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Emotions in the Governance Process: the Case of Boards in NHS Foundation Trusts (FTs)

Abstract

This study explores emotions in the context of public sector governance with a particular focus on the boardroom dynamics. The board is here seen as a social space where emotions emerge due to many situations and events taking place both within and without the boardroom. Research on the human side of board processes is still restricted mainly due to difficulties of getting access to the boardroom. Knowledge of public sector boards is particularly limited. This ethnographic study draws on two case studies of the NHS Foundation Trusts to shed light on the lived experience of emotions in boards. Findings emerging from the narrative analysis of emotions show that they are politically embedded in the governance processes. The two stories presented emphasize how the actors use emotions to shift and push personal agendas and shape accountability. The study also reveals how actors try to keep specific emotional states to retain an impression of masculinity. This research thus contributes to understand emotions in action in the boardroom and it may help practitioners in the NHS FTs.

Keywords: emotions, governance, board process, ethnography, public sector, NHS.

‘There can’t be any emotions. This is business! You have to deal with different people’s opinion, disappointments and frustration, and you just have to be professional about it. I think it is important that you are just calm, and rational, and (ah) professional...’ (CEO).

As we can refer to the quote above, the powerful actors of governance still maintain the 'illusion' of rationality as they try to continue to create an impression of being 'professional'. The actors persistently revere to rationality as it is related to objectivity and cognition which are the essential features of being masculine (Küpers and Weibler, 2008). On the other hand, emotionality has long been characterised by subjectivity, chaos and bodily drives, and which are taken as feminine and negative (ibid; p. 260). Emotions were considered to be inferior and unproductive (Fineman, 2000), a danger to reason (Soloman, 1993), and feminine (Mumby and Putnam, 1992). This view of emotions had substantially marginalised the study of emotions nearly in all the disciplines.

In recent years, the study of emotions have surged including the organisational context but some of the organisational spaces have still been difficult to access due to the overwhelming domination of rationality and the denial of emotions. Emotions are usually suppressed or controlled and this forms a link between masculinity and emotionality (Symons, 2007). Organisational studies and theories had also created perfect models to suppress emotions as human beings were bound to rules, orderly functions, and procedures (e.g. Weber, 1946, 1968; Taylor, 1911; Fayol, 1979). This mechanistic view of organisations was considered to be the 'best' to maximise organisational efficiency and productivity. Later, the human side view of the organisation (e.g. Hawthorne Studies) did recognise the human being as a 'social man' having sentiments and desires but the aim was to invent new management methods to control emotions as they were seen as detrimental in achieving organisational goals (Bolton, 2005).

Hochschild (1983) note on 'emotional labour' defined as control and management of one's feeling while interacting with the customers, led to the foundations of the modern research on emotions in the organisational context. Since then emotions have been studied from various perspectives and in different settings. The recent popular research stream is the study of the expression and the management of emotions (e.g. Hochschild, 1983; Van Maanen and Kunda, 1989), mainly in the service sector. Scholars have also tried to study the functions and the impact of emotions on individual or group performance (Ashkansy, 2004). Another growing stream of research is to study emotions as 'intelligence' (Salovey and Mayer, 1993). Other studies focus on investigating the antecedents and the consequence of emotions (e.g. George and Brief, 1996; Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). Some studies also relate emotions to motivation (George and Brief, 1996).

Emotions have also been studied in difficult organisational spaces like the boardroom during the change process as emotions become more intense and hence are easier to 'capture' (e.g. Brundin, 2002; Brundin and Nordqvist, 2008). However, the inherent complexities in getting access to the top management people in organisation, in addition to the elusive and the private nature of emotions magnifies the difficulty in studying emotions in the boardroom. The study of emotions in these settings is also difficult as it challenges the dominant culture of masculinity of the actors. This paper is a step in this direction. We argue that '(e)Emotions may be hidden or displayed, repressed or expressed, used, abused, ignored, managed, manipulated and/or controlled, but there is no denying the emotional reality of organisational life (Symons, 2007; p.89).

This paper contributes to the study of lived emotions through the perspective of emotions as performance in the boardroom. We will be using dramaturgical metaphors to make sense of the emergence, enactment and the performance of emotions in the boardroom settings.

Emotions as performance in the boardroom

Emotions as performance have been studied mainly through the dramaturgical perspective (e.g. Zurcher, 1982 and Crawley, 2004), where they become part of daily routines conveyed through language. Symbolic interactionist theory also helped to study the variety of emotions existing at the same time in the same situation unlike many sociologists who studied discrete emotions (Zurcher, 1992).

The performance of emotions has to abide to the 'social framework' of the settings determining the actor's experiences, interpretation, and expression of emotions (Shott, 1979: 1320) in order to display 'appropriate' emotions (Shield, 2005). The norms of the settings are learned over time. Performance of emotions is enacted in the actor's 'understanding of appropriate emotional behaviours in a particular situation' (Zurcher, 1982; p. 2). Thus, a single situation can produce a range of emotional performances based upon actors' interpretation of the situation and their understanding of the appropriate emotional displays.

In this way emotions are not seen as only 'staged' or 'faked' or 'superficially' performed in front of the audience without actually experiencing it, the intensity of which depends upon the actor's personality and the requirements of the situation (Zurcher, 1982). The actors may or may not experience the displayed emotions through language and embodiment.

Taking this view of emotions, their performance of emotions is successful when socially accepted as 'real' capable of producing an influence by purposely inducing emotions (see Zurcher, 1982; 1985). Performances are relational requiring others for sensemaking and interpretations (Gergen, 1999). The study of emotions in organisational settings poses a particular challenge to conceptualise emotions as a performance but does not explore them through this perspective.

In this paper, we adapt to Burke's (1945) model of dramatism which in itself is informed by Goffman's dramaturgy. Burke's story elements focuses on the 'elements of the performances such as the roles people are playing and the setting in which they are playing' (Feldman, 1995; p.42). Emotions, therefore, have a rhetorical feature- an act of 'persuasion' which is primary to understand how the performance of emotions is *used* to push and shift personal agendas. Based upon this notion, we try to understand what emotional performances are taking place and how the different elements that constitutes the emotional performances contributes to meaning making (ibid).

The use of concepts and metaphors of dramaturgical performances is not new in the organisational settings. Existing studies in the NHS uses the metaphors of 'performance' to study governance. Governance itself is seen as a performance that follows a script (Freeman and Peck, 2007) a study on board meetings in the NHS

explains how these meetings are seen as a 'ritual' (Peck *et al.*, 2004). Performances have the character of 'ritual'- 'a sequence of actions that gives shape and substance to the interactions, actions and exchanges' (Mangham and Overington, 1987; p. 107). These studies do play an important role in using sociological perspectives to understand the settings and processes of governance but require further exploration of emotions and the way they are performed within and outside the board meetings.

Our aim in this paper is to create an understanding of how emotions are performed in the boardroom and explore how they are used 'strategically' to achieve political means; how actors legitimise emotions and actions; how emotions are used rhetorically in daily encounters and social interactions as they are *used* by actors to manipulate power, intimidation, persuade and shift agendas for their own vested interests (Soloman, 1998). The next section introduces the context of NHS Foundation Trusts and the boards in the UK

NHS Foundation Trusts and board processes

The health sector has undergone major changes during the introduction of the NPM (New Public Management) which made the public sector boards more 'business style' with the introduction of CEO's and non executive directors (Laermonth, 2001; Peck, 1995; Farrell, 2005; Ferlie *et al.*, 1996). Among the various NHS boards, the FTs (Foundation Trusts) have a governance structure that is divided at three levels: community members, governors and directors. The community members elect governors based on their popularity who then confirm the appointment of the Trust's chair and the non executive directors. The extent to which this governance structure is effective is yet under researched. This study will help to explore the 'built in' tensions in the system through the lens of emotions as experienced by their actors.

The study NHS boards have attracted considerable attention in recent years as there are reservations regarding their effectiveness. Since the introduction and implementation of NPM in the public sector, boards in the NHS have taken an important roles and responsibilities. Some studies (e.g. Kitchener, 1999) show the formal structures of decision making processes in the UK health care system have indeed changed but habitual values, ideas and practices still persists running counter the NPM discourses (McNulty and Ferlie, 2002).

The health sector is one of the most vulnerable and 'highly politicised' organisations due to party politics and the presence of various interest groups with competing goals and agendas (McNulty and Ferlie, 2002). The formation of the NHS FTs with unique governance structure was also a political move to give more involvement to the 'public' in the management of the Trust. As will be shown in this study, the question mark still remains as to what extent the public is actually involved in governance.

Researchers study governance mainly to understand the operational structures and decision making in the NHS boards (e.g. Veronesi and Keasey, 2010) but do not take into account the role of governors in NHS governance and the tension created due to interaction between the directors and the governors. In general, the NHS boards share an understanding of the 'what' of governance (i.e. structures and basic principles), but lack in understanding of the 'how' of governance (i.e. processes, dynamics,

responsibilities, overall function and objectives (ibid; p. 368). This study argues that there is a need to understand the behavioural dimensions of NHS boards. It follows the call of researchers (e.g. McNulty and Ferlie, 2002) advocating the use of qualitative methods to understand the behavioural patterns at a more holistic level.

Methodology

This study takes an interpretive stance (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). This is based on the view that emotions are dynamic and are socially and culturally constituted in relationships and interactions as reflected in everyday language and action. To understand and investigate the lived emotional experiences of NHS FT boards, an ethnographic approach has been adopted. The first author has observed 16 board meetings out of 2 were private meetings over a period of seven months to capture lived emotions followed by 22 semi structured interviews that allowed the respondents to narrate stories regarding their situated emotional experiences.

Two NHS FTs were selected to conduct this study based upon both practical and theoretical reasons. Their names and location cannot be disclosed to maintain their anonymity and confidentiality. The one located in the metropolis is named as NHS FT 1 while the other one located in another county is named as NHS FT 2. Practically, the two boards had granted access and theoretically the board of the NHS FT1 was stable while the other one recently came out of the crisis and was undergoing a major change. Secondly, the NHS FT 1 was more multicultural due to its geographical location while the other one lacked diversity. Thirdly, the chair of the two boards differed in terms of gender. These constructs helped in giving useful insights about emotional experiences of the actors when there are differences in the boardroom environment and norms, but is not the primary focus of this study.

At the start, the most difficult task was the negotiation of access to the boardroom settings. The board meetings have both private and public session. The public meetings were open to attend but getting access to the private meetings was a challenge. Many participants assumed that the first author is a 'reporter' from press or a 'spy' from regulatory bodies. After waiting for approximately four months, access to the private meetings was granted subject to the condition to leave if any of the board members find the presence of the first author uncomfortable and if it hindered the openness in the meetings. The board members did not welcome an 'outsider' to 'watch' them and to study their behaviour and emotions.

Once in the field, despite of the permission to access private meetings, access had to be negotiated and re-negotiated each time. In the third meeting, the first author was asked to leave within 15 minutes of the start and was never called back in. It was the time the White Paper regarding the involvement of the GPs in NHS Trusts had been out (Triggle, 2010). However, getting access to at least two private meetings of the NHS board 1 must be seen as an achievement.

The access to board meetings and people was never ensured and therefore the first author lived with the constant fear of being 'kicked out' from the field. The politics, coalitions and the tensions within and between the two boards of governors and of

directors as well as between the chair and the other actors created insecurity for the first author to collect enough data for her doctoral research.

Hence, the first author decided to access another board which was different than the NHS FT 1. This board was undergoing a major change. The Monitor had fired the chair and an interim chair was appointed. The later did not allow access due to the crisis situation in the board. Due to this 'red signal', the first author continued attending meetings and interviewing respondents in the NHS FT 1. After two months, with the appointment of a new chair, the first author was finally given access to the board members (i.e. directors and the governors).

The first author's experience in the field shows that the chair is the key person to grant access. However, behind the scenes it could be that the most powerful person is the CEO to permit access. It will be useful to mention here that the NHS ethics approval process becomes a stumbling block for this kind of study where access had to be negotiated on the 'spot' and the conduct in the field guides the researcher's choices and further actions. Having said that, formal permission was finally granted to conduct this study. It involved several steps but it is not in the scope of this paper to further elaborate them.

'Capturing' emotions to tell board dynamics

The way emotions are 'captured' depends upon the nature of the research and the methodological and epistemological stance of the researcher. This interpretive study aims to look at emotions through language and embodiment. Emotional experiences were reflected very profoundly in dialogue during meetings and in stories of the respondents. Kleres (2010) suggests that narratives and stories are a useful mean to understand explicit and hidden subjective experiences as they have emotions embedded in it. This is particularly useful in male dominated environments where actors are reluctant to discuss emotions as it threatens their rational image and seen as a sign of weakness. Organisational ethnographers are skilled to capture the ways organisations struggle to maintain illusions of rationality (Nugent and Abolafia, 2007; p. 206). Furthermore, ethnographic methods are equipped to explore both explicit and hidden emotions (ibid).

The linguistic turn in social sciences further helps to detect emotions in language. Emotions are expressed in single words or sentences, metaphors, figurative language and prosody (Kleres, 2010) that were identified in the stories to make sense of emotional performances of the actors. Voice tone, body language and the way in which things were said was noted during observation that also contributed to the interpretation of emotional performances.

Collectively, emotional experiences were identified in two main stories across the entire corpus with the help of Burke's (1945) dramaturgical model. One story had four main episodes with a plot (Van Dijk, 1981). These episodes were stories in themselves and formed the main story. The stories were further analysed through Reissman's (1993, 1998) a clear narrative analysis of poetic stanzas and Gabriel's (2000) poetic trope, the specific combination of both approaches designed by Nocker (2006).

The two main stories in the text shared the same ‘tragic’ plot (Gabriel, 2000) and antecedents: the failure to meet ‘standards’ set by the regulatory authorities. The story of succession represents the failure to meet governance standards while the story of failure of cleaning represents failure to meet CQC’s (Care Quality Commission) cleaning standards. The former story is about NHS FT 2 while the latter is about NHS FT 1.

The main emotions emerging from these stories are:

- *Anger and frustration*: governors performed anger when information was not shared with the governors, directors performed anger during accountability
- *Guilt and embarrassment*: actors experienced these emotions when they felt that they had not performed their role and delivered their responsibility.
- *Powerlessness and helplessness*: governors wanted to get involved in governance but they were not allowed to; the chair felt helpless when he was unable to control and manage the first governors meeting.
- *Fear*: actors experienced fear in raising their voices and expressing their opinions as they were afraid of being marginalised.

However, emotions were also used ‘strategically’ for the following purpose:

- To gain more power in governance
- Induce or exchange similar or desired emotions to achieve personal agendas and political interests
- Managing reputation and the presentation of selves as either victims or heroes. Presenting oneself as ‘victim’ allowed to shift responsibility, manage reputation and present themselves as being masculine who were able to handle situations and they turned out to be successful at the end of the crisis.

We have chosen to present these findings about emotions through stories rather than thematic headings to create a better understanding of the situated, contextual and dynamic nature of emotions. In this way, the reader will be able to better understand emotions in the ongoing relationships and events in the boardroom.

TELLING THE STORIES

Story 1-The struggles around succession

The NHS FT board 2 had been in crisis and was undergoing a substantial change. The chairman had been sacked by the Monitor and an interim chair had been appointed who had an established record of leading other boards in the NHS and taking them out of the crisis. The CEO had lost his powers, influence and trust due to failure. The board members and the governors were waiting impatiently for him to complete his tenure and leave the board.

The interim chair was being considered as a ‘Messiah’ who would save the Trust. When the first author entered the field, the interim chair had already been appointed. The main story of these three successions can be divided into four main episodes: the

regime of the old chair, Monitor’s intervention and the laying down of the old chair, the regime of the interim chair, and the regime of the new chair. In all these different eras, the board processes, the board climate and the board environment varied. The following episodes give a holistic picture of the entire story and also explore the emergence of intense emotions during micro interactions, what people did with emotions and how they ‘legitimised’ their actions in a male dominated environment by shifting responsibilities and blames.

Table 1 shows the story elements in every episode adapted to Burke’s (1945) model. These episodes are stories in themselves as they have a plot. The story elements of each episode show the act/agency, main actors, various agents, purpose of the act and the main emotions emerged that are discussed in detail in the next sections. The story is mainly constituted with 4 main actors; a non executive director and three governors representing different constituencies. Patrick and Amanda are public governors while Simone is a staff governor. All these names are fictitious.

Table 1: Story1- Elements of four episodes

<i>Scene/ Episodes</i>	The regime of the old chair	Monitors Intervention: sacking the chair	The regime of the Interim chair	The beginning of new regime: New chair
<i>Act/Agency</i>	Reducing timely and quantity of information	Forming coalition against Monitor	Change in boardroom practice and process	Increased public participation
<i>Agent</i>	Chair CEO	Chair CEO	Chair	Chair
<i>Counter-agents</i>	Governors Non executive directors	Monitor Public Governor (<i>Amanda</i>)	Board members	Vice chair
<i>Co-agents</i>	Executive directors	Governors: • Public governors: • (<i>Patrick</i>) • Staff Governor (<i>Simone</i>)	Governors: • Public governors: (<i>Patrick and Amanda</i>) • Staff Governor (<i>Simone</i>)	Governors: • Public governors: (<i>Patrick and Amanda</i>) • Staff Governor (<i>Simone</i>) Board members
<i>Purpose</i>	Reducing accountability	Avoiding outside intervention	Increased involvement and accountability	Increased involvement and accountability
<i>Emotions</i>	Anger Frustration	Guilt Embarrassment Anger	Happiness Hope	Expectations

Episode 1- The political and ‘strategic’ use of emotions during the regime of the old chair

The Trust had achieved the status of a Foundation Trust during the regime of the old chair. The board was characterised as ‘closed’ with lack of accountability and ‘critical challenge’ from the non executive directors and the governors by delaying and filtering information to the board members that disabled them to perform their roles, that is, to hold the executives to account. The governance literature suggests that the main issue is not how much information is given to the board but at what stage the

information is given to them (Maitlis, 2004). The delay of information leaves less options for decision making and hence pressurises the board to make decisions that the executives desire. The CEO also agreed to this governance strategy and other executives adhered as they followed the CEO. Hence, the executives had also formed a coalition or a 'block' with the chair.

The executives used emotions strategically and politically to induce emotions of 'fear' among the non executive directors by painting a horrifying picture of failure in case they did not comply to the executive's decisions. The non executive directors were therefore left with no other option than to approve what the executives were doing. Hence, emotions were used to control and prevent the non executive directors from being an 'obtrusion' for their decisions. It should be noted here that the attitude of the board towards accountability and therefore, the openness of the board, is mainly determined by the chair as he runs the meetings.

'and saying to the board 'okay! We have been through this big process. We have talked about it and the answer to this problem is to build a two story block, so can you sign off on this', and they would say 'there is two alternative to this to build two story blocks or to fail in the winter and not have enough bed base, and patients queuing up at the door' and all the other things that can go wrong. So you give that decision to the board, and a board *sort of look at that* and say 'hoo' (ahm) 'hoo' (pause) I think! (*laughter*). And you, you know you haven't got any other option say 'what we have been trying to do which are the better governance in that () governance, is to try and get very early on in the process and saying 'okay! Well, this is the problem we have got. These are some areas that we have been looking at some tentative solutions. Let's just discuss these generally.' (NED)

The performance of emotions of the non executive directors was successful as they were able to use emotions politically to achieve their desired interests. On the other hand, governors have to be controlled as they share roles with non executive directors in terms of creating accountability in the boards. It was relatively easier to manage governors as they had less knowledge about their roles and the information presented to them was filtered which suppressed their voice in the board.

Governors had their own agendas of involving and being closer to the public. Their frustrations were manifested due to the chair's response of being 'closed', defensive and lacking trust in governors. He feared that the governors would mismanage the Trust's reputation in the meetings with the public.

'so it was quite defensive in its relationship with us, and the chairman was very defensive. And and there were several occasion that we want to do things like we wanted to have public meeting, very soon after we were elected because we had...There were not public hosting. So we thought it would be a good idea if you know having been elected if the governors were allowed to meet with the members, and *he tried to stop us* from doing that, and said that he was worried about what were are going to say, to the membership...And we had to sort of really push to say that *you can't stop us* from having a meeting with our membership and and...but it was things like that *which has been difficult* .' (Amanda)

These dynamics had created lack of openness in the board that had suppressed actions and emotions during Monitor's intervention. However, the extent to which emotions could be displayed is also largely determined by the actors' personality. Furthermore,

the actors legitimised their actions and emotions by shifting blame and responsibilities while those who tried to fulfil their responsibility experienced anger and frustrations. Table 2 shows the main poetic tropes of the actors and their emotional experiences. For instance, John attributes blame to the chair, CEO and executive directors and experiences fear and frustration.

Table 2: Episode 1- Main Poetic Tropes and Emotions

	John (NED)	Patrick (Public governor)	Amanda (Public governor)	Simone (Staff governor)
<i>Attribution to blame</i>	Chair CEO Executive directors	Chair	Chair	<i>Process of becoming a Foundation Trust</i>
<i>Emotions</i>	Fear Frustration	Frustration	Anger	Anger

Thus, the lack of accountability due to the power and control of the chair had led to governance failure and the Monitor had to intervene to save the Trust.

Episode 2- Monitor’s Intervention: legitimising actions by shifting blame and responsibilities

Monitors intervention was initially not welcomed by actors as they all became defensive and wanted to protect the Trust. They had formed a coalition against the Monitor. Others did not approve to fight Monitor but lacked courage to express their minority views. Among the directors’ group, John needed support from the other non executive directors to raise his voice in opposition. He had his own worries and fear of being marginalised that could be detrimental to his early career stages.

‘at my first board meeting (ah) I didn’t...you know, I didn’t challenge that view, (ahm) but the board that I had been a very low voice, saying something very different what everybody else was thinking and might have made my career as non executive very short. (ahm) So took the view you know whatever, that’s what we are doing on the...so we are providing active support to it. (ahm) But you know it’s still I am not going to make anything but it challenging, because I am quite new and you know this is a sort of current board.’ (NED)

John legitimises his fear of openness and guilt by arguing that he was new on the board and hence his opinion would not have made a difference. Furthermore, he did not feel a part of the current group of directors which made him simply follow what others were doing. His emotions throughout are not explicitly expressed. His silence along with other non executive directors had repercussions – he had lost his credibility as a non executive director, and the Trust had lost its credibility as it failed to meet governance standards.

The governors were in a different situation. They were unaware of their roles and responsibilities and had a false illusion that the FT was performing well due to its solvent status.

‘(ah) the challenge was the hint before we appointed our chairman and Monitor were not keen on it. And of course! The information we have is, why is Monitor picking on us? We are solvent, you see. So I said ‘look! Not then they tell us. We haven’t had a problem with him appointed.’ (Simone)

Finances were considered to be the priority. Performance was being judged only in terms of managing finances but not ensuring patient safety, which led governors to form alliances with the chair and confront the Monitor. However, not all shared the same view. Amanda opposed and did not want to re-appoint the chair.

Later, among the governors who supported the chair and wanted to fight Monitor, some suffered guilt and embarrassment while one who opposed suffered embarrassment and anger. The governors had lost their reputation in front of the public. The feeling of guilt emerged mainly as the governors perceived their decision of re-appointing the chair to be ‘morally inadequate’ (Shott, 1979) as they had performed an action that they were not supposed to.

To elaborate it further, guilt is an emotion that is produced due to ‘negative self – evaluation which occurs when an individual acknowledges and his behavior is at variance with a given moral value to which he feels obligated to conform’ (Ausubel, 1955; p. 379, cited in Shott, 1979).

‘(ahm) one of the governors resigned cause he didn’t approve it. The rest of us went away feeling, we have not done our job of finding out enough. We took chairman word. So that was the challenge to admit, we have made a mistake and we employed the chairman.’ (Simone)

Embarrassment was manifested as governors failed to understand and know that the Trust was not achieving its targets. The governors were unable to understand Monitor’s interference and interpreted it the interest of political reasons. Monitor had also sent the letter to the governors asking them not to re-appoint the chair, but most of the governors could not understand the reasons. Hence, they reappointed the existing chair.

‘So that...(ahm) when we started, we had a false feeling that we were doing well and it came as a *nasty surprise* within about 9 months when Monitor *dissented* on us. Our first response was to defend the Trust against Monitor. Monitor invited us up to come and talk to them. So a number of us went up. Monitor layed out what the problem was and suddenly daunt on us that *ssss(ah)*, we had not understood.’ (Simone)

Some were angry as they were not aware about what was going on and therefore could not exercise influence or perform their roles. They were embarrassed as they were losing their positive image in front of an authority (Shott, 1979). They had presented ‘wrong’ selves to the Monitor that they were unable or not qualified enough to understand and perform their roles.

‘...you know the regulator just took over, and if had known about what was going on, we could have exerted more pressure on executive team, we could have had more influence, and I think we *made our self pretty silly, actually*.’ (Amanda)

The presentation of their actions and decisions in re-appointing the chair in the media, despite of the Monitor's warning further deteriorated the image of the governors, which profoundly influenced their emotions. Amanda wanted to make a statement in the press to justify their actions, an effort to restore the lost image but other governors feared the press and opposed the idea.

'And it came out in the press that we reappointed the chairman, and (ahm) we didn't make any statement about it. We never said a word about it. And I wanted just to make a statement: a public statement, to explain what had happened, but nobody wanted because they thought the press...the press are the enemy and they would say terrible things about us.' (Amanda)

Furthermore, Monitor's intervention created conflict and divide among governors. During the meeting for the re-appointment of the chair, only one governor had openly opposed the decision after Monitor's letter preventing the re-appointment of the existing chair. The lack of understanding of the other governors made Amanda angry and frustrated.

'so we end up with the two non executive directors there. It became very apparent in the meeting that their agenda was, for us to reappoint existing chair. And, *unfortunately, many of my colleagues (pause)* seem to take the same view and didn't want to take notice of what regulator was telling us and, (ahm) wanted to *sort of bury their heads in the sand* and they know everything is fine. And it will be alright and things are not that bad in the hospital.' (Amanda)

Later, some of the governors wrote a letter to the Monitor justifying their position regarding the re-appointment of the chair. Monitor invited the governors for a meeting to make them understand why they laid down the chair and explained to them what the duties and responsibilities of the governors were. The writing of the letter to the Monitor by five governors created distrust and a feeling of deception among the rest of the governors.

'but, I mean it just left *a bit of a nasty taste really*, because the rest of us just felt that it had gone behind our back. I mean when we had (ah) only one governor voted against the reappointment of previous chair. (ahm) Yes, *suddenly (laughter)* (ah) five governors have signed the letter, expressing their concerns. It just seemed to be a bit odd, (ahm) but they are that full water under the bridge we resolved that, and moved on.' (Patrick)

At the end, the governors blamed three agents: the directors for not sharing information with the governors; Monitor, as they did not give clear evidence while instructing not to re-appoint the chair; and themselves, as they did not made an effort to find out about the real situation with in the Trust.

'I think, some of us...a lot of us *felt a bit cross* because when the information provide to us we realised that we shouldn't have appointed him. We also *crossed a little bit* with Monitor because they have not spelled that out. They sent us a letter saying that they think it wasn't a good idea that we appoint. Well! you know that is *(pause)* doesn't tell you why and I think they assumed a lot as good as a wink and we would have done something and our view was 'hang on! We want evidence'. They gave us the evidence and there wasn't much argument. (ahm) and this is...the problem I think a lot of problems sort of occur where you have got people where you supposed 'why

don't you go and find it. No! it's gonna give it you' *I think that's the one thing that we didn't realised.*' (Simone)

In general, governors usually get defensive of their Trust when they have a lack of understanding of their roles. Other Trusts that failed governance wise and threatened patient safety also suffered from hostility of the governors when Monitor had intervened in their boards.

'...it was interesting when I spoke to the person from regulator. (ahm) He said 'well! this is what happened when we intervened at xxx, xxx hospital which you know the, the scandal of people high mortality rate, and people being poorly looked after'. (ahm) He said that 'the *governors there were very hostile* when the regulator intervened. And didn't think that there was anything wrong.'(Amanda)

In conclusion, Monitor's intervention had created a chaos within the Trust. The ambiguities and lack of clarity magnified the crisis. Many actors continued to shift blame and scapegoat others as summarised in table 3.

Table 3: Episode 3- Main Poetic Tropes and Emotions

	NED	Patrick	Amanda	Simone
Attribution to blame	Executive directors Senior non executive directors	Governors (Amanda)	Governors	Governors (Amanda) Monitor
Emotions	Guilt	Guilt, Embarrassment, Anger	Anger, Frustration, Embarrassment	Guilt, Embarrassment, Anger

Episode 3- The regime of the interim chair: taking corrective actions to overcome guilt

After firing the chair, the CEO had lost his credibility and power. Board practices and the board environment had changed with the appointment of the interim chair. The later spoke with more authority. The board had trust in him as he had an established experience as a chair of NHS boards, previously helping another Trust out from crisis.

'and when so when our chair was removed by Monitor, we had xxx chaired, and he was brought in by Monitor, and in a sense he came with a lot of authority and power () intervention from the Monitor. He was essentially sort of running the show, and (ahm) which you know in a turnaround situation. (ahm) I think it is sort of governance and management sort of turnaround situation then you know things are different, and you have been brought in as a chair for six month period and these things, so (ahm) that was always gonna produce the amount of challenge toward what he is doing.' (NED)

The governors were happy with the interim chair as he allowed accountability in the board meetings.

'xxx was the original chairman when Foundation Trust was first formed the interim chair was xxx. He was much more (ah) outgoing, much better with people, much

better in terms of leading meetings. He was much more open. Was much more prepared to be to be critical and if we weren't happy, say 'you know that is fine, I took care so you can express concerns about these things'. (Amanda)

The processes improved as well. The governors had set up monthly meetings to review the progress of the Trust. This was a corrective action that helped them to neutralise their guilt and embarrassment. Shott (1979; p.1372) suggests that people engage in 'altruistic conduct(s)' to 'repair ones self-conception or self presentation(s)'. With these actions, the governors wanted to prove themselves of 'moral worthiness or competence' (ibid; p. 1327).

'He (interim chairman) was obviously (ahm) much more- we thought conducive to what we wanted in terms of board meetings in public. I would ask questions (ahm) far less (ah) rigid division between the two. However, he was quite clear that (ahm)... I mean following the removal of the original chair, we would setting up you know monthly meetings to questions the chair on performance. Well! he said he couldn't be micro managing in quite that way. (ahm) However he understood that we needed to have that information. We needed to be kept inform. It didn't actually need him to (ahm) attend the meeting and I think we generally accepted that may be that was asking a bit too much'. (Patrick)

The governors that had become more vigilant and active in arranging meetings to manage their guilt. It was a learning exercise and an opportunity for them to play their role in 'fixing governance' within the Trust.

Episode 4- The regime of the new chair: increasing involvement and participation

The new chair was a lady who was more open in terms of allowing governors and public participation in meetings. The presentation of agenda items on paper was changed and she allowed the press to ask questions either at the beginning or at the end of the meeting. Furthermore, a new CEO was also appointed with whom she wanted to work collaboratively to improve governance. The CEO used emotions rhetorically and demonstrated pride and satisfaction on the Trust's performance to restore and protect the image of the Trust. Other actors too were influenced by his rhetorical reports that created an impression of perfection in the Trust.

The governors were happy with the new chair and the other new non executive directors; they were able to create critical challenge unlike the previous ones who simply followed the executives.

'I think it's got better with the appointment of the new non executive directors. They seem more challenging, whereas the old non executives were happy to just sort of go along with what whatever was you know, whatever was recommended by the executive team or, you know just would say, 'Well! This doesn't seem to be going right, but just seem to accept it () that way have to be'. (Amanda)

It was not easy for the new chair to bring about changes due to the opposition of the executive directors. She had to manage two different groups, that is, the executives and the non executive directors who were at the initial stages of building understanding and relationships.

This story of succession unfolds the complexities in relationships, interactions and meaning making due to uncertainties and ambiguities within the NHS FT and the way it influences the emergence and performance of emotions in the board. This story shares some key elements with the next story of failure to meet CQC standards in the NHS FT 1. A key difference is the stance of governors in this board towards new proactive behaviour.

Story 2- Story of failure to meet CQC Standards

The NHS FT 1 had failed to meet the cleaning standards which created intense emotions among all the actors involved. The Chair was in a sympathetic state in the governors' meetings as he was under 'attack' by the governors. The governors were not happy that their voices were not heard. As part of the process, a commentary was prepared by the PESC (Patient Experience and Safety Committee) that moved back and forth between sub committees, working parties and the board of governors. Finally, the chair of the PESC had made changes in the report without the consent of the governors, which heated up the situation. Following legislations, is a tick-box exercise that the governors failed to understand. The complications in the processes and the lack of understanding of the governors made the situation complex and ambiguous, giving further room for the emergence of intense 'uncivilised' emotions that negatively affected relationships.

The governors were angry as the document had been sent without taking into consideration their comments and suggestions. Similar to the previous story, the actors were involved in scapegoating and shifting blame and accusations. However, unlike the previous Trust, governors in this Trust were more active in raising their voices and confronting 'authorities' in meetings. Table 4 shows the main story elements with the identification of main actors with fictitious names, and emotions that emerged throughout the story in various episodes.

Table 4: Main Story elements of the failure to meet CQC Standard

<i>Scene</i>	Trust is not maintaining cleaning standards
<i>ACT/Agency</i>	Change of commentary to CQC
<i>Main Agents</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karon (patient Governor) • Tracy (public Governor)
<i>Main Counter-agents</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair • CEO • Executive director
<i>Passive actors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nick (public Governor) • James (patient Governor)
<i>Purpose</i>	Struggle for empowerment and involvement in governance
<i>Emotions</i>	Anger (rage), Frustration, shock, defensiveness, mistrust, suspicions

This story progressed and developed in three meetings together with the interviews that acted as a representation of lived emotions at that time. The Chair was unable to control the meeting. The governors were infuriated as the change in the report was

made without their consent. However, some of them expressed their emotions more strongly and explicitly while others remained passive. Also, there were some new governors on board that had affected the equilibrium of relationships and mutual understandings in the board. The agenda could not move forward as the same issue was repeated again and again which made the other governors frustrated. This also allowed them to blame the chair for not being able to effectively manage the governors' meetings.

The main player in this meeting was 'Karon' who transgressed the displayed norms of the setting and made her emotional performance inappropriate in the boardroom. Her 'rage' was manifested due to her suspicions that the governors were being sidelined in governance and strategy making. The extent of inappropriateness can be judged from the silence that followed afterwards. The audience was in shock.

Karon: 'We were very pleased when...directors were allowed to participate...(This) questions interaction...We were not informed that the submission had to be publicised. There are some *confiscations* going on how governors can be involved in that?...*I must say that as a committee member, we should not accept any sturdy communication*' (silence).

This can be 'deviant' behaviour or response when actors fail to understand the display norms of emotions (Shields, 2005). Emotions on both sides had emerged as the actors had either assumed or had challenged the power and status of each other. The chair's response signalled the 'right' behaviour that is expected from the actors in this setting (Mangham and Overington, 1987). He took a moment to manage his intense emotions before he tried to manage the situation.

Chair: 'I am clarifying this issue to take the meeting to a *positive note*'

Karon's actions had paved the way for the other actors to transgress the norms of the settings. Furthermore, the lack of clarity of roles and understanding of issues created more ambiguities and intense situations of accountability. It was not only about creating accountability; it rather is about the way in which the chair and the directors were held to account.

Adam : 'We are doing too little to cause deficit. We are doing more that cause deficit. I do not understand. Where the surpluses are? Where the money came from?' (Silence).

The constant 'attacks' on the chair had made him defensive as he tried to clarify issues and justify the positions of the directors. Furthermore, the chair's role himself was not well defined which contributed to ambiguities in the board meeting.

Chair: 'apologies, Somehow due to the pressure of time schedule we might not have communicated to the governors...Board of directors are working 14 hours a day...To improve coordination, the board of governors have open invite to the board of directors meeting...Role of chair is not well defined. People can send their comments to... are people happy with that?'

The meeting highlighted the extent to which the processes, roles and responsibilities were ambiguous. The chair was frustrated due to the inability of the governors to

understand the processes and regulations that led to the heated debate in the governors' meeting.

'Can't do anything about it. We have them...you always get the person because (pause) they are (ahh) pedantic, and not seeing the difference between that operation detail that tact core influencing the strategic end, they can't see it, and if you are hitting a tick box at side of the regulation it's very specific. You go according to the regulation.' (Chair)

Other governors who were relatively passive; they felt anger and frustration as the interactions in the governors' meetings wasted their time and damaged their team spirit.

'It was *wrong*. It was a *waste of time* of all the members of the board of governors (aah) and a lot of...*misgivings were generated* at that and it you know that was just one example but that destroys the partnership, that destroys the team spirit of any big organisation' (Nick)

The issue of changing the report without the governors' consent was emotionally intensive to an extent that it became a topic of discussion whenever the governors met. The ambiguities had created suspicions regarding the motives and politics behind the change of the report.

'so it created a huge, you know, division and argument and then (pause) every time we met after that always kept keep coming back to the same issue that we don't know why it was changed, but who persuaded it to change it, *so it's really like...* (James)

In the absence of the 'culprit' the chair was blamed. Furthermore, his inability to manage some of the 'active' governors raised questions about his capability to run meetings.

'I think we need a stronger chair. I think we need a better structured meetings. I think we moved a little bit of the way there. (ahm) I do not [] to design as a governor because the meeting are so badly organised. (ahm) The irrelevancy of the given party much time and serious matters were brought aside because of poor management and poor chairing of the meeting...' (James)

However, the story moved forward to the next episode. The situation had become better in the second board meeting. The emotions of the governors had calmed as the chair was making sure that the processes regarding cleaning are being improved.

Board meeting 2

In this meeting, the dialogue among the governors began when Tracy performed anger to make the board realise the sensitivity of the situation.

Tracy: 'I have come across *considerable anxiety*...and in particular wards where the toilets are extremely busy...'

The chair asked the relevant director to come forward and give his report. The scene created in the board meeting was similar to a parliament. The director stood up and went to the middle of the boardroom near the governors and presented his report. He

took the governors' suggestions and agreed that there is a possibility to increase the number of staff for cleaning.

The governors were not satisfied with his assurances. Tracy who had begun the dialogue was successful in inducing powerful emotions of anger in Karon. The former pulled out of the dialogue and Karon took over with and carried the dialogue further with similar emotions. The way things were said infuriated the director. He became irritated and hence ironic when the governors disagreed to be satisfied despite of his repeated assurances.

Karon: 'the reason why I am asking is that I visited the public toilets which were in a *disastrous state*...what I have seen. I couldn't use it as many couldn't use it. There was no cleaner and I reported it. I went to another lieu which was *absolutely disgusting*. I think that should be noted in the public area'

Executive Director: 'perhaps when she went in at that time the toilets were dirty and it was about time for cleaning'.

This represents the lack of trust and suspicions. The way emotions are performed challenge the power and status positions of the actors, which create intense emotions. Governors became restless at the director's remark. This was also unexpected for the chair as he could not utter much; rather, his emotions were reflected in prosody. This was the situation of 'corpses' for the chair where the entire performance comes to a standstill and the other actors have to find ways to improvise around the corpse. The script of the chair had dried out (Höpfl and Linstead, 1993). The CEO took over to manage the situation and tried to create joint laughter which is a form of figurative language and is used strategically in meetings to diffuse negative emotions or tensions.

Chair: 'oh, oh, oh , oh...'

CEO: 'I am sorry to disagree. I went to one of the toilets as well...and the ladies toilet is not clean. I would personally not go in of course.' (joint laughter)

The joint laughter was successful and the negative emotions had calmed down. The director promised to investigate and solve the matter. However, this still did not satisfies the governors. The repetition of the same issue created more anger and frustrations. The concerned director gave his assurances, but the voice tone reflected anger.

Karon: '(I) spoke to some one on micro and macro things. I don't believe this and followed a cleaner. She was called and she came. How can this possibly go on with one people.'

Executive Director: 'I assure you that it will be cleaned' (*with anger*).

Finally, the chair recommended to increase audit in cleaning to which the director agreed. The chair stopped the dialogue and asked the director to give further information in the next meeting.

Board meeting 3

Emotions were even more calm in the third governors meeting. The chair ensured the board that the quality of cleaning had been checked. The director was asked to report. The chair reminded him of the issues on cleaning that were raised in the last meeting.

Executive Director: 'cleaning (contractors)...were given 30 days to take action. (We had a) meeting with managing director to make sure that (*cleaning is improved*). What I don't want is to (damage) the relationship. It's important that we work together to get best out of it'.

Chair: 'there were issues' (cleaning issues in the last board meeting)'.

Executive Director: 'cleaning standards have been improved'.

When the director finished his report, Karon said that she could not hear him as she was sitting at the farther end from where the director was presenting. The director became irritated and angry and said: 'Should I repeat all over again?' (*anger and looked at the chair*)

The chair said to him 'yes' through his gestures. The director had to repeat all over again. He summarised his report but Karon was not satisfied. She asked him about the frequency of cleaning. The director ensured her of rectification.

Karon: 'Just to comment in the report. Patient survey points (infection control) towards that cleaning is a problem. *I am glad* that you have a meeting. There was a reduced frequency (of cleaning)?'

Executive Director: 'they will rectify it as it is not up to the standard'.

The chair also supported the director that ended the director's accountability. The director was annoyed and the extent of his anger can be seen when he came back murmuring and to which the other directors ironically smiled.

Chair: 'we have got good feedback on cleaning and environment'.

The anger of the director was also confirmed in his interview when he tried to make sense that the tension exists because of communication issues.

'Again it really is about communication by meeting them by talking to them (pause) and (ah) unfold and explain to them, so they understand what's going on. I mean one of things they [governors] always got the [] about, it's about food or clean and things like that. But once they come and talk to me and see what's going on, they go back you know happy as () no problem at all—wonderful, you know (smile). *Why why why they be so fussy*, but (ah) that's life, you know? You make one happy, then another one comes up with unhappy, so you have to think all over again.'

 (Executive Director)

Discussion

Throughout the stories we have shown the way emotions are manifested into the lives of the board members as situations emerge in the boardrooms. The two stories discussed above asserts that the social spaces of governance and decision making are

indeed 'emotional arenas' where emotions emerge due to many situations, events and interactions, despite of the dominant prevalent view of rationality. The two boards shared issues that provoked intense emotions; ambiguities in processes and roles; accountability; and the rhetorical use of emotions mainly by CEOs to maintain and build reputation.

The story of succession shows the way intense anger and frustrations emerged among the governors as they failed to understand their roles. Discovery of the crisis was a shock to the governors as the governors lived under the constant impression that they were performing well. The knowledge of Monitor's interference to fire the chair was seen as a political interference in the beginning that gradually changed as the governors discovered more facts regarding their governance standards. In the absence of clarity, the subsequent reactions of the governors created further chaos as everyone made sense of the situation in their own ways and chose certain actions that they thought were appropriate to restore their lost image. Writing a letter to the Monitor without the consent of fellow governors was seen as a deception that created mistrust.

Similarly, the crisis situation due to cleaning standards had also evoked intense anger and frustrations when their report on cleaning standards was changed without informing them. The chair was frustrated as the governors could not understand the processes regarding the submission a report to CQC as a tick-box exercise while the governors were angry as their say was not taken into consideration. This incidence led to many accusations and heated debates in the next three governors meetings.

The two boards share the way actors shifted blame and responsibilities. In the NHS FT 1, the chair was held responsible for not considering the consent of the governors before the change. The governors were suspicious that the chair is taking the sides of the directors. They accused the non executive directors for not performing their roles. Similarly, in the NHS FT 2 the non executive directors blamed the executive directors and the chair, and the governors blamed the non executive directors for not sharing information. As a consequence of crisis, accountability from the governors in the governors meeting increased which was not welcomed by the directors. This produced intense emotional scenes as the governors transgressed their role boundaries and clashed with the role of the non executive directors. Emotions became more volatile as the actors violated the display norms in governors meetings while holding the chair and the executive directors to account.

Ultimately, it is the CEOs responsibility to manage the reputation of their Trust. They used emotions rhetorically to justify their actions and to shift the attention of the public towards future actions and improvements by concentrating on 'what lessons have been learnt'. Winkler (1987) rightly suggests that 'elite renderings are vulnerable to self-justification, the impulse to rationalize and to tidy (p. 130). Managing selves and presentation of selves is crucial for their reputation in public and press. The rhetorical use of emotions also helps them to protect themselves from criticism and accountability from the governors and the public.

Conclusion

This paper also show how emotions are tied up with situations as they changed over time with the change of situations and processes. In the story of succession, they changed from anger and frustrations to happiness and hope as the old chair was succeeded by the interim chair. Finally, there were expectations when the new chair was appointed. In the story of failure to meet cleaning standards anger and frustrations calmed down in the later meetings as the directors made an effort to improve the processes. Hence, we argue that emotions can be seen as a resource in improving processes rather than something to be avoided and suppressed.

This paper contributes empirically to the study of the performance of emotions in the boardroom. It elaborates the way emotions are used and performed to induce certain emotions and actions in others to gain personal agendas. The ethnographic approach to studying emotions is an important methodological contribution in the exploration of emotions in the boardroom, which are highly inaccessible.

Practically, this study helps the practitioners to understand governance through the lens of emotions. The intensity and the frequency with which negative emotions emerge in the boardroom explicitly indicate the extent to which governance structures and processes are dysfunctional in the NHS FTs. The ambiguities about roles and processes, the conflicts and tensions among the directors and the governors are inherent in the design of the governance structure that can be improved to an extent through board workshops. The narrow definition of roles of the governors and the power imbalances created between the directors and the governors naturally produces status differences and tensions among them.

Theoretically, this paper contributes to the politics of emotions through the use of dominant discourses of 'formality', 'professionalism', 'seriousness' and 'predictable behavior', which are exploited to limit the range of emotions that can be displayed in meetings and to reproduce the same culture with a masculine approach. At one end, this politics of 'emotion rules' encourages the actors to display masculine emotions- pride, anger, irritation, while on the other end discourages the display of feminine emotions- fear, anxiety and sadness (Shield, 2005; Symons, 2007). Interestingly, both men and women live with these dominant practices in different ways to control volatile emotions in the boardroom. Women engage in such discourses to gain acceptance and recognition in the masculine environment. The politics of these emotions is strong enough to an extent that even women try to detach themselves from performing feminine emotions to prevent themselves from being seen as weak.

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