main categories	Subcategories	Definition from the incumbent's point of view
Doing unvalued work	Doing unnoticed and unvalued work	Doing work that the incumbent believes is required by practical rationality, is not noticed by dominant authorities, and would not be valued by them even if noticed
	Doing noticed but unvalued work	Doing work that the incumbent believes is required by practical rationality, is noticed by dominant authorities, but is not valued by them
Doing thankless work	Carrying out a superior's request believed to be illegitimate	Doing work that the incumbent believes is required, but that dominant authorities would attend to only if they suspected the work to have been misperformed
	Pacifying abusive or otherwise uncivil service recipients	
	Extra work arising from subterranean internal obstacles or poor overall coordination	
	Informal negotiations with troublesome service recipients or suppliers	
Being subject to distorted representation	Being subject to negative slanting	Believing that one is the subject of a performance assessment that spotlights negatives and downplays positives
	Being subject to negative embroidery	Believing that dominant authorities are holding false and unfavourable assumptions about one's competence or performance

Table III. Ethical issues associated with doing unvalued work

Subcategories of doing unvalued work	Nature of the unvalued work	Implied ethical problems
Doing unnoticed and unvalued work	Counselling or advising others	Indifference toward the ethics of care
Doing noticed but unvalued work	Unappreciated proposals or initiatives	Interpersonal injustice associated with lack of respect for initiatives taken

Table IV. Ethical issues associated with doing thankless work

Nature of the work involved	Implied ethical problems
Carrying out a superior's request believed to be illegitimate	Violation of procedural injustice by the incumbent Lack of care by dominant authorities, associated with failure to protect against exploitation
Pacifying abusive or otherwise uncivil service recipients	Interpersonal injustice associated with being on the receiving end of incivility or verbal abuse Lack of care by dominant authorities, associated with failure to protect against incivility or to alleviate the need for emotional labour
Extra work arising from subterranean internal obstacles or poor overall coordination	Lack of care by dominant authorities, associated with failure to make allowances for the need for articulation work or repeat work
Informal negotiations with troublesome service recipients or suppliers	

Table V. Ethical issues associated with being subject to distorted representation

Subcategories of being subject to misperception or misattribution	Sub-subcategories of being subject to unfavourably biased judgement	Implied ethical problems
Negative slanting	Being publicly ridiculed or humiliated	Interpersonal injustice associated with disrespectful treatment by superior(s)
	Having flaws spotlighted but merits downplayed	A possible symptom of an underlying climate of procedural injustice
Negative embroidery	Being subject to false or misleading uncorrected allegations	Threats to procedural justice entailed by use of inaccurate information and lack of correctability
	Receiving misattributed blame	Threats to procedural justice entailed by lack of neutrality and use of inaccurate information
	Receiving reprimands perceived as unfounded	Procedural injustice associated with use of inaccurate information, lack of neutrality and lack of voice
	Suffering prejudicial stereotyping	

Table VI. Representational predicaments featuring females and males as subjects

Main categories	Stories Focusing on Female Subjects		Stories Focusing on Male Subjects		Total	
	Number of Stories	Number of Different Informants	Number of Stories	Number of Different Informants	Number of Stories	Number of Different Informants
Doing unvalued work	9	8 [†]	3	3	12	11*
Doing thankless work	10	8	10	7	20	15
Being subject to distorted representation	15	9	5	4	20	13
Overall representational predicaments	36	19 ^{†‡}	16	13 [‡]	52	32 ^{*‡}

[†] Includes one male informant who reported a story featuring the representational predicament of a female colleague.

* One male informant who reported a story featuring the representational predicament of a female colleague as well as one featuring himself has been counted twice.

[‡] Some informants reported more than one category of representational predicament.

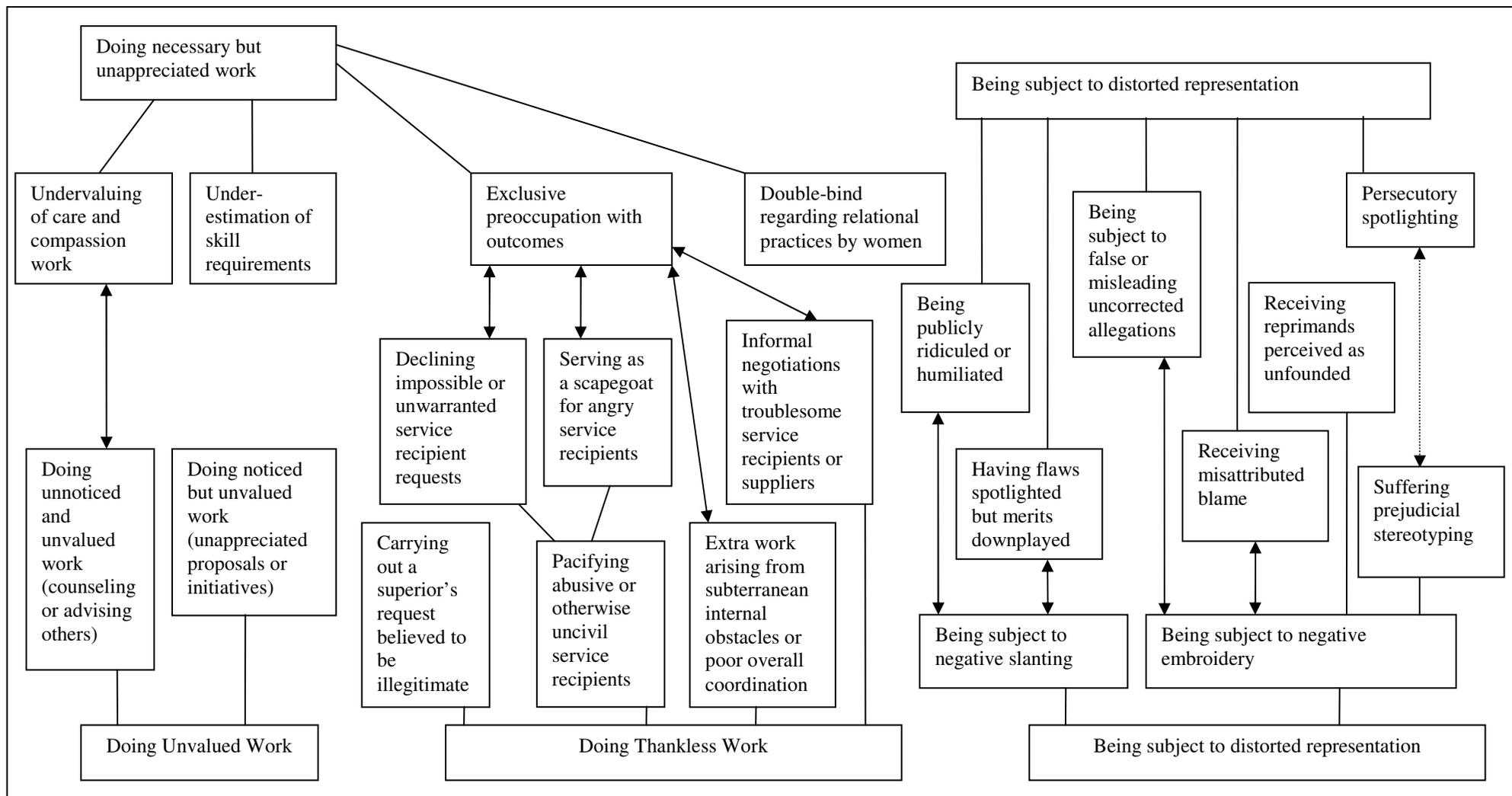


FIGURE I. A comparison of representational predicaments found in the current research with those found in prior literature

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