When Caring Is Not Enough: Emotional Labor and Youth Shelter Workers

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Organizations often dictate how their employees should behave through explicit rules and structures. In addition, sociologists and organizational theorists suggest that organizations invest energy, time, and money into creating a uniform mentality through selective hiring, formal meetings, and informal gatherings. Based on in-depth interviews with seven frontline workers at a Canadian youth shelter, this article explores the concept of emotional labor by workers who struggle with their organization's culture and its demands on them. I suggest that the negative consequences of the demand for emotional labor can be mitigated when workers both identify positively with their work and have a strong sense of solidarity with their coworkers.

The expression of emotions was once situated uniquely in the private realm but has now become a marketplace commodity subject "to the rules of mass production." [1] To illustrate, Anat Rafaeli and Robert Sutton provide us with an excerpt from the handbook of a supermarket checkout clerk: "You are the company's most effective representative. Your customers judge the entire company by your actions. A cheerful 'Good Morning' and 'Good Evening' followed by a courteous, attentive treatment, and a sincere 'Thank you, please come again,' will send them away with a friendly feeling and a desire to return. A friendly smile is a must." [2] In this sense, not only has one's behavior come under the rubric of organizational control, but also one's way of expression and feeling.

Each organization has a unique cultural form, one which is manifested in its stories, rituals, myths, and symbols. These cultural forms serve to encourage strong collective membership within an organization. For example, some organizations cultivate a culture of competition, while oth-

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ers foster a culture of efficiency, integrity, or risk taking. Through such gatherings as weekend retreats, intense training sessions, or after-work socials, workers come to understand their organization's "spirit." An organization's culture comes to influence how its workers behave and think. Therefore, this article explores culture vis-à-vis "emotional labor" because culture is, in essence, a form of social control, one which seeks to control even the emotions of its inhabitants.

Emotional labor refers to the effort, planning, and control required to express an organization's desired emotions.[3] Arlie Hochschild's seminal work illustrates this concept through an analysis of the consequences of flight attendants putting on an image scripted by the particular airline. As the participants in Hochschild's study explain, one begins to play roles, fake a smile or a laugh, and try to maintain the "happy" appearance that is expected of them by the organization. In other words, workers manage a publicly displayed emotion that is not necessarily privately felt, the consequence of which is that their feelings and emotions become more externalized and less authentic. The inner self becomes affected by this form of labor and "owned" by someone else.[4] As Hochschild notes: "But when the product—the thing to be engineered, mass produced, and subjected to speed up and slowdown—is a smile, a mood, a feeling, or a relationship, it comes to belong more to the organization and less to the self."[5]

Eli Teram has explored emotional labor issues with respect to client processing in child welfare agencies by focusing on how professionals "manage their hearts" when they participate in making decisions that they view as being inappropriate.[6] Teram describes two common strategies used by workers to deal with this particular situation: either they view themselves as failures or they view themselves as experienced workers who know about human behavior and thus accept a different decision as a rational compromise. As such, Teram identifies the emotional difficulty experienced by workers when their clients are inappropriately placed.

However, there has been little discussion surrounding issues of emotional labor with respect to day-to-day encounters between workers and clients within a social work setting. In their review of the emotional labor literature, Andrew Morris and Daniel Feldman note the dearth of research on organizations' attempts to control and direct how employees display emotions to customers. This article will highlight how one organization attempts to direct employees' emotions. Moreover, it explores the ways in which workers fight back in order to maintain their genuine emotions. In other words, while workers must perform emotional labor, they have found ways to resist the organization's messages or culture and thereby lessen the negative effects of emotional labor. Within this study, two factors were found to minimize the negative consequences of emotional labor: group support and workers' beliefs that their work is "honest" and "good enough." This article explores the day-to-day experi-

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ences of workers at a Canadian youth shelter when the workers do not accept the agency's emotional ethos.[7]

Method

This study is based on fieldwork and interviews conducted with seven frontline workers at the Open Door, an emergency shelter for street youth in the downtown core of a large Canadian city.[8] Street youth are defined as adolescents who have no permanent place to call home other than the house of a friend, a park, or a shelter. I am an ex-supervisor of this particular shelter, which allowed me easy access to the site. Following the naturalistic (grounded theory) paradigm, I chose cases for this analysis based on theoretical or purposive sampling (in order to gain an understanding about a certain phenomenon) rather than to facilitate generalization.[9] I have chosen seven workers from 12 full-time employees and four part-time workers who represent different positions in the agency (team leaders, day workers, part-time night workers), diverse work histories (new workers and pioneers), and most important, different experiences within the agency.[10] The small sample allows for exploratory analysis (and the discovery of "thick description") and generalizability rests on the individual reader's personal assessment.[11]

I previously worked with the majority of participants in my research, which provided me with an insider's view of the workings of the agency and a partial history of its actors. Moreover, because I was an accepted member of the agency, I was able to conduct thorough data collection. Personal closeness with participants and settings can at times lead researchers to ignore or gloss over important details. In order to minimize this problem, steps in the research process (such as designing interview questions and conducting data analysis) involved either colleague or participant feedback or both. The data were collected during the month of March 1997 and included open-ended interviews.[12] Each interview lasted approximately 2 hours and accrued in-depth material regarding participants' perceptions of their workplace, other workers, street youth, and their own thoughts around day-to-day work issues. Notes and tapes were then transcribed, examined, selectively coded, categorized, and subcategorized. Loose themes or stories were pulled out from the data, checked with several participants, and clarified into the present articles's subcategories. I presented my findings and conceptual analysis to the participants in order to temper my own biases and allow for a credible and transferable inquiry.[13] Once the data were organized, I tested pattern matching, explanation building, and rival hypotheses. While the loose concept of emotional labor guided data collection within the field, this article's conceptual framework emerged from the data and was checked (and rechecked) with all participants. Initially, my focus leaned toward the concept of "burnout" as a symptom of emotional labor, yet I

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discovered, through the data, that workers mitigated the toll their emotional work was taking by creating a strong sense of solidarity with other workers and by reassuring themselves that their work was important and meaningful.

Setting

The Open Door began in 1988 as a mobile van that serviced street youth in the city's downtown core. The agency was founded by a charismatic priest (Father Paul) whose name has become synonymous with the organization.[14] By 1997, the Open Door included a downtown rooming house, which serviced over 200 youth per day through their residential program (20 beds), drop-in hours (3-hour blocks during the day and night), and counseling periods (specific hours during the day and night). Overall, the shelter has maintained a strong presence in the community, has a high profile in the media, and has progressively developed a status of being the most popular place for street youth. The Open Door has three main goals—to provide a safe environment for marginalized youth to feel welcome and obtain immediate services such as food, shower, bed, and clothes; to give support for those who are ready to "move on" to an independent lifestyle (such as to school, an apartment, or a job); and to advocate on behalf of street youth within the political and legal realms.

In terms of organizational theory, the Open Door is an open system that functions on flexible, innovative, nonbureaucratic and nonhierarchical structures. This organic style of management involves few rules and formal procedures and emphasizes overlapping role assignments in order to account for a turbulent environment. As one worker notes: "I like this place [the Open Door] 'cause there's very little routine, you know, like we don't have too many rules and things . . . nothing is written in stone . . . anyone can bring in new ideas." The formal layout of the system includes Father Paul as president and figurehead as well as an executive director who manages fundraising, media coverage, and the administrative office. Within the shelter, there is a coordinator who oversees the administrative and clinical aspects of the house as well as the supervision of all shelter workers. Therefore, the coordinator is the one with whom workers most interact. Frontline workers are divided into three teams—two night and one day—with each team consisting of three to four workers and one supervisor. The Open Door employs approximately 12 full-time and four part-time workers. Due to the small size of the organization, decisions concerning day-to-day operations tend to be made through consultative processes: "Say a kid is to be barred or something, we decide it as a team . . . call a meeting to talk it out and come to a group decision."

Within the agency, there are very few house rules, except for those prohibiting drug or alcohol use, violence, and weapons. In addition,

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there is the general rule of "respect for all." The Open Door is presently the only agency of the four downtown youth shelters that reports an increase per day of residents and street youth contacts. During my 3 years of working at the Open Door, many youth noted their approval of the shelter's operation. To these youth, the Open Door "understands their situation," "relates to them on their level," and shows "genuine love and care." This positive image has emerged from dedicated frontline workers, a new and dedicated coordinator, and alternative agency policies.

On entering the shelter during one of its daily drop-ins, it is hard not to notice the strong connection between workers and youth. Many workers stay after hours to finish work, are involved in extra activities that take up their nonwork hours, and express a deep affection for the organization and the kids. As one worker explains, "I feel a lot of joy at the Open Door, especially in the exchanges I have with other workers and especially the kids."

The new coordinator, who was hired approximately 3 years ago, has introduced a high level of passion and commitment. He displays obvious affection for the youth and has initiated many new youth-focused projects of social action and advocacy. For example, he recently started a protest (including many of the youth) to oppose the closing of a public park that was a "hang out" for street youth. As one worker notes, "the coordinator is *very very very* pro-kid." While the Open Door has always espoused an advocacy-based agenda, the coordinator can be viewed as an explicit agent of this philosophy. As will be discussed, this "pro-kid" advocacy has caused intense problems within the organization.

In contrast to many homeless shelters, the Open Door has very flexible policies as the agency attempts to provide services without recourse to bureaucratic authority.[15] As one worker describes: "I like . . . about this place [the Open Door] that there is very little routine, things aren't stuck in the mud, they can move, things can change. . . . If a kid has some new ideas for the place . . . it happens that we will consider them." Workers are hired more for who they are and what they believe (especially concerning issues of homelessness and poverty) than for their education and experience. Actually, candidates who possess formal education (i.e., social work, psychology degrees) and "system" experience (child welfare, youth protection) are generally frowned on by the coordinator. According to the coordinator (and upper management in general), individuals with professional training and experience are frequently seen as "too bureaucratic," "too hard-nosed," and lacking genuine warmth and caring for street youth. Consequently, the agency tends to hire individuals who display natural compassion for youth and a flexible and relaxed character.

Decisions concerning day-to-day operations are made in weekly group meetings (lasting approximately 3 hours), where everyone (including the youth) has a voice. Rules, structures, and policies are flexible and

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can be questioned. Each team makes its own "calls" regarding specific day-to-day situations. House policies are seen as benefiting the youth more than the workers. For example, the Open Door allows pets in the shelter, which greatly aids the surprisingly large number of street youth who have animals. However, for workers, this creates a more hectic and sometimes dangerous environment. The debate surrounding the "good" of the kids versus the "good" of the worker will be expanded below.

Adopting Erving Goffman's notions of "front region" (a formal, sacred image) and "back region" (an informal, profane image), the Open Door can be categorized as a "back region" organization that functions both as an alternative space and as a substitute family accepting of street culture.[16] Instead of "rescuing" kids from the street, the Open Door acknowledges the positive elements of street life and has in many ways adopted its culture. In fact, other agencies view the Open Door as a "squat," that is, as an agency that provides a caring, open, and flexible setting in which street kids can take a break from street life. As Father Paul notes, "we are here to give kids our ears and shoulders, yet most importantly, to give them our hearts."

Giving of One's Heart

Within human service organizations, an integral part of the frontline workers' tasks involve "emotional management" in daily interactions with clients. Nurses, social workers, and youth workers use their personal emotional resources to fulfill work requirements—dealing with a dying patient, counseling an abused child, or supporting a homeless person. The organizational environment where emotional work is performed attempts to manipulate the amount of "heart work" through explicit and implicit devices. This article explores how the Open Door shapes the way in which its workers behave and feel. The nature of the organization, its culture, and its job structures all push workers to employ their emotions as primary tools for intervening with youth. The Open Door, thereby, sculpts a uniform mentality within its worker population in both explicit and implicit ways.

Explicitly, workers are guided in their daily interactions with street youth by two important agency credos. Workers understand that to be a "good worker" in the eyes of the organization means being liked by youth, bending house rules in favor of youth, staying overtime, and being available. During team meetings, the coordinator frequently singles out those workers who have gone "out of their way" for youth (such as spending an entire night at the hospital with a sick youth) and workers who tend to be lenient when it comes to youth rule violations (such as opposing or shortening the amount of time for which a youth is discharged). In short, an ideal worker believes that he or she is "here for the kids." Second, the agency strives to instill a sense of respect for street

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youth primarily through believing what kids say. Upper management continuously attempts to have workers "understand where street kids are coming from" and place less credence in what parents or other agencies perceive. It is common for the coordinator to tell workers to spend less time on the phone with other resources or family members and more time with residents. In addition, the Open Door requires workers to accept and put faith in the youth's story, by showing the correct emotion (e.g., sorrow, anger, remorse) regarding their plight.

Through organizational structures and policies, the Open Door also implicitly frames the way in which workers should feel. For example, the shelter's physical layout provides little opportunity for staff to be alone. Consequently, workers understand that they should always be interacting with youth. A night worker explains that she "learned quickly that you got to be hanging out with kids, be present on the floor . . . there's nowhere to hide." At one point in time, the agency debated whether to eliminate several services (such as aid in welfare applications, tutoring, and job training) in order to provide workers with "breathing room" and an opportunity to complete their paperwork. However, upper management argued that most social service agencies steadily curtail client services for the benefit of workers, and that "the Open Door would not give that same message to street youth." Father Paul regularly exclaimed during these discussions that workers must never forget that "we are here to serve the kids." Moreover, team meetings and informal gatherings provide settings in which workers recount heroic and martyr-like endeavors that inevitably benefited one or a group of street youth. Every worker is familiar with the agency's genesis, involving Father Paul's first ventures out onto the street alone to provide food, clothing, medical supplies, and referrals to these youth. At times he found himself in precarious situations (e.g., a pimp aggressively asking for the whereabouts of a young girl), yet continued his unending service to street youth.

Following Father Paul's example, one of the most fundamental characteristics of the Open Door philosophy is that each worker is required to be available for the kids. As one worker describes, "you got to be there, like, got to open up, got to let yourself go, you got to make yourself accessible for the people to come at you." This notion of being available has as much to do with a physical presence (being on the floor, having time to talk, introducing oneself to newcomers, etc.) as it does with an emotional or spiritual openness (listening, supporting, providing advice, counseling, etc.). Unlike physicians who are taught to keep interactions with patients to a minimum in order to avoid emotional involvement, the Open Door explicitly demands its workers to create relationships with kids on a daily basis and to deepen these relationships over time. A new worker notes that "one thing you learn here [at the Open Door] is to be accessible, you got to talk a lot with everybody who comes in, but not just talk, you got to listen and be there with them [the youth]."

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The shelter's physical layout is conducive to the philosophy of worker availability. For instance, staff do not have offices, but "hang out" with the kids in the living room, kitchen, and front hall area. The main office (where morning workers change shifts and write files) is open to everybody, and it is a common morning ritual to have to ask youth to leave the office couch while shift changes occur. As a result, there appears to be little space where workers can "hide." An experienced worker remembers: "forget trying to get some personal space when you're here . . . My first week I felt like I was thrown into a gladiator pit."

In addition, meetings between workers and kids are rarely scheduled and the agency impresses on staff the importance of "dropping everything" when a youth is present. A supervisor explains who is a "good worker" in the eyes of the agency: "First of all, a good worker is someone who fits in . . . with the kids, it's just that simple . . . who kids feel comfortable around . . . someone who's not just gonna sit down in the office . . . not talk to the kids . . . someone who's always talking to them [the kids] . . . seeing what they need . . . if they want to talk about something."

Pro-kid

This notion of being available for the kids became more intense with the introduction of the new coordinator, who wanted to promote a greater advocacy, or "pro-kid" stance, within the agency. A pro-kid philosophy systematically favors the youth and youth culture over other individuals and groups. This new pro-kid stance is described below by a worker: "I think that with the arrival of [the coordinator], I think that with his experiences, his own life events, he made us realize at a certain point certain things, a way to look at the kids . . . he brought in very strongly the idea of respecting kids, it's really positive in this sense, it made us reflect a lot on the work we do."

Along with the pro-kid philosophy there appears to be an "anti-all-other-agencies" philosophy, especially regarding those agencies connected with the formal child welfare system. In advocating for the importance and urgency of an agency that espouses a philosophy of care, love, and understanding of street youth, the Open Door coordinator is commonly heard emphasizing how other agencies show "little care," "little patience," and "do not understand" street youth. The agency advocates an antiestablishment (and specifically antipolice) position as a defining characteristic of the Open Door.[17] Included in this antiagency position is a belief that parents are generally to blame for youth moving to the streets, and accordingly, little consideration is placed on the family's point of view. This exemplifies the agency's extreme pro-kid stance.

Many workers, however, do not maintain the same views as the coordinator and have experienced frustration and anger when these positions

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collide. For example, a new supervisor experienced difficulty getting support to shorten the drop-in hours for street youth in order to provide workers with a more sensible work load. She was attacked by upper management (especially the executive director and the coordinator) for trying to turn the Open Door into a child welfare institution and was told that "we [workers] are not here for ourselves, but for the kids." As another worker notes, it is insulting when the coordinator labels a worker or an action as resembling some other agency: "Like I said, [the coordinator] places a lot of judgments on the work we do . . . sometimes I have the impression that he doesn't have much esteem, or trust for us. He'll question us a lot. Like I talk to him a lot, and I get the impression that he sees me as a social worker from the [formal child welfare system]."

While workers are encouraged (by rewarding good workers with explicit praise) and taught in the first interview and during their initial probation period to "open their hearts" to the kids, frontline staff voice their belief that the agency is too pro-kid and not enough pro-worker. As one worker describes: "He [the coordinator] is so pro-kid, I mean so pro-kid that . . . he doesn't realize the things he does. I mean everything we do is never up to the level he wants . . . if something we do goes against their views [those of the Open Door management], then you're blasted . . . how do you think that makes us feel?" Unlike other shelters, the Open Door's interview process involves the coordinator expressing in detail the agency's (and his own) philosophies regarding homelessness, street youth, poverty, and social services. This is an intentional act to elicit a reaction from the interviewee. Moreover, there is little formal training once hired—a neophyte is placed on a particular team and tends to learn on the job. The coordinator will strategically place newcomers with supervisors who will "indoctrinate" new workers to his satisfaction.

An important agency credo involves siding with street youth when it comes to hearing their stories. The agency's philosophy requires workers to be nonjudgmental and accept youth for "who they are." This has everything to do with showing the "correct emotion" regarding a youth's plight. For example, during a team meeting, one worker acknowledged his skepticism regarding a resident's story about family abuse. Several other workers were dismayed by this worker's lack of empathy and he was quickly lectured by the coordinator about the hardships of street life. Several workers explore their feelings around this pro-kid stance:

> You know, when you got a problem with somebody [a youth] and you go down to see him [the coordinator], you know that he's gonna side with the kid, like it's your fault that something happened . . . The only thing I keep hearing him [the coordinator] say is "you got to remember where the kid's coming from."
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> [The coordinator] will criticize decisions that we will take on the grounds that we have not thought about the kid in the situation, that's just crazy. . . . Here, I'll give

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you an example, um, if we get a thirteen-year-old kid picked up [by the police], the first thing they'll [the director and the coordinator will] do is yell at us cause we just put a kid back into a youth center.

Workers commonly feel that the agency cares too little for workers and too much for kids. For street youth visiting the agency, this type of environment provides immediate and caring services. However, for workers, the consequence of this environment is fatigue, stress, frustration, withdrawal, and burnout.[18] As three frontline staff explain:

Like, when you go out of your way at times . . . to do more for the kids, making sure you're available . . . I realized I was more anxious . . . and tired and nervous . . . really stressed.

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Sometimes I feel saturated, it's like being in a room with a lot of people and noise, it comes a time when you've had enough, you feel saturated, I don't just feel that mentally but also physically, especially with the kids we work with, you know.

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It's frustrating and you get tired . . . sometimes I create a shield, I know I disagree with something but when [the coordinator] makes his little comments, it's like . . . you really don't understand . . . you just want me to agree with you.

In order to continue working at the Open Door, workers are required to "buy into" its philosophy or "way of seeing." Most organizations require workers to accept its way of functioning. However, accepting the agency's philosophical orientation appears to be equated with "acting" and "feeling" the same way as those in charge. In the eyes of the Open Door, being available to kids, accepting their stories as truth, sympathizing with their experiences, and experiencing deep and meaningful relationships are all characteristics of a "good worker."

Workers' Status

Unlike other social work settings, the Open Door posits that workers should shy away from the urge to play a professional role with kids and, instead, learn the role of "friend," "family member," and "nonprofessional."[19] Being friends with street youth also implies that workers be authentic and truthful in their day-to-day interactions. Many workers struggle with the agency's implicitly dictated amount of disclosure required. For example, when a youth asked a day worker whether she was involved romantically with anyone, the worker replied that it was none of his concern. Overhearing the conversation, the coordinator later met with the worker and questioned her desire to create honest and open relationships with youth. Most workers believe that their role lies somewhere between friend and worker: "I think that we are workers . . . but there is a friendship aspect . . . that's how we should be to develop strong

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relationships with the kids . . . I like more to be seen as friends with the kids . . . we're like friendly workers I guess." However, many workers also believe that they are role models and need to create a distance between themselves and their clientele: "For some kids you'll be a worker of the place, and for others you'll be a friend, but a friend to a certain point . . . I would never cross that line . . . we keep our professionalism." And "We're workers when we step inside [the Open Door] and no matter how much we may want to be friends with these kids, you got to remember what our role is . . . I don't think it's proper to have a very close relationship with a certain kid." In this sense, Open Door workers struggle to create and maintain a professional identity and feel that the agency has gone too far in propagating an equal stance between them and youth.[20] Many workers speak of the struggle involved in playing a role of friend. As one participant describes: "I can act cool, like in hanging out and talking . . . and be like a friend to kids only so long. . . . It's not like I completely change or anything, but for me I'm more a worker."

In fact, most workers are adamantly against the coordinator and the director's personal closeness with many kids (going out for supper, movies, etc.) and believe that they are not being professional: "The things he [the coordinator] does with a lot of kids, like hanging out with them at their apartments is wrong, I think he's crossed the line, I don't know, but I won't do that," and "they [the coordinator and the director] will go for a drink or something with a kid . . . I think that's not proper, I think that's bad."

Street youth are seen as victims in this pro-kid philosophy. According to many workers, the coordinator repeatedly espouses views such as "it's not his fault," "his family messed him up," or "how do you expect her to act after ten years of abuse?" that seem to take away any degree of responsibility and accountability on the part of the youth.[21] One worker explains that he has been told repeatedly to "put myself in his [the youth's] shoes" or to "try and spend a year on the streets and see how you behave then." Some workers have difficulty expressing views to the coordinator and director that appear to be too conservative since it will be viewed as "anti-kid." Instead, many workers have adapted to the role scripted by the agency. One worker explains that there are times when she will make more of an effort to be understanding of a youth's situation and be able to "feel what this kid felt." However, at the same time, workers are not prepared to fake their true feelings. One worker mentions that although he understands what is required of him, he cannot manufacture his emotions because he would not be himself: "I can't say, today I'm gonna be more caring, more a friend to this kid, it doesn't work."

Thus, while workers agree that care and love need to be the cornerstones of the agency, they believe that there should be more support for their own feelings and concerns. Kahn's study of an agency for homeless youth finds that social support from leaders and coworkers reduced the

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likelihood of members being drained and disengaged. The most common strategy Open Door workers employ in order to deal with their frustrations and anxieties involves discussions with other workers and outside friends. As one worker explains: "The only support we got is among ourselves, my team, other workers on other teams . . . sometimes I find myself talking to say, my girlfriend about what happened that day, say with a kid." Teram argues that unlike the workers studied by Hochschild, child welfare professionals are often not offered any systematic "feelings management guidance." This certainly applies to Open Door workers.[22] The only guidance appears to stem from other workers.

Organizational Culture

The Open Door possesses a distinct culture that shapes the character of the organization. Top management (Father Paul, the executive director, and the coordinator) promote a "caring," "loving," and "pro-kid" environment. Moreover, there is an aura of uniqueness ("we're better than the rest") and expertise ("we understand street kids") that dominates this belief system. Through selective hiring (recruiting like-minded workers), intense socialization (newcomers are thrown into frontline work and learn from others), and agency rewards and punishments (praise and promotion), the culture is implicitly and explicitly renewed.[23] In addition, workers are inundated with stories and myths spanning the agency's humble beginnings (involving Father Paul and a mobile van) to its present domination of the street kid scene. The Open Door culture is reproduced and strengthened through formal rituals and ceremonies (team meetings) and what John Van Maanen and Gideon Kunda call "time outs," that is, informal, outside-of-work outings.[24] These rituals and ceremonies create a strong culture and an impressive sense of collective membership.[25] Workers refer to the Open Door as their second home and express strong feelings of loyalty, commitment, and passion toward the agency and their day-to-day work: "I think I spend more time here [at the Open Door] than at home . . . But that doesn't affect me, I love the kids, and the work here, the other staff . . . it feels like home."

Van Maanen and Kunda argue that organizational research has surprisingly tended to overemphasize the integrative and cohesive nature of culture while ignoring its dark side. This article has explored how an organization's culture is a form of control. This point has been made by numerous researchers and has been illustrated here through a specific analysis of emotional labor. Since it is nearly impossible to explicitly control the emotional rapport between worker and client, the organization uses culture as a form of social control.

The case of the Open Door also illustrates how "culture replaces structure" as a way of organizing and monitoring workers' behaviors and feelings.[26] Rather than creating a mechanistic, rule-oriented, and bureau-

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cratic environment for control purposes, culture plays the same role within a more organic structure.[27] As noted by Van Maanen and Kunda, "these heralded corporate cultures are of a very conscious sort," which is reflected in the perception of one Open Door worker as to how new employees are hired: "It's like he [the coordinator] chooses workers that won't question what he does, that will listen to him and follow what he says as if he was some sort of god." Van Maanen and Kunda coined the term "culture control," whereby organizations aim to engage and attach its members.[28] Emotional labor is one part of a culture's demands. However, there are very few who continuously put their heart and soul into day-to-day work. Emotional dissonance, or distancing oneself from one's emotions, is played out in varying degrees. For Open Door workers who have been described as "giving their all" to the agency, emotional dissonance generally comes in the form of acting more pro-kid and less professional than workers deem necessary. In this sense, the terms "emotional stretch" or "exaggeration" more accurately describe the shelter situation. One worker explains her actions by saying "I don't want to keep hearing them [the Open Door management] telling us that we got to be more like this, 'be closer to kids,' 'feel where they come from,' and so on."

As noted by William Kahn, "caregivers give of themselves in the course of their work with care-seekers."[29] "Giving of themselves" is an integral part of what social service professionals do. In many situations, organizations limit the "giving," while in others (like the Open Door), they demand more "giving" than the professional can supply. Here lies the dilemma that illuminates the type of emotional labor done by Open Door workers. No matter how much passion, love, and care is applied in their job, a majority of workers believes that the coordinator still shows little respect for their judgments and concerns. Like an ungrateful and never satisfied parent, the coordinator believes that workers can "do more" or "go further" with the kids. As one worker points out, "whatever you do, I guarantee he'll [the coordinator will] find something wrong with it . . . like you could have done more with the kid."

Workers express frustration, anger, and stress in dealing with this situation. The nature of the organization plays a role in defining the form of emotional labor. The organic structure of the Open Door is conducive to a philosophy of "kids first" and "give from your heart" because of the organization's flexible and unstructured setting. As opposed to a mechanistic and bureaucratic environment where relationships between workers and clients are highly structured (e.g., welfare workers who have scheduled half-hourly meetings per client in an office), the Open Door's environment allows for deeper and more spontaneous contacts to emerge between worker and youth. However, this environment results in workers feeling alone and not cared about. One worker explains how scared and alone she felt in working with a suicidal youngster: "I lived everything he

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[the youth] lived, I returned home, I asked myself whether he would be alive tomorrow, I dreamt that he was dead or that something had happened . . . it was very hard . . . the only support I had was amongst ourselves [frontline workers], I didn't have the support of [the coordinator] . . . I nearly cracked." The agency appears to only address the needs of its clientele and consequently has left its workers vulnerable.[30] At times, workers believed that they only had each other in the "fight" against the agency's philosophy of "giving more."

Workers' Resistance

It has been demonstrated that the more workers perceive a lack of control over their conditions of work, the more they will feel "burnout" or guilt for distancing themselves from the job.[31] However, the majority of Open Door workers perceive their daily work as a natural extension of their personal and intrinsic being. Most workers perceive that their own values of "care and love for kids" are congruent with those of the Open Door. Much like Hochschild's flight attendants, there is a stigma within shelter work about "being phony." In sum, workers acknowledge that they are doing good work. As one worker explains: "Look, I know that what we do here works, cause I see it working . . . when I started working here, it wasn't as busy as it is now for example. The drop-in used to be 30, now its over 100. It's not because there are more kids on the street, there's just more people coming to see us cause they like being with us." What the agency desires workers to "be like" is perceived by workers as "already there." Thus, the effort placed in expressing organizationally desired emotions is lessened through workers' intrinsic identification with the shelter.[32] This provides evidence for Blake Ashforth and Ronald Humphrey's contention that the effects of emotional labor are moderated by the extent to which the individual identifies with his or her work role.[33] As several workers note, "The work we do comes from us, it's natural, I don't have to think about it," and "for the most part, it's natural, because if not I wouldn't be here, but of course, sometimes I got to reevaluate the way I do things, you know, like I got to give more to a kid say." Jane Dutton, Janet Dukerich, and Celia Harquail suggest that, like Open Door workers, members strongly associate with an organization when their self-definitions correspond with the attributes they use to define the organization.[34] Working at the Open Door represents, for most workers, an inner quest that taps into their own fears, joys, anxieties, frustrations, and dreams. Each day is seen as an opportunity to grow, learn, reflect, and reevaluate one's beliefs and values. Every worker interviewed spoke of the deep and strong ties that have been formed with many of the youth: "I am amazed at how I can get so close to the kids, that kids can get close to us, how we can have beautiful exchanges."

The literature on emotional labor has underemphasized the actions

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and processes needed to minimize the negative consequences of emotional labor. Two factors have been explored in this article: the feeling of solidarity and cohesion among workers and the internal belief that one was doing what he or she believed was not only "good work" but "a natural part" of who one was. These two factors appear to be instrumental in minimizing the negative consequences of emotional labor and, in turn, fostering empowerment among workers.

The culture metaphor can be extended further by acknowledging the importance of subcultures that subvert and challenge the agency's interpretations of their work. In this case, the subculture involves workers who believe that their work is "good enough" and that a more intense working relationship with kids is neither necessary nor warranted.[35] Open Door workers do not adhere completely to the culture of "giving more of themselves." The power of the subculture was recently tested when a group of workers called a meeting with the director to discuss their frustrations with the coordinator. The end result of this gathering favored the workers, and the coordinator was asked to be more sensitive and supporting to his staff. This example provides hope to those who maintain that social control is complete and threatens individual freedom. As Goffman notes: "Our sense of being a person can come from being drawn into a wider social unit; our sense of selfhood can arise through the little ways in which we resist the pull."[36]

Nonetheless, we must keep in mind that workers' effectiveness in changing rules and policies is largely contingent on the structure of an organization. In this case, the Open Door is indeed "open" to listen to workers and values them enough to "hear" their complaints. Whether this could happen in larger, more bureaucratic agencies is questionable. An organizational context involving fairly balanced power among workers of different statuses seems also to have lessened the negative effects of emotional labor. Thereby, a paradox emerges within this argument, for the one and the same organizational structure fosters feelings of both worker alienation and worker empowerment. Managers involved in such a setting must, therefore, be aware of these seemingly contradictory issues.

Conclusion

Although it appears that culture often is completely hegemonic, we sometimes see actors resisting the power and all-encompassing structure through subtle actions, thereby defying a culture's assessment of either their work or their position or both. The Open Door culture implicitly and explicitly influences how its members behave and feel. Nonetheless, Open Door workers find ways in which to resist. The effects of emotional labor were minimized when workers identified positively with their work and felt a sense of solidarity and support within the organizational set-

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ting. Participants spoke about a "natural" connection to this type of work—that it accorded to their own internal values and beliefs. In this case, the advent of a pro-kid philosophy was easy to assume since it was a natural extension of what the workers actually do. To use Goffman's language, workers are not playing roles or acting per se, but rather are "managing" or "filling in" a new part given to them by the agency.[37] In this case, emotional labor was minimized because workers genuinely believed in what "they were selling." The conflict that has ensued between the agency's push toward what workers perceive as "too pro-kid" and "not professional" has been tamed by workers' internal beliefs that their work is caring and loving enough. This belief has been framed explicitly through the multitude of intimate relationships formed between workers and kids. In addition, there was a sense of solidarity and support that emerged between workers that allowed for self expression, reflection, and "emotional sanity."

Emotional labor has primarily been explored in relation to service sector workers, most often those who do not particularly like their work or the organization or both. The most important reason I conducted my research with the Open Door is because it allowed me to analyze emotional labor through a different lens. It seemed to me to be more interesting to uncover emotional labor issues in an organization where workers admire the agency, the clients, and the work in general. Future research should not only extend and test this article's findings but also investigate diverse work settings in order to highlight various accounts of emotional labor, organizational culture, and workers' resistance. Specifically, what conditions allow for successful versus unsuccessful workers' resistance? What are other factors that minimize negative consequences of emotional labor? To what extent do an organization's characteristics (e.g., age, size, internal structure, external environment, etc.) influence the type of emotional labor felt by members?

In a sense, this article can be seen as providing some "lessons from the field" for those who are involved in helping professions where they are required by others to feel in a certain way. Emotional labor is still somewhat of an invisible construct in day-to-day work environments. One hopes that as more research is undertaken in this arena, supervisors and managers within human services will become more attuned to the impact an organization's culture has on its inhabitants.

Notes

An earlier version of this article was presented at the first annual Conference of Emotions in Organizational Life, San Diego, August 6–8, 1998.

1. Arlie R. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983); Nicky James, "Emotional Labor: Skill and Work in the Social Regulation of Feelings," *Sociological Review* 37 (1989): 15–42;

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J. Andrew Morris and Daniel C. Feldman, "The Dimensions, Antecedents, and Consequences of Emotional Labor," *Academy of Management Review* 21, no. 4 (1996): 986–1010.

2. Anat Rafaeli and Robert I. Sutton, "Expressions of Emotion as Part of the Work Role," *Academy of Management Review* 12 (1987): 23–37, quote on p. 23.

3. Morris and Feldman. There are a number of definitions offered regarding the term "emotional labor." This article adopts a notion of emotional labor that is more specific (i.e., situated within an organizational context) than, say, James's broader and more common definition that posits "the labor involved in dealing with other peoples' feelings" (quote on p. 15).

4. Similarly, Howard Karger makes the comparison between social welfare and industrial production in terms of how both settings manifest environments in which workers distance themselves from their work precisely because their skills (in one case emotions, in the other, manual labor) become commodities. That being the case, the author argues that burnout should be redefined as alienation in order to move away from a focus on the individual worker and instead turn toward a focus on organizational life. Howard Karger, *Social Service Review* 55, no. 2 (1981): 270–83.

5. Hochschild, p. 198.

6. Eli Teram, "From Self-Managed Hearts to Collective Action: Dealing with Incompatible Demands in the Child Welfare System," *Children and Youth Services Review* 10 (1988): 305–15.

7. One of the most important reasons this study has centered on workers at a street youth shelter is because I assume that the longer a worker is required to interact with a client, the more this exchange becomes unscripted and revealing and intense, thus creating a more challenging environment in which the worker manages emotions. A social work environment, in general, and an alternative street youth shelter, specifically, assumes this form of exchange and thus is an ideal location to observe.

8. In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity for both the agency and its workers, all names have been changed.

9. Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1985).

10. This study focuses solely on frontline workers since they represent the agency in many ways and are situated "on the floor" and in close proximity to the client population. As noted by Morris and Feldman different organizational and job characteristics are associated with different dimensions of emotional labor. It is the contention of this article that the frontline worker has a high frequency, duration, and intensity of emotional display that involves a variety of emotions.

11. Lincoln and Guba (p. 214).

12. For a discussion of the naturalistic paradigm and my personal experiences collecting data for this analysis, see Jeff Karabanow, "Understanding the Researcher within the Research: A Discussion about the Journey Involved in Doing Research." Paper presented at the fourteenth annual Qualitative Analysis Conference, Toronto, August 1997.

13. Lincoln and Guba, p. 124.

14. As mentioned earlier, all individuals have been provided with pseudonyms in order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity.

15. For a description of street kid shelter environments, see Jeff Karabanow and Prue Rains, "Structure versus Caring: Discrepant Perspectives in a Shelter for Street Kids," *Children and Youth Services Review* 19, no. 4 (1997): 301–21; Sharon Keigher, "Rediscovering the Asylum," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 14, no. 4 (1992): 177–97; Louisa R. Stark, "The Shelter as 'Total Institution,'" *American Behavioral Scientist* 37 (1994): 553–62; Marlene Weber, *Street Kids* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

16. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1959).

17. The consequence of such a position has been to alienate more mainstream street youth agencies as well as the formal child welfare system. That being the case, the Open Door presently exists as a "lone gun" within the social service network and collaborates minimally with other agencies.

18. William A. Kahn, "Caring for the Caregiver: Patterns of Organizational Caregiving," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 38 (1993): 539–63.

19. For a description of a formal shelter setting, see Jeff Karabanow, "The Shelter Expe-

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rience: A Case Study of Street Kid Residents at Toronto's Covenant House" (MA thesis, McGill University, 1994).

20. Human services in general have long been plagued with such ambiguity regarding their professional identities. See, e.g., a discussion concerning student social workers' quest for professional identity in Donileen R. Loseke and Spencer E. Cahill, "Actors in Search of a Character: Student Social Workers' Quest for Professional Identity," *Symbolic Interaction* 2, no. 2 (1986): 245–58.

21. In the same light, Hochschild's (see n. 1, p. 109) flight attendants were asked to see passengers as "potential friends" and thus be as understanding as one would be "with a friend."

22. Teram (n. 6 above), p. 306.

23. Working during the day appears to be the desire of most Open Door workers because of the perception that day staff "do the real social work" (i.e., referrals; contacts with parents, police, welfare, etc.). Many workers at the shelter believe that the coordinator, being aware of how workers view day positions, uses shift allotments for the day team as a tool for rewarding "good night team workers."

24. John Van Maanen and Gideon Kunda, "Real Feelings: Emotional Expression and Organizational Culture," in *Research in Organizational Behavior,* ed. L. L. Cummings and B. M. Staw (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI, 1989), pp. 43–103.

25. Charles A. O'Reilly and Jennifer A. Chatman, "Culture as Social Control," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 18 (1996): 157–200.

26. Van Maanen and Kunda, p. 73.

27. O'Reilly and Chatman (p. 164) similarly argue that as workers' tasks become more unpredictable and structures become more flexible, formal control gives way to more subtle forms of social control that are seen as more extensive and less expensive.

28. Van Maanen and Kunda, p. 89.

29. Kahn (n. 18 above), p. 539.

30. This point appears to be somewhat ironic since social workers employed in bureaucratic settings have been struggling for some time to create an environment that will prioritize clients' needs. Alternative, nonbureaucratic agencies have developed precisely to address the client in a more immediate and humanistic manner. See, e.g., Nancy R. Hooyman, Karen Fredriksen, and Barbara Perlmutter, "Shanti: An Alternative Response to the AIDS Crisis," *Administration in Social Work* 12, no. 2 (1988): 17–30; Stephanie Riger, "Vehicles for Empowerment: The Case of Feminist Movement Organizations," *Prevention in Human Services* 3, no. 2/3 (1984): 99–117. Further research concerning alternative agencies should investigate this issue.

31. Hochschild (n. 1 above), p. 189.

32. As argued by Morris and Feldman (n. 1 above), even though less effort is required from the worker when there is congruence between his or her felt emotions and the organizationally desired emotions, there is nonetheless some degree of effort or labor required so that the emotion can be displayed in an organizationally appropriate manner.

33. Blake E. Ashforth and Ronald H. Humphrey, "Emotional Labor in Service Roles: The Influence of Identity," *Academy of Management Review* 18 (1993): 88–115.

34. Jane Dutton, Janet Dukerich, and Celia Harquail, "Organizational Images and Member Identification," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 39 (1994): 239–63.

35. Within this analysis, subcultures are viewed as value systems that maintain many of the values and norms of the corporate culture, but have formed due to some competing interests. In this sense, subcultures differ from countercultures that are in direct opposition with most values espoused by those in power.

36. Erving Goffman, *Encounters* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961).

37. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (n. 16 above), p. 73.

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