

# Emotional Labour in New Zealand Public Libraries

An exploratory study

by

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## Abstract

In order to provide good customer service, library employees need to know the expected standard for emotional display and modify their emotions to meet it, a concept known as emotional labour. Research suggests that, while emotional labour is essential to customer service, it can have negative outcomes for individuals. A clear understanding of emotional labour is needed to find ways of mitigating its costs and promoting its benefits. There are few studies of emotional labour in librarianship and this qualitative study is intended to explore the experience of employees in one public library network.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of eighteen employees, including qualified and non-qualified staff. The findings show that library employees performed emotional labour on a daily basis with customers, using both surface and deep acting techniques. Both strategies produced some positive outcomes, such as an increased sense of accomplishment, but surface acting was also associated with negative outcomes such as burnout.

The findings suggest that employees should be encouraged to develop deep acting techniques and library management should support employees by providing training and developing an organisational culture which recognises the effort required to manage emotions. This study contributes towards a greater knowledge of emotional management in libraries and suggestions for further research are provided.

**Keywords:** emotional labour, work in libraries, customer service, public libraries, emotion regulation strategies, surface acting, deep acting, burnout

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## Contents

Introduction .....	1
Problem Statement .....	1
Reason for the Research .....	3
Research Questions .....	3
Literature Review .....	3
Introduction of the Concept.....	3
Theoretical Frameworks .....	4
Themes Explored in the Literature.....	5
Display Rules.....	5
Emotional regulation strategies.....	5
Outcomes for individuals and organisations .....	6
Effect of emotional labour on customer service .....	7
Personal and organisational factors affecting emotional labour.....	7
Factors which mitigate negative outcomes of emotional labour.....	8
Studies of Emotional Labour in Libraries .....	8
Related Research and New Zealand Studies .....	9
Limitations of Previous Research.....	10
Research Design.....	10
Population Sampling .....	11
Data Collection .....	11
Human Ethics .....	12
Data Analysis.....	12
Validity .....	13
Limitations of the Research.....	13
Findings.....	14
Characteristics of Participants.....	14
Display Rules .....	14
Achievement of Positive Display .....	15
Customer Behaviour .....	16
Colleague Behaviour.....	19
Personal Factors.....	20
Organisational Factors.....	20
Emotional Labour Strategies.....	21
Avoidance .....	21

Displaying Real Emotion.....	22
Emotional Regulation Strategies.....	24
Individual Outcomes .....	27
Coping Strategies for Emotional Labour .....	29
Individual Factors Affecting Performance of Emotional Labour.....	32
Other Factors .....	33
Professionalism .....	33
Fairness.....	34
Suggestions for the organisation.....	34
Discussion.....	36
Organisationally Desired Behaviour – Display Rules .....	37
Antecedents of emotional labour.....	37
The Effect of Customer Behaviour on Emotional Labour .....	38
Professionalism as a Reason to Perform Emotional Labour .....	39
Emotional Labour Strategies.....	39
Moderating Factors on the Performance of Emotional Labour.....	41
Effects of Emotional Labour on Individuals .....	42
Support for Theoretical Frameworks.....	43
Coping Strategies .....	45
Suggestions for management .....	45
Suggestions for Further Research .....	46
Conclusion .....	47
References.....	48
Appendix 1: List of Terms.....	55
Appendix 2: Interview Questions .....	56
Appendix 3: Customer Service Standards.....	57

### List of Tables

Table 1: Characteristics of Participants .....	14
Table 2: Difficult Customer Behaviour .....	17
Table 3: Coping Strategies.....	30
Table 4: Motivation for working in a public library.....	32

## **Introduction**

### **Problem Statement**

This research explores whether employees of a New Zealand public library experience emotional labour when interacting with customers and if so, with what outcomes.

Emotional labour is an essential work requirement in any front-facing role (Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2008; Hochschild, 1983), but may have negative consequences for employees (Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004; Hochschild, 1983; Osa, 2002). Public libraries rightly wish to provide excellent customer service (Calvert, 2005; Christchurch City Council, n.d.; International Federation of Library Associations, 2012; Jordan, 2005) but also need to consider the cost their employees pay to provide such service (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Moorcroft, 2009).

It is hoped that an increased understanding of emotional labour will contribute to improved customer service and better outcomes for employees.

### **What is Emotional Labour?**

Workplaces are full of emotion (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995, p. 98) and employees frequently need to manage their feelings. When this emotion work is a necessary requirement of a work role it is called emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) Morris and Feldman (1996) provide a succinct definition: "the effort, planning and control needed to express organisationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions". Most occupations have expectations for acceptable emotional displays to customers which usually require employees to suppress negative and display positive emotions (Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005) However, when an employee feels one emotion but is required to display another, for example, to keep smiling at a demanding customer, they experience emotional dissonance (Pugh, Groth, & Hennig-Thurau, 2011). In order to reduce this dissonance, employees must either change their outward display to fake the required emotion (surface acting) or change their thoughts to enable them to genuinely feel the required emotion (deep acting) (Hochschild, 1983).

Emotional labour is endemic in a service economy as “a customer-service orientation is bound up with care and emotion work” (Guy et al., 2008, p. 57). Research to date shows both negative and positive outcomes of emotional labour for individuals and organisations (Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Humphrey, Ashforth & Diefendorff, 2015; Matteson & Miller, 2012).

Emotional labour is a vital component of both collaborative working and customer service (Guy et al., 2008; Humphrey, Ashforth, & Diefendorff, 2015; Matteson, Sharon, & Mease, 2015; Silke McCance, Nye, Wang, Jones, & Chiu, 2013). That New Zealand libraries place a high value on customer service was clear from a search of the vacancies on the website of the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA) carried out in October 2015. Every front-facing position requires excellent customer service skills, one or two going so far as to demand a “passion” for customer service (Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa, n.d.).

Employees may benefit from emotional labour, as some studies reported increased levels of personal achievement, self-esteem and job satisfaction, especially when deep acting strategies were used (Guy et al., 2008; Humphrey et al., 2015; Matteson et al., 2015). However, emotional labour and especially surface acting, is also implicated in negative outcomes including stress, burnout, reduced levels of engagement, psychosomatic complaints, substance abuse and ailments such as cancer and heart disease (Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Hochschild, 2003; Judge, Woolf, & Hurst, 2009; Matteson & Miller, 2012; Pugh et al., 2011; Zapf, 2002). In addition, customers can frequently detect the inauthenticity of surface acting, which may lessen their satisfaction (Medler-Liraz & Seger-Guttmann, 2015).

These negative outcomes have implications for the duty of care owed by organisations to employees (Moorcroft, 2009). Emotional labour is also linked to disengagement, lower performance, high turnover and absenteeism (Grandey, 2000; Silke McCance et al., 2013).

## **Reason for the Research**

If, as the literature suggests, emotional labour is an integral part of customer service, it seems likely that it is a work requirement for front-facing library employees.

Existing research suggests that there are positive and negative effects of emotional labour, both for individuals and organisations, but results have not been conclusive and further research is needed to establish the most effective strategies for the performance of emotional labour. It may be that different occupations require different strategies, and research into the experience of library employees is needed for organisations to reap the benefits of emotional labour and minimise any harm to employees. The first essential is to establish whether library employees perform emotional labour and, if so, what outcomes they experience.

Hochschild (1983) identified librarians among those who perform emotional labour, but few library researchers have studied it, although a 2012 study by Matteson and Miller confirmed that librarians in the United States perform emotional labour. It has not been studied in New Zealand, leaving a gap in the literature which this study is a first step toward filling.

## **Research Questions**

To discover whether front-facing employees in New Zealand public libraries perform emotional labour during customer interactions and if so, what outcomes they report.

### **Sub Questions**

Does the organisation expect a certain level of behaviour from employees and do they agree with this expectation?

What customer behaviour is associated with the need to perform emotional labour?

What emotion management strategies are used?

What other factors influence performance of emotional labour in public libraries?

## **Literature Review**

### **Introduction of the Concept**

The pioneering work on emotional labour is by sociologist Arlie Hochschild who defined it as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and



bodily display: emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value” (Hochschild, 2003, p. 7). In the workplace, the display of emotion is governed by “feeling rules” (p. 18) which prescribe the expected demeanour, for example, a flight attendant is supposed to be friendly and calm under pressure. When the employee’s true feelings are different to the emotion they are supposed to display, they experience “emotional dissonance” (p.88), a psychological strain which they try to reduce by performing emotional labour, using either surface or deep acting strategies. Hochschild believed that both of these strategies required effort which caused psychological harm.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Hochschild herself used Goffman’s dramaturgical theory of the self as an actor (Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 1983) and theorised that performing a role, especially one which produces emotional dissonance, is likely to result in alienation from true feelings.

Hochschild also drew on Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) to develop the theory of emotional dissonance. Other researchers have applied Festinger’s model to emotional labour. Pugh et al., (2011) challenged Hochschild’s conclusion that emotional dissonance is always harmful, finding that it only causes distress if it contradicts the employee’s image of themselves (Pugh et al., 2011). If the employee believes themselves to be, for example, a helpful and friendly person, then faking these emotions when they do not genuinely feel them may not cause harm and may even be beneficial to their self-concept, a conclusion supported by other studies (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Humphrey et al., 2015).

Hobfoil’s conservation of resources theory (Hobfoil, 1989), which states that people strive to acquire and retain resources and suffer stress if these resources are lost, has also been applied to emotional labour. Findings suggest that the effort of faking emotions leaves employees with fewer emotional and cognitive resources for other tasks and causes them distress (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Dormann & Zapf, 2004).

Emotional labour has also been studied using control theory (Dieffendorff & Gosserand, 2003), which suggests that employees constantly monitor their behaviour against the organisationally-approved display rules. Whether they suffer

ill-effects from regulating their emotions to fit the display rules depends on whether the display rules are consistent with the employee's personal goals.

In a somewhat similar approach, Zapf (2002) applied action theory to emotional labour, proposing that work activity is a series of goals and sub-goals, both organisational and personal. Employees often enjoy meeting goals and their willingness to do emotion work will be influenced by its importance in their goal hierarchy. For example, hospice workers may see emotional interaction with clients as a main goal, while a doctor in an emergency ward may consider it an irritating barrier to the real task of diagnosing and treating conditions. Within occupations there may be differences in the importance placed on emotion work by individual employees. Whether librarians consider emotional labour as an integral component or a tiresome adjunct to their work may depend on their motivation for choosing libraries and the goals they wish to achieve.

## **Themes Explored in the Literature**

### **Display Rules**

Most occupations have rules or conventions about the acceptable display of emotions, termed "display rules" in the literature (equating to Hochschild's "feeling rules"). These may be implicit professional norms or explicit lists of requirements. In some organisations display rules are strictly enforced while in others employees may have a good deal of autonomy over their emotional display. Goldberg and Grandey (2007) found that workers who were given explicit display rules reported more emotional exhaustion and lower performance standards than those given autonomy over display, while Morris and Feldman (1996) found that organisations which require greater attentiveness to display rules place a greater burden on employees. Rupp et al. (2008) found the need to comply with display rules in the face of mistreatment from customers causes employees to feel anger and strain, while Dieffendorf and Gosserand (2003) suggested that some employees reject display rules because the rules do not align with their goals or they lack confidence in their ability to fake the expected emotion.

### **Emotional regulation strategies**

Employees experiencing emotional dissonance may attempt to lessen it by regulating either their outward display or the emotion they feel. The former,

attempting to produce the required display without changing the underlying emotion, is referred to as surface acting. Deep acting, on the other hand, involves changing the emotion felt (Hochschild, 1983). Meta-analytic results found that surface acting was frequently associated with negative outcomes, while deep acting produced a more nuanced picture: weakly associated with negative individual effects in many studies, showing positive effects in others and frequently being positively associated with improved customer service and other performance outcomes (Hülshéger & Schewe, 2011).

### **Outcomes for individuals and organisations**

Surface acting appears to be associated with negative outcomes for employees, including psychosomatic conditions (Ogbonna & Harris, 2004), substance abuse and ailments such as cancer and heart disease (Grandey, 2000); and psychological harm from stress and depression (Browning, 2008; Matteson & Miller, 2012).

Work-related effects include job dissatisfaction (Grandey, Fisk, & Steiner, 2005; Matteson & Miller, 2012; Zapf, 2002) and burnout (a condition comprising emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment) was linked to emotional labour in several studies (Dormann & Zapf, 2004; H. Kim, 2008; Pienaar & Willemse, 2008; Zapf, 2002) including one focused on librarians (Matteson & Miller, 2012).

Negative consequences for organisations include diminished performance (Goldberg & Grandey, 2007), increased absenteeism and higher turnover (Varca, 2009), lower levels of engagement and motivation (Matteson & Miller, 2012; Zapf, 2002) and impaired customer service (Browning, 2008).

However, some studies suggest there may be individual and organisational benefits to emotional labour. Individuals may benefit from an increased sense of self-efficacy if they believe their skills in emotional regulation are professionally useful (Pugh et al., 2011) and deep acting was positively related to job satisfaction and performance in some studies (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Guy et al., 2008; Humphrey et al., 2015; Matteson & Miller, 2013).

Overall, surface acting is viewed as the less successful strategy. It may be seen as inauthentic by the customer (Rupp et al., 2008), depletes resources faster (Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Pugh et al., 2011) and carries more risk of burnout, exhaustion

and reduced job satisfaction (Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Matteson & Miller, 2013; Sliter, Chen, Withrow, & Sliter, 2013).

### **Effect of emotional labour on customer service**

Emotional labour helps smooth the path of customer-employee interactions as many customers expect friendly, helpful service (Calvert, 2005; Cherry, 2008) and are likely to rate employees showing positive emotions more highly than those who do not (Holman, Martinez-Iñigo, & Totterdell, 2009). However, if the emotional labour is not performed successfully, the underlying emotion is likely to “leak out” and become apparent to the customer. When this happens the customer may judge the employee to be hypocritical or dishonest and react negatively (Holman et al., 2009).

### **Personal and organisational factors affecting emotional labour**

Measuring the outcomes of emotional labour is not straightforward as there are a number of possible moderating factors including age, emotional intelligence, experience, sex and organisational culture

A study of the relationship of age to emotional labour found that older employees are more likely to choose the less damaging deep acting strategy and display higher levels of emotional intelligence, perhaps as a consequence of lifelong learning (Sliter et al., 2013). In addition, experience may be a buffering factor (Browning, 2008).

Emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to control one’s own emotions and handle interpersonal relationships effectively (Sliter et al., 2013) is a concept which has received much attention recently and a study by Kim, Kim and Lee (2012) found a clear relationship between high emotional intelligence and deep acting.

Research into the effects of gender indicated that women do more emotional labour (Grandey, 2000; Guy et al., 2008; Hochschild, 1983; Meler, Mastracci, & Wilson, 2006) but it is not clear from these studies that one sex suffers more ill-effects than the other.

Judge, Woolf and Hurst’s study into the effect of personality on emotional labour (2009), found that introverts find it more draining than extroverts, but other studies found little empirical evidence to link personality to emotional labour outcomes (Grandey, Fisk, & Steiner, 2005; Matteson & Miller, 2012).

### **Factors which mitigate negative outcomes of emotional labour**

Increased levels of job autonomy, particularly for employees attempting to deal with difficult customers, is the most important organisational moderating factor found in the literature. The beneficial effects appear to be related to a general feeling of control over one's emotional display, the freedom to decide how to approach customers and the ability to take breaks from customer service (Browning, 2008; Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Grandey, 2000; Grandey et al., 2004; Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, et al., 2005; Hochschild, 1983; Jackson, 2002; Matteson & Miller, 2012; Varca, 2009; Zapf, 2002).

The benefits of social support are investigated in an experimental study by Silke McCance et al, (2013), which found that employees who have been subjected to hostile customers suffer fewer ill-effects from emotional labour if they are encouraged to discuss the encounters with colleagues.

Other factors include organisational support (Bee, 2001; Moorcroft, 2009), training (Browning, 2008; Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, et al., 2005; Matteson & Miller, 2012; Moorcroft, 2009) and the recruitment of people with high levels of emotional intelligence (Judge et al., 2009; Sliter et al., 2013; Varca, 2009).

### **Studies of Emotional Labour in Libraries**

The concept has not been widely researched in the library and information field, though Matteson and Miller set out a research agenda in 2012 and in 2013 carried out a quantitative study of American academic, public, special and school librarians, discovering that emotional labour was endemic and that surface acting was consistently associated with burnout and decreased job satisfaction. In a 2014 article, Matteson and Miller suggested ways to mitigate harm to library employees through supervision, training, recruitment and attention to organisational culture. In a 2015 study, Matteson, Chittock and Mease used experience sampling of public, academic and special librarians to explore their experience of emotional labour, finding that customer and colleague behaviour are the most common antecedents of emotional labour and that surface acting was used twice as often as deep acting. Outcomes were mixed, with cynicism and emotional exhaustion experienced by some and an increased sense of self-efficacy by others.

Other authors have looked at academic libraries, including Julien and Genuis (2009) who found that Canadian librarians involved in instructional work suppressed various emotions, notably boredom and frustration, mainly using deep acting techniques. A South African case study found that university librarians used various emotional labour strategies to manage negative emotions during rule enforcement (Sandham & Steinberg, 2010).

Shuler and Morgan (2013) interviewed American academic librarians, finding that that all performed emotional labour, predominantly using surface acting, especially with customers.

Peng (2015) considered the moderating role of supervisor support on surface acting (chosen as the more damaging strategy) performed by academic librarians in Taiwan and found that it improves performance but has no effect on intrinsic job satisfaction.

Research on customer service in the library field has focused largely on the needs of the customer and on strategies to deal with problem patrons. The attitude was largely that “the customer is always right” (Chelton, 2002; Jackson, 2002) and the emotional response of the employee was often ignored. However, employee attitudes are central to customer service – no amount of training will produce effective results if an employee does not wish to produce a good impression, or is unable to control their emotional response to a difficult patron (Grandey et al., 2004). For this reason, an understanding of emotional labour is vital to improving customer service quality.

### **Related Research and New Zealand Studies**

Emotional labour in two American public administrations was studied by Guy et al. (2008). They found the growth of a service economy resulted in increased demand for emotional labour and a higher risk of burnout for employees. They noticed that work high in emotional labour tended to be low-paid and recommended that employees be recognised and compensated for their emotional work.

There are no studies of emotional labour in New Zealand libraries, but Bondarenko (2009) looked at emotional labour performed by mental health fieldworkers and found little surface acting as employees genuinely empathised with clients. Support

from colleagues and supervisors, along with effective training were mitigating factors against negative outcomes.

Cherry (2008) studied customer service in New Zealand libraries and, like Hochschild (1983), used Goffman's theory of dramaturgy to examine differences between librarians' concept of customer service and a retail approach. While this study does not mention emotional labour by name, findings showed that librarians frequently felt the need to fake emotions, that some resented doing so and others suffered exhaustion or became cynical toward customers. There was strong resistance to scripted encounters or overtly-stated expectations of behaviour and librarians placed great emphasis on their professionalism and expertise.

Browning (2008) explored deviant employee behaviour in customer service encounters in the New Zealand hospitality industry, finding that employees frequently responded to customer misbehaviour with surface acting. Some also refused to perform emotional labour, instead choosing to avoid interactions or to retaliate against customers.

### **Limitations of Previous Research**

There is little research from libraries, even less from public libraries and in many cases studies have used a small population sample, meaning that the results may not be generalisable.

There may also be some confusion and bias in the research as emotions are difficult to describe, define and quantify. Many studies rely on employee's self-reports, which may be misleading or disingenuous.

There is also disagreement among researchers about the very concept of emotional labour, how it should be defined and measured and its antecedents (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). This may explain some of the contradictory research findings.

### **Research Design**

As there are no studies of emotional labour in New Zealand libraries, this is exploratory study and suits a qualitative design (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013), which also aligns well with the subject, involving as it does employees' feelings, behaviours and

reactions. The qualitative design yielded deep and rich data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013) and suggested further avenues for research.

Focus groups were considered as they might not only have provided rich data but the debate among participants may have helped to refine topics. However, on pragmatic grounds interviews seemed a better choice for an inexperienced researcher than attempting to manage the dynamics of focus groups (Barbour, 2014).

One-to-one interviews were chosen as the method to elicit data since they seemed likely to encourage participants to be open about their experiences. They allow the researcher to probe for further details and explore different strands of thought (Barbour, 2014). The relative privacy of a one-on-one interview was useful as some participants disclosed information they did not wish colleagues to know. The researcher had some experience with interviewing (though not for research purposes) and was aware of the need to allow participants to express their views freely (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

A semi-structured interview format was chosen to allow for flexibility in which questions were asked and in what order, in order to take account of interviewees' experiences and opinions (Barbour, 2014). This approach allowed for some standardisation and for the topic to be fully explored while also allowing other information to be captured.

### **Population Sampling**

Participants were recruited through an email sent to all branches of Christchurch City Libraries. Purposive sampling was employed, with participants chosen who were involved in front-facing work (rather than technical roles) and who spent, on average, four hours a day with customers. Those who met the criteria included library assistants, qualified librarians and Associate Team Leaders. All participants who responded were interviewed, except three for whom convenient interview times could not be arranged.

### **Data Collection**

Face-to-face interviews lasting between 30-50 minutes were carried out with eighteen participants.



A list of interview questions was compiled, based on the research objectives and the main themes suggested by the literature review, but in keeping with the semi-structured approach, questions were sometimes asked in a different order, omitted or added. A copy of the questions was provided to participants to allow for reflection beforehand and the researcher explained the concept of emotional labour to all participants at the beginning of the interview.

### **Human Ethics**

Approval from the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University was sought and obtained before the interviews took place. The management of Christchurch City Libraries also granted permission for employees to be interviewed.

Interviewees were given a written summary which introduced the researcher, explained the objectives of the study and the information sought from them, and confirmed the procedures used to ensure their anonymity and the confidentiality of the data. This information was repeated at the start of each interview, before participants were asked to sign a written consent to their participation. It was made clear that they were free to withdraw from the study within a given period.

### **Data Analysis**

The interviews were recorded and notes were also taken in some cases due to malfunction of equipment. The interviews were transcribed using NVivo software and coded using inductive codes developed from several readings of the transcripts. Constructs suggested by the literature were also used as codes. These codes were revisited, reappraised and renamed in a continuous process of re-reading and re-coding to ensure that all data was accounted for by at least one code. The transcripts were then re-read to ensure that similar responses in each interview were gathered under the same codes.

A framework matrix was constructed to allow comparison of responses across codes and the coding categories were again examined and refined during this process. Queries were run to discover possible relationships between the characteristics of participants and their responses, and word frequency searches helped to illuminate frequently-mentioned words or concepts.

The writing up of the project was also treated as part of the analysis (Barbour, 2014).

## Validity

The following methods were used to help ensure validity:

- Carrying out a number of interviews allowed a picture to be built up from a number of viewpoints and questions to be repetitively answered
- Interviews were transcribed and direct quotes used in the report
- Data was closely examined using various methods of analysis – comparison between interviews, framework analysis, queries and word reference searches.
- The findings of previous research were examined against the data obtained in this study and any points of difference noted.

## Limitations of the Research

- The research only considers emotional labour performed during interactions with customers, though it is likely that it is also performed with colleagues and superiors. This was done to limit the scope of the project and because library employees are increasingly likely to encounter difficult and deviant behaviour from customers (Sliter et al., 2010), especially as libraries attempt to broaden their appeal to less-traditional users (Zickuhr, Rainie, & Purcell, 2013).
- There are a number of variables such as personal affect, mental state, previous experience, etc. which were not controlled for and which may affect the findings.
- The qualitative design cannot quantify the extent of the topic.
- Participants selected themselves for interview and may have done so for their own reasons.
- The participants form only about 6% of the employees of one public library network so the results are not generalisable.
- The researcher works for the same library network and was known, at least by sight, to many participants. This may have caused them to censor their views, though the shared basis of knowledge also helped the researcher to empathise with their experiences.
- As with any research which relies on participants' views of themselves, a self-report bias is possible.

## Findings

### Characteristics of Participants

The eighteen participants were asked to give their job role, length of service and hours of work and the results are summarised below:

Characteristic		Number
Sex	Female	12
	Male	6
Job Role	Library Assistant	11
	Qualified Librarian	5
	Associate Team Leader	2
Hours	Full-Time	11
	Part-Time	7
Length of Service	Less than 2 years	2
	2-4 years	6
	5-9 years	4
	10-14 years	4
	15-20 years	2

*Table 1: Characteristics of Participants*

When quoted below participants are referred to as Library Assistant 1 (LA1), Librarian 1 (L1), Associate Team Leader 1 (ATL 1) and so on. This has been done to preserve confidentiality while still attributing quotes to individuals and so ensuring quotes can be related to job role and that specific individual voices do not dominate (Barbour, 2014)

### Display Rules

The organisation has an explicit set of display rules in the Customer Service Standards (see Appendix A). All but one participant was aware of the standards and all agreed that library employees should display friendly and welcoming behaviour, though some referred to the Standards as an ideal, which could not realistically be followed with poorly-behaved customers.

There was general agreement that some emotions should never be shown to customers, though the employee may be feeling them. Most commonly mentioned were:

- Anger or hostility (8)
- Sorrow or anxiety (3)
- Fear or apprehension (3)

All agreed that the Standards are not strictly enforced, though customer complaints might prompt action from superiors. Several participants said that any attempt to enforce display rules would be counter-productive and six said the Standards were too explicit and “obvious” and insisted on the freedom to monitor their own behaviour:

*“If it was enforced I would react against that, I would resist it, so it wouldn’t work for me. It has to be my own, I have to own it.” (LA5)*

Though the Standards do not require the use of scripts (phrases which should be employed or avoided), it appears that, at some point, this was done, as two participants mentioned their dislike of scripting:

*“All the business of, we’re not supposed to say “Can I help you” is just silly. Because what they want is help. So I will say “Can I help you” (LA4)*

### **Achievement of Positive Display**

The majority of participants believed that they, and most of their colleagues, tried to meet the display standards consistently, though almost all found difficulty in doing so at times. The most common reasons given for this and the number of participants who mentioned them, were:

- Customer behaviour (17)
- Colleague behaviour (13)
- Personal factors: employees unsuited to working with people, personal troubles (11)
- Organisational Factors: including time pressure, changing job roles and expectations, new service models, technology (11)

## Customer Behaviour

The majority of participants emphasised that pleasant customer interactions, during which they genuinely felt positive emotions and could display them with little effort, greatly outnumbered negative interactions:

*“Nine out of ten of the customers are great” (LA2)*

*“To my mind it's valuable in terms of what my expectations are, to realise that the problem exchanges are like 5%. So 95% of the time it is going to go smoothly” (LA5)*

Participants were asked to describe customer behaviour which requires them to regulate their emotions in order to maintain a positive display. The table below summarises the responses:

Behaviour	Associate Team Leader (from total of 2)	Librarian (from total of 5)	Library Assistant (from total of 11)
Physical aggression and attacks	2	2	8
Verbally Abusive	2	3	10
Angry/Irritated			6
Rude, arrogant or condescending	1	4	9
Overly friendly – harmless but time-consuming			3
Overly Familiar – persistent touching & sexual harassment	1		4
Unrealistic expectations - demanding preferential treatment, expecting too much or being unwilling to help themselves	1	3	9
Requiring too much assistance but not customer fault e.g. disabled		1	3
Constant complaining or blaming staff for Council or library management decisions	1	1	5

Failure to follow rules and procedures	1	2	6
Disrespectful or low-level disruptive behaviour	1	2	8
Lack of English			2
Poor hygiene	1	1	1

*Table 2: Difficult Customer Behaviour*

Job role appears to affect employees' perceptions of difficult customer behaviour, with library assistants being the only ones to mention certain behaviours. A higher proportion of library assistants also mentioned disrespect, unrealistic expectations, rude or condescending behaviour and physical aggression. This may reflect the greater proportion of time library assistants spend with customers, compared with librarians and ATLS. It is unlikely to be due to customer perception of their status, as some noted that customers cannot tell the difference between qualified librarians and library assistants.

Male and female participants equally found the same behaviours difficult and both encountered overly friendly customers and sexual harassment. .

Length of time in the job seemed to have no effect on employee's perceptions of customer difficulty but work hours did as full-time employees reported more instances of challenging behaviours, probably due to the greater amount of time spent with customers.

ATLS, who are in a supervisory role, were often called to assist with more serious cases of misbehaviour, which may explain why both encountered physical and verbal aggression. All participants said that serious physical and verbal aggression is rare, but has a significant effect on staff. The effort required not to display anxiety or fear was difficult for some participants and others mentioned negative outcomes both in the short term (shakiness and fear) and long term (stress symptoms, anxiety when out on the library floor).

Participants were not asked to quantify the frequency of difficult customer behaviour, though it was clear that one librarian, at least, faced frequent and severe difficulties:

*“Some days it seems like everyone I meet is difficult ... I spend the whole day telling them they can't sleep on the floor, stop yelling, don't do that, you have*

*to leave now, and it's absolutely exhausting. I spend so much time on these people I don't have the time or energy to be happy and welcoming for the nice customers."* (L2)

About half the participants mentioned boredom as an antecedent of emotional labour. One spoke of the "tedium of disinterest" engendered by a stream of people who had forgotten their library card and others mentioned the boredom of mundane tasks and repeating the same information to customers:

*"We have explained to him every time ... but he still says it every time. Every week, a big long rant about it. And so you just stand there and you explain again until you've had enough"* (LA1)

Boredom was felt most acutely by those who described themselves as task-oriented and/or not primarily motivated by a desire to help customers.

For over half the participants, the effort they were prepared to expend on keeping their positive demeanour intact depended on their judgement of how much the customer was at fault. This was noticeable when comparing reactions to customers deemed to honestly require extra help with those who were wilfully demanding. Four participants said they had difficulty with certain disabled customers, who often required a lot of assistance or were overly familiar. The participants felt guilty at finding these customers difficult and made strenuous efforts to appear welcoming and friendly. However, customers seen as being wilfully demanding or entitled engendered no guilt and were much more likely to receive a brusque response. Condescending and arrogant customers were regarded as problematic by more people than angry ones, with some participants saying that customer anger was justified if the library had made a mistake, whereas there was no excuse for entitled or rude behaviour.

When asked whether they believed that the "customer was always right" (Chelton, 2002; Jackson, 2002), ten out of eleven participants said they did not. A few participants did say that customers may have unknown problems and should not be judged by staff, but more rejected this view, believing that customers who cannot behave in a civilised manner should not expect a warm welcome. Half said they would not make a special effort for uncivil customers:

*“Piss me off at your peril, because maybe there won't be as much help offered” (LA2)*

Many customer expectations regarded as unrealistic by staff were related to technology. The provision of public computers, free internet and customers wanting help to set up mobile devices caused difficulties. Participants wished to help but over half said they were forced to fake confidence and knowledge when answering computer-related queries. The time-consuming nature of many computer queries frustrated some:

*“An hour's gone and you've been sitting with that customer and the rest of your colleagues are like "Grrrrrr" ... and everybody is getting antsy about it. But if the customer comes in and you can't help them right away, they're pretty miffed about it as well. They expect it.” (LA4)*

One participant rejected the idea that customer behaviour was an antecedent of emotional labour, saying that emotion regulation was needed in all interactions, whether pleasant or difficult.

### **Colleague Behaviour**

Though it is not the focus of this research, it is worth noting that five participants said interaction with colleagues required greater emotional effort than that with customers, because they spent more time with colleagues or expected better behaviour from them:

*“Customers are fleeting, they're there then they're gone. It's just literally a moment in time, you can have a big old grumble about them and then it's fine. But it's the people you work with who can take the smile off your face in a heartbeat.” (LA2)*

Some participants who had no qualms about faking emotions for customers, disliked doing so for colleagues as the greater emotional connection involved seemed to require greater honesty:

*“It actually causes me more difficulties when I feel the need to fake it with colleagues than with customers. I feel like there is more of a psychic cost associated with that because part of working in a library is having that professional game face and that is part of the skill set, so although there are*



*times when it might feel a bit icky, it's part of what I do. With colleagues it's more of a personal choice and therefore there is more of a personal cost associated with it.” (LA6)*

### **Personal Factors**

Eleven participants found it more difficult to show positive emotions to customers when they were upset themselves. Most believed they succeeded in hiding such feelings, though some mentioned colleagues who were “moody” or “dragged personal stuff into work”.

Four participants said that work, especially interactions with customers, provided a welcome break from personal problems as they switched on their “professional face” and forgot about outside factors. One said:

*“Using the analogy of an actor and thinking about it like a stage – once you go out there, it impacts on me relatively little. You’re out there and it’s game face” (LA6)*

Some participants said they had on occasion worked with people who were completely unsuited to customer service, either because of personality disorders or lack of a customer orientation.

### **Organisational Factors**

As mentioned above, technology has led to changing job requirements and customer expectations which require greater emotional work.

The organisation introduced a roving model of service a few years ago, requiring employees to move around the library approaching customers. Though a third of participants enjoyed the opportunities offered by the new model, four thought it increased emotional labour demands by causing “over-exposure to customers” (LA3) and insufficient time backstage to recover from negative interactions. Three participants noted that the new model was particularly demanding for introverts and three said that anyone who did not seem delighted to be out the front for long periods was negatively judged by colleagues and superiors. One-third of participants mentioned strain caused by the need to juggle long periods spent with customers with the completion of other tasks. Some said they “shut down” customer interactions

to save time, while others took work home. One participant summed up the conflict between the desire to provide exceptional service and the toll it took by saying:

*And there is a cost for that [great service], so as long as you can allow for the cost, let staff have some time to get over those things and regenerate themselves, then it all gets back on track quickly. If you just keep saying, no, you have to be out there all the time and no, you can't actually get away from customers, and no, you can't express negative feelings, there's a problem.*  
(LA3)

The two ATLS interviewed, though they personally favoured the roving model, said they were aware of the need to allow employees time off the floor, especially after a challenging customer encounter.

Ten participants said they were frequently overwhelmed by their workloads and of these, over half said they managed their emotional display to discourage extended interactions with customers by “dampening down” their interest and enthusiasm, and two said they had seen colleagues snap at customers when under pressure.

Several participants had become jaded and discouraged by dealing with misbehaving customers who suffered no consequences:

*“They get ten warnings, then they’re asked to leave, they come back in the next day and it all starts all over again”* (L2)

A quarter of participants wanted clear policies and sanctions for misbehaviour.

## **Emotional Labour Strategies**

### **Avoidance**

When unable to show genuine positive emotions, some participants preferred to avoid customers rather than perform emotional labour.

*“It’s like the short straw, if he approaches me then I have to deal with him. I don’t run off and get someone else. But if we see him come in we might busy ourselves doing something else”* (LA7)

*“And we have customers here that everybody tries to avoid, which sounds awful, you’re like “Oh, you’ve got him this week, lucky old you”, but that’s the way it is, it’s how you survive when it’s full-on”* (LA1)

In some cases, particularly when a customer had been overly familiar or sexually harassed an employee, the avoidance was supported by their colleagues and supervisors.

Four participants, including the two ATLS, said they never avoided customers, either because their supervisory role required them to manage difficult customers, or because they had developed strong emotional management and coping strategies:

*“The particular customer I’m thinking of, everybody dislikes, and in the back room you’ll hear people saying “Oh God, he’s in the library” and they’re trying to hide and saying “you go out the front” and I will go out when he’s there because I feel that I can help him, I can give him a little bit of interaction and then I can get out again without getting stuck.” (LA8)*

Four participants believed they should have the right to refuse to serve abusive customers and be backed up by management. In some cases this faith was justified:

*“I recently had a customer who was very, very abusive to me, swore at me ... Anyway I just put my hands up and said “I’m not helping you because I will not be spoken to like that” and walked off. My team leader went and had a word with her and said ‘it’s not acceptable’ and showed her the Code of Conduct” (LA4)*

But others had faced difficulty:

*“We need to have the freedom to be able to make that decision [ask a customer to leave the library] and to be backed up by our team leaders. We’re sometimes not.” (LA 3)*

A variation of avoidance was curtailing an interaction with a difficult customer:

*“I just shorten the process as much as I can, don’t offer any more help than I absolutely have to and I think the customer service suffers because I will offer less to remove myself from that situation.” (LA2)*

### **Displaying Real Emotion**

Participants overwhelmingly disagreed that they should always be genuine with customers, since that would involve displaying genuinely negative emotions:

*“People can be really mean and rude and if you were genuine you would be feeling the same thing and you would say it back to them, you would say ‘I don’t give a toss what you think, f- off’, but you don’t do that” (LA1)*

*“You can’t do this job if you can’t hide what you are really thinking about the customers” (L2)*

The most commonly given reason for refraining from showing negative emotions was because it contradicted their self-image as professionals. Five also mentioned the fear of escalating a situation through showing anger. Interestingly, no-one mentioned fear of disciplinary action or incurring the disapproval of superiors, indicating a high degree of self-regulation.

Over half the participants were unconcerned about the idea of faking emotions (though some disliked the word “faking” and preferred “professional face” or “game face”). A few said that they disliked feeling inauthentic in their emotional display. Most believed that faking was preferable to showing negative emotions:

*“I just accept that in a customer service role you sometimes have to fake it” (LA7)*

Almost all participants emphasised that they are able to be genuinely positive with customers most of the time. A third of participants disliked artificially upbeat displays, believing that their natural, polite but not effusive manner should suffice:

*“I am a friendly, welcoming person and to me, everything just flows from that ... I am confident I can deliver just by being me” (LA5)*

*“It’s not being negative, but it’s not being happy-clappy-smiley either” (LA1)*

The few participants who admitted showing genuinely negative emotions said it was in exceptional circumstances with very rude, demanding or racist customers and even then none admitted overtly hostile behaviour. Expressions such as a disgusted facial expression or sarcastic tone of voice were more common than angry words. However, four participants described colleagues “absolutely losing it” and being “just incredibly rude”. The most common negative emotions seen were anger, frustration, contempt and disgust.

Several participants said that, despite their best efforts, genuine emotions sometimes “leaked out” in their tone of voice or body language:

*“I realised my hands were shaking. I was quite angry” (LA9)*

*“Because if the temptation is to yell back, I have to calm that right down. Sometimes it's not easy, you feel your face going red and your hand going like that [trembling] from anger” (L3)*

### **Emotional Regulation Strategies**

All participants sometimes needed to show different emotions from the ones they were feeling and they used a variety of strategies, including surface acting and deep acting.

Every participant used surface acting sometimes, including reminding themselves to keep calm, “slapping on a smile”, monitoring their tone of voice and changing their body language to appear more relaxed. For five participants surface acting was their favoured technique in all situations and it was favoured by the majority to cover boredom, fear and anxiety:

*“You hide your nerves through a veneer of bravado, confidence.” (ATL2)*

Participants were more likely to surface act if they believed the customer to be at fault. This applied to unfair, entitled or condescending customers, as well as those who were disruptive or refused to listen to library staff. In these cases, almost all participants “bit the bullet”, as one said, and attempted to mask their anger and contempt while making no attempt to change their underlying feelings.

Fifteen participants wanted customers to believe the surface display, but three said they occasionally deliberately overacted in the hope that the customer would notice they were faking. This was usually done by being unbelievably nice or elaborately polite and was justified as a way of retaliating against deviant customer behaviour without resorting to open hostility:

*“I'll be super polite and I don't care if they think it's disingenuous.” (L2)*

All participants also used deep acting techniques at times, though two did so very rarely, saying that they were usually too cynical or tired to summon the energy

required to change their thoughts. Deep acting techniques included empathising with the customer, used by seven participants:

*“I just say I'm lucky I'm not in his shoes ... it's his only proper social interaction that he gets most of the time, let's make his day if I can.” (LA10)*

Three used self-talk and visual imagery:

*“I talk to myself and I also have this vision of my hand going over my head, stuff just goes past you, over your head and it's gone, so it's not going to stick around and get to you” (LA1)*

For one participant, imagining an angry customer as a toddler substituted amusement for anger:

*“I had a customer who was really acting like a toddler and in my head I just wanted to laugh ...it just made it funny.” (L3)*

Four participants elevated their mood during difficult encounters by remembering pleasant things and twelve frequently reminded themselves not to take anything said to them personally.

Eight participants said they deliberately tried to strip emotion from encounters and concentrate very hard on solving the problem at hand. Reframing difficult customers' behaviour as a challenge rather than a problem was a technique often used by four participants.

About half reported moving from surface acting to deep acting, usually as they empathised more with the customer or developed strategies to manage their behaviour:

*“At first when I didn't know how to deal with it, I was feeling frustrated and bored and putting on a nice face but going “Oh my God, please go away”. But since I've learned how to deal with it I actually feel a lot more compassion for their need for interaction so I do look for a way to give them a small amount of that while not going across the personal line that I have drawn.” (LA8)*

Three participants used deep acting techniques to try to affect the customers' emotions as well as their own. One noted that sometimes “putting a bit more effort

into being pleasant and helpful” (LA3) was enough to elicit a positive response from the customer. Three others attempted to surround the customer with a positive atmosphere in order to change their mood:

*“I beam love” - that’s my saying. I beam positivity and understanding and calm” (L1)*

*“I don’t get a lot of grumpy customers because I don’t let them get grumpy with me... I just give them nice. Bombard them with my happy and I go to great lengths to help them” (LA2)*

A small minority of participants predominantly or always used deep acting strategies. Two of these used a specific methodology to manage their emotions. One used the positive thinking techniques of learned optimism<sup>1</sup> to recast thoughts and assumptions and would always choose to do this rather than surface act:

*“I can adjust my feelings by adjusting my thinking” (LA5)*

Another said she deliberately put her feelings aside during difficult interactions but examined them later and developed strategies to manage similar encounters. These participants both enjoyed emotional labour, seeing it as an opportunity for self-development and a valuable skill.

Five participants consciously donned a “work persona” or professional face, which made it easier to separate their self from their work role. For some the work persona was very similar to the real self:

*“When I’m at work and out the front I’m “on” and I’m slightly more active, more loud, more strongly-coloured” (L1)*

Another participant spent years developing an outgoing façade to mask her “very quiet and mousy, vulnerable real self”. The persona, accepted as her true self even by many colleagues, acts as a protection and no longer takes conscious thought to maintain:

*“I don’t have to work as hard to be the other person, the one they want to see ... It’s like a private little joke, I just keep faking it” (LA2)*

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<sup>1</sup> Learned Optimism was defined by Martin Seligman in his book *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life* (1990), Knopf:NY.

No connection was found between the use of various strategies and the participants' age, job role, sex or length of service.

Almost half of the participants said they found it harder to fake positive emotions than hide negative ones. One commented that faking positive required more energy and most believed that it was less important than hiding negative emotions:

*"I'm not going to say 'I'm so happy to see you' when I'm not, but I'm not going to show dislike" (L3)*

*"I'm not very good at faking everything but I am very good at not showing the negative. But I'm teaching myself to like things - maybe it's not so sucky and I can learn it and then I can be enthusiastic about it." (L3)*

Others dampened down positive displays in order to deter "clingy" or loquacious customers and three said that a "poker face" was more appropriate with angry customers as an overly positive display could be seen as disingenuous.

## **Individual Outcomes**

### **Negative effects**

Six participants reported one or more of the symptoms of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, reduced job satisfaction). Two reported feelings of depersonalisation but not the other symptoms. One reported emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction but not depersonalisation. Three participants reported all three symptoms to varying degrees.

Emotional labour caused personal difficulties for three participants, in one case being a factor in ending a long-standing relationship. Participants were either unwilling to continue performing emotional labour at home after doing so all day at work, visited the negative feelings they could not show to customers onto their families or were simply emotionally exhausted:

*Eventually it becomes very difficult, it requires even more energy to put on that positive face and to listen carefully to customers ... When I got home from work at the end of the day, when my wife and kids would talk to me, I didn't want to talk back. I just wanted to go somewhere quietly, in darkness and silence and let myself be for a while and then I'd be ready to go back out and*



*talk to them. But they didn't understand that and that led to some quite stressful times at home (LA3)*

It can be difficult to separate the demands of emotional labour from other stressors, but several participants said that the need to disguise real feelings was an added burden. Three participants had “occasionally” or “once or twice” considered resigning because of emotional labour demands.

Tiredness, sometimes amounting to “exhaustion” was the most common physical effect of emotional labour, mentioned by two-thirds of participants. Psychological outcomes including “brooding”, “stress”, feelings of inauthenticity and anger were also reported. For a majority of participants these effects were regarded as a normal and acceptable cost of doing the job, though two needed sick leave:

*“I've taken the odd mental health day because I've woken up and thought "I just can't do this today" and usually it's the customers, or maybe sometimes the staff. I'm just "it's too stressful, I can't face it today" ... to me it's as valid as if I'd fallen over and hurt my foot. It's whether you can function and you just do need a break sometimes.” (LA1)*

Seven participants said their work performance occasionally suffered due to emotional labour demands, reporting mistakes, forgetfulness, lower levels of service (“just doing the minimum”) and avoiding customers.

Four participants reported no significant or noticeable ill-effects of performing emotional labour and three others said the benefits of emotion work outweighed the drawbacks.

Those reporting negative effects were all library assistants or librarians. No ATL personally suffered ill-effects though they had noticed unhappiness and tiredness in some colleagues.

### **Positive Effects of Emotional Labour**

Eight participants noticed beneficial effects of emotional labour, enjoying the challenge of turning an unhappy customer around:

*“I know how to get them down off that "I'm going to be a grumpy old cow" sort of emotions, I've learned how to do that. Most people can't turn away from the*

being nice, so, yeah, you get a little rush. I turned someone's head around, good, they're going out of here smiling ... Yeah, it makes you feel really good.” (LA2)

Those who thought emotional labour could be enjoyable commonly believed it was a skill which made their jobs easier:

*“There is an art to managing conflicting feelings in a helpful way” (LA5)*

Positive effects were mentioned by people in all job roles.

For almost half the participants the effects of emotional labour depended upon the perceived success of their tactics. If either surface acting or deep acting achieved their goal, whether that was delighting the customer or cutting short the interaction, they reported feeling “energised”, “empowered”, “a sense of achievement” or “happy”. If the encounter ended badly, they were more likely to regard the emotional work as wasted effort and feel “discouraged” or “drained”.

### **Different effects for Surface and Deep Acting**

Three participants clearly found surface acting more harmful than deep acting, feeling uncomfortable when “faking it” and seeking to move quickly to a more genuine response. Two talked of the “cognitive load” required to feel one emotion while displaying another. However, five participants who used surface acting more frequently than deep acting felt pride and pleasure in their acting skills.

Of the participants who reported significant negative effects, all but one were predominantly surface actors, while one mixed surface and deep acting techniques. Those reporting positive effects were those who used deep acting techniques more frequently.

### **Coping Strategies for Emotional Labour**

Participants were asked what factors either helped them to perform emotional labour successfully or helped to ameliorate any negative effects. Their answers are summarised in the table below:

Factor	Number of participants (out of total of 18)

Support from colleagues	15
Job autonomy	9
Time away from customers e.g. in library workroom	6
Time alone	6
Thinking about positive aspects including pleasant customers	5
Support from supervisors	5
Talking to family and friends	3
Methodology for managing emotions	2
Support from professionals e.g. counsellors	2
Alcohol	2
Physical exercise	2
Support from customers	1

*Table 3: Coping Strategies*

Talking to colleagues was overwhelmingly the most important factor, providing what one participant called “the three Vs – venting, validation and viewpoints”. Being able to share their frustrations was important to almost all participants, and many also benefitted from their colleagues’ validation of their actions:

“You get to have their point of view. Did I do the right thing, is that normally a grumpy old bugger that one? It makes you feel a lot better. You have your vent and away you go.” (LA10)

Colleagues also shared ideas and strategies, usually on an individual basis, but three participants mentioned working as a team to manage the behaviour of particularly challenging customers.

Job autonomy was the second-most important mitigating factor, mentioned by nine participants. This included autonomy in their interpretation of the display rules, in the way they prioritised their work, and in the freedom to refuse to serve a customer or

cut an interaction short. Almost all participants believed they had autonomy over emotional display but several felt they could not order their work day, feeling coerced into spending too much time out the front and being given insufficient time and solitude to recover from emotional labour.

Though only five participants mentioned cheering themselves by thinking about the positive aspects of their jobs and the many pleasant customer encounters, it was clear from the answers to other questions that most participants enjoyed their jobs, so the effect of this factor may be higher than recorded.

Support from supervisors was also valued and participants gave examples of managers taking over in difficult situations, applying sanctions to customers and encouraging employees to take time off the floor to recover. The majority of participants found their immediate superiors helpful:

*“Just the knowledge that there is someone who understands your situation and is ready to support you makes the most difference” (LA9)*

However, a minority of participants experienced unsupportive colleagues and superiors:

*“You should be able to share without being critiqued whether you did the right thing. Sometimes people get into a blame thing” (LA11)*

One participant talked about working in teams with a culture of silence:

*“I have worked in other teams where there are people who are very sort of, yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir, type of people and it's like, this is what we're supposed to do so I can't talk to you about the issue you had with that customer because we shouldn't be having issues like that.” (LA4)*

Four participants said that superiors had told them not to talk negatively about customers, which caused them to feel resentful, guilty, cynical, and disillusioned. Superiors were also criticised for adhering to ideals of service design without concern for the wellbeing of employees:

*“I think this whole thing about you've got to be out in the library as much as possible and I don't want to see you in the workroom actually creates distrust and it also leads to people becoming more vulnerable to stress.” (LA3)*

A few participants believed that management prioritised the needs of the customers above the needs of the staff, sometimes believing a customer's word over that of a staff member. This was deprecated by all participants who mentioned it:

*"I think you have to put your priorities right and I think there's something Richard Branson said, if you want to keep your customers happy you have to keep your people happy because they will make your customers happy. So if you're putting your customers before your people, for example, if the Team Leader had come out and said well, he's wrong but you are definitely going to do this - that would have made me feel less willing." (L3)*

Four participants had worked in libraries with no "backstage area" in which to speak freely and reported that this required them to continue to act even when away from customers. This was mitigated by colleagues and superiors encouraging them to go to the staffroom or walk around the block.

### **Individual Factors Affecting Performance of Emotional Labour**

#### **Motivation for choosing library work**

Participants were asked why they chose to work in libraries and what they enjoyed most about the work and the results are summarised in the table below:

Motivation	Number of participants
Problem solving, research, improving services	4
Helping people, interacting with customers	9
Learning new things	3
Reading and books	1
Change, variety, dynamic and busy environment	1

*Table 4: Motivation for working in a public library*

Participants who were motivated by a wish to help people also reported more use of deep acting and fewer ill-effects. Those reporting symptoms of burnout and other significant ill-effects gave problem-solving, learning and books as their reason for choosing the job.

## Age

Though three participants believed that their age and life experience gave them an edge in performing emotional labour, this was not supported by the account of other participants, as two of the younger employees reported positive effects and high performance. A larger sample size would be needed to examine this further.

## Sex

No differences between men and women in the performance of emotional labour were detected. From their accounts, both sexes performed equally well and reported both negative and positive effects.

## Personality

Two participants believed that the ability to perform emotional labour was not a skill but a facet of personality and those who struggled with it were simply not suited to working with people.

Introversion and extraversion were mentioned by six participants. One, an extravert, believed that introverts were less accomplished at emotional labour, though willing to perform it. Five, four of whom identified as introverts, believed that introverts were just as capable of emotion work, but suffered more negative outcomes, especially tiredness. However, it was not clear whether it was the emotional labour component of the work which was tiring for introverts or the necessity of being around other people for extended periods of time.

Three participants who had a strong task focus were less willing to perform emotional labour and more likely to cut encounters short than those who said they were relationship-focused.

## Other Factors

### Professionalism

Twelve participants said that professionalism was a reason to perform emotional labour. For some, it was only thing preventing the display of negative emotions to customers:

*“I think because I shouldn’t show anger, I should always be looking professional. I have to maintain a professional appearance and try to hide it.”*

(LA9)

Several participants defined surface acting as an essential component of professionalism:

*“Game face is part of the professional skillset” (LA6)*

Even when, or perhaps especially when, customers were strongly disliked, every participant wished to maintain professional dignity:

*“If I'm professional and I come across pleasantly and people see me being pleasant to these people who are obnoxious, that's important.” (L1)*

Professionalism also prompted deep acting for four participants as they defined it as the need to “lead” encounters by managing emotions:

*“It's my responsibility to be organised, knowledgeable, pleasant and good-willed, not theirs. OK, it would be nice if they were, but it's not their responsibility” (LA3)*

## **Fairness**

A third of participants mentioned fairness. If customer behaviour was seen to be unjust, for example, wrongly blaming a staff member, employees were less willing to perform emotional labour. Three participants reported returning direct, though not hostile responses and three more sometimes retaliated with clearly fake “bad acting”. No participant reported using deep acting strategies in this situation and seven reported curtailing interactions or avoiding customers who regularly behaved unfairly.

## **Suggestions for the organisation**

### **Training**

Two participants had either not had any customer service training or could not remember it. Of the rest, two thought that managing people and emotions was common-sense and the organisation should simply hire people with these skills.

Almost half the participants believed that the customer service training, while useful, did not meet all needs:

*“I think it is a bit too shallow really, it's telling you what you should be doing, but you're either going to be able to do it or you're not depending on what skills you've already got” (LA8)*

Seven participants had found a course on dealing with difficult customer situations very useful and recommended that it be made compulsory, and three wanted training in handling highly aggressive people.

Six participants suggested training in emotional intelligence and personality traits. Those participants who already used specific techniques to manage their emotions were adamant that it is a skill which can be learned:

*“Some people are naturally more optimistic in their take on things but those who aren’t, they’re easy skills to learn and they are really powerful” (LA5)*

### **Other suggestions**

Seven participants simply wanted greater recognition of the effort involved in managing emotions during customer service, as they believed it was currently largely ignored by the organisation:

*“It’s just expected. We control our emotions and put on a front for the customers and it’s part of the job but it is also hard work which is not recognised” (L2)*

Almost half the participants said that senior management did not understand the pressures they faced when interacting with customers:

*“If the further-ups actually spent time working on the library floor, even for a few days, they would get a sense of what it’s like for us. They say “I did the same job as you 20 years ago” and I’m like, yeah, but 20 years ago and now, it’s completely different. Because I do think there is a disconnect between the things that they make decisions about and how we should function and what it is actually like to be working here. I just think that’s the main problem. They need to get the rudeness and the way people can behave. Stick them in one of the rowdiest libraries and see how they go and then they would perhaps think about the impact on the mental health of the staff. Because it is a thing and that’s why I wanted to do this [be interviewed], it is a thing which does impact on people.” (LA1)*

Five participants said that their immediate superiors (Team Leaders) did not spend enough time on the library floor:



*“I personally feel that TLs should actually spend regular time in the library even if it's just one or two hours a week, different days of the week, some evenings.... At the moment in some libraries I think it may be one or two hours a month or every two or three months and that's not enough. You need to see constantly what's happening out in the library, what sort of behaviour we are facing on a daily basis” (LA3)*

Four participants thought there was an unreasonable emphasis from management on displaying “genuine warmth” to customers:

*“I think sometimes you can look too closely at it in the sense of "is this genuine, is this real", when it should just be about creating a positive environment for people and working with that.” (LA6)*

Half the participants wanted the organisational culture to be more open:

*“I know at one point we got told that we shouldn't talk about the customers - and I thought, "God, how can you survive and not do that?" and I think that was probably people who don't deal with customers very often who say that sort of thing.” (LA1)*

Greater job autonomy and less pressure to be constantly with customers were sought by a third of participants.

Five had recommendations for recruitment, suggesting finding people with good emotion management skills. Others said it was important that new recruits be well-prepared for what they would face:

*I think it is very important for a lot of people to learn how to deal with difficult customers ... Some of the new people come in and they've worked in places like Video Ezy or Liquorland - you might have some interactions that are quite difficult but it's a different setting. Here you expect it to be all nice and booky and nice people and then you get someone yelling at you and it's like 'Aaarggh' (L3)*

## Discussion

Emotional labour in libraries has been researched in other countries (Julien & Genuis, 2009; Matteson et al., 2015; Peng, 2015; Shuler & Morgan, 2013) but it has

not been studied in New Zealand. The results reported here show that emotional labour is certainly performed by employees of a New Zealand public library. Participants used various strategies and reported both positive and negative outcomes.

### **Organisationally Desired Behaviour – Display Rules**

Participants were shown the organisation's Customer Service Standards (see Appendix 1), which function as display rules and which are fairly explicit. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that the requirement for positive displays embodied in these Standards reflected their own values. Some believed the rules were too explicit, but their resentment at being told to "smile", for example, was mitigated by the lack of enforcement of the display rules and the freedom to use their own judgement in interpreting the Standards. Employee resistance to enforced display rules and scripted encounters is reflected in other studies (Cherry, 2008; Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Grandey, Rupp & Brice, 2015; Morris & Feldman, 1996)

The results support the findings of other authors that employees' ability to adhere to display rules is affected by customer behaviour (Browning, 2008; Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Rupp et al., 2008; Sliter et al., 2010). All participants reported experiencing "emotion-rule dissonance" at times (Holman, Martinez-Iñigo & Totterdell, 2008), when they felt one emotion but were required to display another. Some participants occasionally dealt with this by avoiding customers or by disregarding the display rules and showing negative emotions to customers, but by far the most commonly reported reaction was to perform emotional labour and either change the emotion felt (deep acting) or the emotion displayed (surface acting).

### **Antecedents of emotional labour**

Antecedents identified included:

- customer behaviour
- colleague behaviour
- personal factors
- organisational factors

That colleague behaviour also required participants to perform emotional labour has been noted in other studies (Hochschild, 2003; Matteson, Humphrey, Ashforth &

Diefendorff, 2015; Sharon & Mease, 2015). However, it is not the focus of this research.

### **The Effect of Customer Behaviour on Emotional Labour**

Many studies have found customer behaviour to be the major antecedent of emotional labour (Dorman & Zapf, 2004; Grandey et al, 2004; Rupp & Spencer, 2006; Sliter, 2010). The types of difficult behaviour identified also align closely with those noted in other studies (Bee, 2001; Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Osa, 2002; Sliter, 2010). Employees are also more likely to encounter incivility or aggression from customers than colleagues (Grandey, Kern, & Frone, 2007) and have less power than customers, since the organisation cannot function without customers (Sliter et al., 2010).

Rupp et al (2008) found that customer injustice angered employees and led to increased levels of surface acting. The results from the current research confirm this and also show employees providing “the bare minimum” levels of service to such customers. Grandey, Dickter and Sin (2004) found that customer aggression caused surface acting if the employee felt threatened, which was seen in participants’ choice of surface acting to cover fear and anxiety. Browning’s study of the hospitality industry in New Zealand (2008) discovered that unfair customer behaviour frequently provoked deviant employee behaviour, which was not borne out in this study. Few participants admitted outright deviant behaviour such as showing anger to customers and it may be that professionalism is a moderating factor here.

Most of the library literature about difficult patrons does not acknowledge the employee’s emotional response and some authors reject the terms “difficult customers” or “problem patrons”, instead placing the blame on employees’ inability to manage customers (Chelton, 2002; Jackson, 2002). The attitude touted in these studies that “the customer is always right” was emphatically rejected by participants in the current research. Hochschild (2003, p. 111-112) calls the strategy of renaming “obnoxious” customers as “mishandled” customers an Orwellian technique to remove blame from the customer and place it on the employee, who can have no legitimate right to be angry with a “mishandled” customer. This form of linguistic deceit was encountered by two participants who had been told not to use the term “difficult customers”. A few more had been told not to talk about customers in a negative way.

This made the participants less trusting of their superiors and less willing to perform emotion work. In addition, they reported that emotional labour was more stressful when they lacked supervisor support, findings borne out by other studies (Peng, 2015; Shuler & Morgan, 2013; Wessel & Steiner, 2015).

Organisational factors including technology, increased workloads and changing user expectations were discussed by Shuler and Morgan (2013) in their study of academic libraries and Ogbonna and Harris' 2004 exploration of emotional labour performed by university lecturers. Over half the participants in the current research also mentioned factors such as new service delivery models, an increasing reliance on technology, financial constraints and heavier workloads as antecedents of emotional labour. It is possible that public libraries face even greater challenges than academic libraries due to the particularly broad and diverse nature of their patron base.

### **Professionalism as a Reason to Perform Emotional Labour**

The organisation's display rules were accepted by most participants because they reflected their sense of professional values. A majority regarded the need to manage emotions as a necessary part of professionalism and this view was held by both qualified and unqualified employees. That emotional labour, for professionals, is less a job requirement than a part of professional socialisation has been argued by other authors (Arbuckle, 2008; Hochschild, 1983; Kadowaki, 2015; Ogbonna & Harris, 2004; Shuler & Morgan, 2013).

### **Emotional Labour Strategies**

#### **Avoidance**

Some participants avoided customers if they felt they could not refrain from showing negative emotions such as anger or boredom, while others curtailed encounters. This is perhaps more accurately described as a refusal to perform emotional labour than a strategy and is not well covered in the literature, though Shuler (2013) noted it in academic librarians and Sliter (2010) regards it as a perfectly justifiable strategy in some cases, for example, providing minimal service to a demanding customer during a busy time to enable more attentive service to other customers. This appears to be the rationale adopted by most of the participants in the current research.

## Displaying Genuine Emotions

The satisfaction of being able to display genuine positive emotions in rewarding customer encounters described by participants, is not considered emotional labour under some definitions (Hochschild, 1983; Grandey, 2000), since there is no need to act. However, some authors include it and also find positive outcomes, including an affirmed sense of identity and pleasure in dealing with customers (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Humphrey et al., 2015; Shuler & Morgan, 2013).

Participants made strenuous efforts to avoid showing genuine negative emotions, or “emotional deviance” as it is termed by Zapf (2002, p. 248) even in the face of deviant customer behaviour. They were deterred primarily because they wanted to maintain their self-image as professionals, which is consistent with the findings of Pugh et al., (2011) who found that people will accept a state of emotional dissonance rather than violate their self-image.

## Surface and Deep Acting

For the participants in this study, surface acting was a common response to fear, possibly because violent situations do not allow much time to formulate a deep acting strategy. Grandey, Dickter & Sin (2004) found that employees who felt threatened used surface acting to mask negative feelings because they lacked the attentional resources required by deep acting. Surface acting was also used almost exclusively by participants when dealing with unfair, entitled or condescending customers, in other words, those rated most difficult by a majority of participants. Participants said they cared less about the opinions of these customers and were less motivated to be convincing in their display, a result most reliably provided by deep acting (Medler-Liraz & Seger-Guttmann, 2015). The quicker surface acting “slapping on a smile” technique sufficed for these customers.

Surface acting was also predominantly used by participants who no longer had the energy to bother with deep acting and was associated with more serious negative effects than deep acting. However, some participants, especially those who were unconcerned about faking emotions, reported positive effects from surface acting, primarily a sense of pride in their acting skill and the high level of service provided. Shuler and Morgan (2013) found that academic librarians predominantly used surface acting with customers, which they attributed to a strong customer service

value requiring the expression of positive emotions under all conditions, and Pugh et al., (2011) noticed that people who believed they were good surface actors often enjoyed it, a finding confirmed in this research.

Those who preferred deep acting strategies were the participants who particularly disliked emotional dissonance and the display of inauthentic emotions and those who regarded emotion work as an opportunity for self-improvement. Since deep acting seeks to change emotions, it restores authenticity of display (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002).

Deep acting techniques used were of two main kinds: directing attention towards pleasant things to distract them or trigger the required emotion (known as attentional deployment); and reappraising the situation, for example, by imagining that an impatient customer has a real emergency (known as cognitive change) (Grandey, 2000). A strategy described by Shuler and Morgan (2013, p. 127) as “helping really hard” – ignoring their emotional state to concentrate totally on solving the customer’s problem and so, ironically, using rationality to accomplish emotional labour, was also reported. Shuler and Morgan suggested that this may be a favourite strategy for librarians because they enjoy helping people as well as solving problems, a finding supported by the motivation for working in libraries given by participants in this research.

### **Moderating Factors on the Performance of Emotional Labour**

The population sample of this research was not large enough to retrieve generalisable results about moderating factors, but no difference in the performance or outcomes of emotional labour was found between men and women, which contradicts other authors who found that women perform more emotional labour and that jobs which are high in emotional labour and low in pay are predominantly filled by women (Hochschild, 1983; Guy, Newman & Mastracci, 2008; Meler, Mastracchi & Wilson, 2006). Perhaps librarianship, as one of the few female-dominated professions, makes it a special case. Certainly, none of the studies of emotional labour in librarianship consulted mention gender differences.

A minority of participants believed their age made them more adept at emotional labour, which accords with the findings of Sliter et al (2003) that older employees tended to manage their emotions better, possibly because lifelong learning led them

to choose more effective, deep acting strategies. However, since the two participants in this study who recorded most use of the more effective deep acting strategy were also among the youngest, these findings should be regarded with caution. A larger sample size would be needed to explore this facet.

A third of participants believed that introversion and extraversion affected the performance of emotional labour. Judge, Woolf and Hurst (2009) found that extraverts are better able to handle the emotional demands of service jobs, but do not establish whether this is because of emotional labour or simply because introverts find working with people more tiring than extraverts. Chi, Grandey, Diamond, and Krimmel (2011) ascertained that surface acting has more negative effects for introverts, whereas deep acting affects both introverts and extraverts equally. This was borne out by the experiences of introverts in the current research.

Length of service did not seem to affect emotional labour strategies or outcomes. While those who reported symptoms of burnout were all relatively long-serving employees, there were also participants with similar length of job tenure who did not experience ill-effects.

### **Effects of Emotional Labour on Individuals**

The results of the current research seem to confirm that surface acting is associated with negative effects for some individuals, which accords with the results from a meta-analytic study that, while the benefits of deep acting may not be conclusively proven, the negative effects of surface acting are well-attested by many authors (Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). Given that deep acting is also associated with organisational benefits such as improved customer service (Medler-Liraz & Seger-Guttman, 2015) it would seem to be the preferred strategy.

A number of negative outcomes were associated with emotional labour including burnout, relationship troubles, stress, impaired performance, job dissatisfaction and lowered engagement with work. All of these have been reported in other studies (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983, Hülshager & Schewe, 2011; Matteson, Chittock & Mease, 2015; Matteson & Miller, 2012; Peng, 2014; Shuler & Morgan, 2013). It was not possible, given the design of the current research, to separate emotional labour from other causal factors for the tiredness reported, but some participants certainly ascribed it, at least in part, to emotional labour.

Positive effects of emotional labour noted included personal accomplishment, especially pleasure in the skill of emotional management and a heightened sense of achievement and empowerment. These effects are also well-documented in other studies (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Guy et al., 2008; Humphrey et al., 2015, Matteson & Miller, 2013).

Overall, the findings are similar to those of Matteson, Chittock and Mease (2015) who found that American librarians endured “moderate amounts” of stress, cynicism and emotional exhaustion but “high amounts” of professional efficacy (p. 101), suggesting that, although emotional labour has negative consequences, library employees are determined to remain professional and maintain high levels of performance. It is encouraging that some positive outcomes were also reported.

### **Support for Theoretical Frameworks**

Various theoretical frameworks have been applied to explain the effects of emotional labour and this research found support for several of them.

While the findings did not support Hochschild’s theory that workers who are required to fake emotions will experience alienation from their true feelings, support was found for Pugh et al.’s later adaptation of Hochschild’s theory (2011), which theorised that a dissonant emotional state only causes distress if it violates the employee’s self-concept. Participants who saw themselves as friendly, helpful, customer service professionals easily rationalised the need to fake emotions when required, to maintain that self-image and reported few ill-effects from doing so.

Hobfoyl’s conservation of resources theory (1989) suggests that employees will pursue strategies which maintain a balance between expending and renewing the resources they value. This was noticeable in this study as some participants tried to balance time spent with customers (expending resources of attention and energy) with time backstage or alone (resource renewal). Matteson and Miller (2012) applied Hobfoyl’s theory to librarians and suggested that those who spend most time with customers would adopt strategies such as deep acting which minimise negative outcomes, but this result was not replicated in the current study. Participants did notice impaired job performance, which may have been caused by cognitive resources being diverted to emotional labour, leaving fewer available for other tasks, a result noted by Brotheridge and Lee (2002) and Dormann and Zapf (2004).



Dieffendorff and Gosserand (2003) applied a form of control theory to emotional labour and discovered that employees balance outward controls (such as display rules and organisational goals) against inner controls (personal goals). If the employee's personal goals do not align with those of the organisation, dissonance results which is dissipated by performing emotional labour. Strategies and outcomes depend partly on the employee's faith in their ability to regulate their emotions and partly on the importance to them of displaying the required emotions. Those who believe they are skilled at manipulating their emotional displays and whose personal goals coincide with the required display, reported more positive outcomes. In the current study, those participants who were most committed to displaying positive behaviour at all times tended to employ deep acting strategies and report fewer ill-effects. Participants whose goals were not completely aligned with the requirement for positive display, for example, by being more interested in winning an encounter with a rude customer than displaying positive emotions, tended to report negative effects, even though they had confidence in their acting abilities.

Action theory, as defined by Frese and Zapf (1994) and applied to emotional labour by Zapf (2002), provides possibly the most complete explanation of the findings of the current study. It theorises that all work activity is a series of goals and sub-goals and employees are likely to enjoy meeting challenges which align with their goals. Work which is high in emotional demands may produce either feelings of personal and professional satisfaction or of exhaustion, depersonalisation and dissatisfaction, depending on whether it is seen as an integral part of the job or a barrier to goal achievement. In the current research, some participants' main motivation for choosing library work was "helping people", while other wished to "solve problems" "learn new things" or "loved books and reading". The first group were more willing to perform emotional labour and suffered fewer negative outcomes, possibly because their "helping" orientation predisposed them to see emotional work such as talking to a lonely customer or reassuring an anxious computer user as important and valuable parts of the job. In contrast, those motivated by problem solving and learning were more likely to report curtailing interactions with loquacious customers and becoming frustrated with customers who refused to help themselves, suggesting that, for these employees, emotion work was a barrier to their real goal of solving problems and answering queries.

## Coping Strategies

Many of the coping strategies mentioned by participants echo those in other studies:

- Support from colleagues which allows employees to vent, obtain validation of their feelings and share strategies (Shuler, 2013, Silke McCance et al., 2013). This was the most commonly mentioned mitigating factor for half the participants, in contrast to the literature which finds job autonomy to be the salient factor. It may be that participants thought of what gave them immediate relief rather than considering the workplace as a whole.
- Supervisor support – managing workloads, recognising difficulties, modelling effective strategies (Matteson & Miller, 2014; Peng, 2014)
- Respite from customers and time alone (Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Grandey, 2000; Matteson & Miller, 2012; Varca, 2009)
- Organisational culture which provides time off the library floor, a backstage area where employees can talk freely and support for open expression of authentic emotion (Matteson & Miller, 2014; Shuler, 2013; Sliter, 2010)
- Job autonomy: freedom of emotional display, authority to resolve difficulties with customers without involving management and freedom to arrange their workday (Browning, 2008; Grandey et al., 2005; Matteson & Miller, 2012)

## Suggestions for management

### Training

Almost all participants reported that further training would better equip them to perform emotional labour. Two had trained themselves in emotional management and reported increased self-efficacy and job satisfaction, in line with a number of studies from the library literature alone (Bee, 2001; Julien & Genuis, 2009; Matteson & Miller, 2014; Peng, 2015) as well as research from the wider literature (Bondarenko, 2009; Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Grandey et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2012; Pugh & Groth, 2011; Rupp et al., 2008).

Participants sought management recognition of the effort and skill involved in managing emotions. They believed emotional labour was largely ignored or simply expected and that management did not understand their concerns. In this, it seems little has changed since Hochschild's pioneering work:

“emotional labor is a dimension of work that is seldom recognised, rarely honored and almost never taken into account by employers as a source of on-the-job-stress” (2003, p. 153).

Shuler and Morgan’s 2013 study of American librarians also recommended greater recognition, both informally and in performance reviews.

Changes to the organisation culture to encourage greater openness and job autonomy were also sought, echoing the findings of Matteson and Miller (2012) and Matteson, Chittock and Mease (2015). Matteson and Miller (2014) recommend formulating responses at various levels of the organisation: managing incidents, providing training, setting up support networks, managing staffing to allow time for recovery and building an organisational culture which allows sharing of authentic emotions. These are sensible and practical recommendations.

Participants thought that recruiting people with a customer orientation who are able to cope with high levels of emotional demand was important, and many studies concur (Gabriel, Daniels, Diefendorff & Greguras, 2015; Judge, Woolf & Hurst, 2009; Matteson & Miller, 2014; Sliter, 2010; Varca, 2009). The preparation of new recruits for the reality of library work is a concern shared by Shuler (2013, p. 130), who noted that courses in Library and Information Studies seldom, if ever, include information on the emotional demands of librarianship.

## **Suggestions for Further Research**

This exploratory study is the first to look at emotional labour in New Zealand librarianship and as yet, there have been few studies from other countries either.

Research is needed in almost every area, including (but not limited to):

- Other theoretical constructs which may better suit libraries
- Quantitative studies to ascertain the extent of the problem
- Whether employees in different types of libraries have a different experience
- The customer experience of emotional labour
- How the experience of librarians compares to other professional occupations
- The experience of other libraries employees (those who are not front-facing)
- Other antecedent conditions, for example, colleague behaviour

- The role of personality, gender and other moderating factors
- Effective recruitment and training strategies to manage emotional labour

## Conclusion

This research has confirmed that employees in a New Zealand public library perform emotional labour during customer interactions as they need to disguise, suppress and amplify emotions to consistently present the positive behaviours expected both by the organisation and by their professional values. Employees used both surface acting and deep acting techniques and experienced positive outcomes for both strategies but fewer negative outcomes from deep acting. A minority of participants reported symptoms of burnout.

Given this finding, training employees in effective emotional management skills would be worthwhile. While respondents identified coping strategies, especially collegial support, such strategies usually only apply to the aftermath of emotional labour and do not help employees to cope while they are interacting with customers (Van Dijk & Kirk-Brown, 2004). Training is therefore likely to lead to better customer service as well as improving individual outcomes.

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## Appendix 1: List of Terms

**Display Rules:** The expected standards for emotional expression. They may be explicitly stated or an informal set of agreed norms (Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, et al., 2005).

**Emotional Dissonance:** The conflict between emotions experienced and those required to be displayed (Pugh, Groth & Hennig-Thurau, 2011)

**Emotional Labour:** The effort, planning and control needed to express organisationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions (Morris & Feldman, 1996)

**Deep Acting:** Reappraising situations and changing thoughts to genuinely feel the required emotions (Hochschild, 1983)

**Surface Acting:** Monitoring one's outward behaviour to simulate a required emotion (Hochschild, 1983)

**Burnout:** A psychological syndrome comprising:

- Emotional exhaustion
- Depersonalisation manifesting as cynicism toward customers
- A reduced sense of personal accomplishment or job satisfaction (Dormann & Zapf, 2004)

**Job Satisfaction:** The sense of pride and fulfilment felt by people who enjoy their work and do it well (Law, 2009).

**Employee Engagement:** The extent to which employees commit to their organisation. Sometimes used to predict how hard they will work and how long they will stay (Law, 2009).

**Job Autonomy:** The degree of discretion an employee has as to how the job will be done (Law, 2009).

## Appendix 2: Interview Questions

Most of these questions were asked in most interviews, though at times participants wished to explore other areas.

Introduction: description of study, definition of emotional labour, outline of interview.

1. How long have you worked for the libraries (this or any)
2. Why did you choose to work in libraries? What is your favourite part of the job? Do you enjoy your job?
3. On average, how much time do you spend with customers each day?
4. DISPLAY RULES: Show the Customer Service Standards
  - a. Do you agree with the Service Standards? (Are they a good description of how you wish to appear to customers?)
  - b. Do you agree that the organisation expects you to show positive emotions to customers as part of your job?
5. Are there any barriers to meeting these service standards?
6. What do you find is the hardest thing when dealing with customers?
  - a. Have you ever had a "difficult" customer? What made them difficult?
  - b. Do you think there are some emotions you should not show to customers? Or some that you think you are supposed to show?
7. Do you sometimes find it is hard to keep your "professional face" on?
  - a. Do you monitor your behaviour when dealing with customers? If so, how and why?
8. How do you keep your professional demeanour?
  - a. Do you concentrate on the things customers can see - tone of voice, facial expression, etc.?
  - b. Do you try to change how you feel or think?
9. When you have to hide or change or amplify your emotions, how does this make you feel?
10. Do you ever find it's an effort to manage your emotions? Does it have an impact on how you feel about your job?
  - a. Do you find yourself thinking about customer interactions in your time off?
  - b. Do you notice any other effects (good or bad) of dealing with customers?

## Appendix 3: Customer Service Standards

*In addition to the core Council Service Standards, Christchurch City Libraries will...*

### GREET

(customers expect: friendly acknowledgment ["it's my place too"]; manners; respect; empathy; clean, tidy presentation [of staff, facilities, resources])

- Acknowledge all customers' presence
- All wear name tags
- "Smile"
- Be approachable and open-minded
- Be proactive in our greeting and acknowledgement of customers (e.g. look up and out)
- Say who we are on the phone and use a standard salutation
- Use standard name and role identifiers when sending emails

### LISTEN AND DISCUSS

(customers expect: listening, interest, empathy, responsiveness, and knowledge and competence)

- Ask open ended questions
- Listen with interest and empathy
- Maintain appropriate eye contact
- Discuss library services, resources and facilities knowledgeably
- Display enthusiasm for library services, resources and facilities
- Discuss difficult matters respectfully and sensitively
- Offer alternatives
- Provide self-service options

### DELIVER

(customers expect: competence, efficiency, reliability, empathy, assurance that what they are doing is correct, and assurance that what we are doing is correct)

- Understand the Christchurch City Libraries' policies
- Know where and how to access the current version of policies
- Use informed judgement to apply policies consistently and with due regard to their intent
- Connect customers with the information, services or resources they need or want
- Provide clear explanations and recommendations
- Inform customers of any action they need to take
- Take responsibility and be prepared to admit errors
- In the event of being unable to satisfy needs, ensure customer understanding of why we cannot and provide alternatives or feedback options that will meet (current or future) needs

### CHECK AND FAREWELL

(customers expect: reassurance of doing the right thing; friendly, respectful 'departure'; to feel satisfied or good about the whole Christchurch City Libraries experience)

- Check with customers that we have met their needs and wants, or they are satisfied we have done everything possible
- Discuss other relevant services and resources offered by the Libraries and ask if there is anything further we can do to assist
- Pave the way for the next customer interaction (e.g. further use of [different] services, resources, asking for assistance if anything is unclear)
- Smile and thank customers (e.g. for their custom, for following policies and procedures, their understanding in difficult situations)
- Remain engaged with customers until the interaction is totally completed (e.g. customer walks away or hangs up from the telephone)

### **Measures we will use to check service delivery:**

Desired behaviours observed

100% of staff wear name tags

Positive feedback from 'mystery customers'

Positive customer survey feedback

Increase in positive feedback (HWTS)

Reduction in complaints (including HWTS)

Reduction in 're-work' (we 'get it right first time')

Increase in demand

Increase in usage (including self-service usage)

Increase in average number of services used by customers

Increase in returning customers

Increases in staff engagement

Increase in self-confidence in staff

Increase in PR&D achievements