

‘Bring yourself to work’: Rewriting the feeling rules in ‘personalised’ social work

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Purpose: This paper explores how feeling rules are constructed, experienced and contested within personalised social work practice. It considers how organisations seek to shape practitioners towards certain forms of emotional display in increasingly market-oriented conditions. It contributes to our understanding of the place of ‘backstage’ emotional labour in seeking to shape and direct social work practice.

Design/methodology/approach: A single immersive ethnographic case study of an English social work department was undertaken over a period of six months.

Findings: The paper reveals embedded tensions which emerge when practitioners are caught between traditional bureaucratic function, the incursions of the market and feeling rules of relatability, commitment and creativity.

Originality/value: The paper contributes to the scant literature on frontline experiences of personalisation in children’s services and the importance of ‘backstage’ emotional labour for shaping and directing social work practice. Importantly, it considers the complexity of emotional labour within an organisational context which is neither fully marketised, nor fully welfarised, a position many welfare organisations now find themselves in.

Keywords: Feeling rules, emotional labour, personalisation, social work, bureaucracy

Paper type: Research paper

Introduction: ‘Bring Yourself to Work’

‘I have a way of thinking about where I put people and one of the questions I ask myself is, ‘Does this person bring themselves to work?’ Somebody who brings themselves to work, so they understand themselves, you know, the philosophy ‘know thyself’ – they know where they’re coming from, they understand their own prejudices. People that bring themselves to work, they’re the people who love what they do, so work isn’t tiring its energising. That person is likely to be able to embrace the personalisation work and there are no limits. The person who quite likes to be a local government functionary is going to struggle.’

This was the first, but not the last time, I encountered the managerial call for social workers' to 'bring themselves to work' within the organisation I was immersed in. On this occasion I was interviewing the Director of the child and family service having been based with one of his social work teams for two months. His call was a central plank of his broader quest to reorient the emotional bonds of the work being undertaken. On the surface, his account appeared as a call for relatability, familiarity and authenticity when working with families. He emphasised a form of self-work, self-knowledge and emotional accountability; features deemed essential to the task at hand and which were set in contrast to the abject subject, 'the local government functionary.' His call was to be enacted within a changing organisational context, one of personal budgets, talk of 'markets' and 'commissioning'; yet one also still regulated for its fidelity to bureaucratic rules and professional values of care. Here, my interest was piqued, and I began to explore how managers in this site sought to remake the affective dimensions of social work and equally how social workers' responded. Over the coming months of ethnographic fieldwork, the central imaginary of the 'bring yourself to work' professional provided the moral tone at the heart of the managerial quest to remake the organisational feeling rules. It became clear that these discursive invocations became performative expectations - matrices of new forms of address and accountability were forged to demonstrate fidelity to this spectre and the reworked feeling rules which accompanied it. As such, the emergence of this figure at the same time of the implementation of a localised form of personalisation was no accident – rather the two went hand in hand and reflected broader trends exerting influence over professional welfare practice caught as it is between traditional bureaucratic function, the incursions of the market and affective discourses of relatability and responsiveness.

Over time, the imaginary of the 'bring yourself to work' professional emerged as a central figure in rewriting the 'feeling rules' of the organisation. Embedded in this process was a growing concern that professionals 'display' their affective connection to their work, rendering it a site of audit and assessment. Yet social workers themselves responded differently to these demands to display their emotional labour in internal processes and paperwork. As I traced the twin threads of desire and discipline centred around this imaginary at a time of change, Hochschild's work (1983) on emotional labour, feeling rules and their display came to the fore.

This paper takes up those threads to consider the emergence, disciplining and frontline response to the rewriting of feeling rules in this organisation at a time of change. It addresses these features in three steps. Firstly it explores the construction and reiteration of the 'bring yourself to work' imaginary by managers. Here, the paper explores the imaginary as a product of managerial desire and as a crucial linchpin for altering organisational culture at a time of change. Secondly, the paper turns to how feeling rules and their display centred upon this imaginary became disciplined into everyday practice through ceremonies, auditing practices and rituals. Finally, the paper considers the ways in which professional social workers subverted, resisted

and reworked these feeling rules to their own ends. The paper contributes to the scant literature on frontline experiences of personalisation in children's services (Author, 2015; Mitchell, 2012a, 2012b) and the importance of 'backstage' emotional labour for shaping and directing social work practice (Gibson, 2019, 2016). Importantly, it considers the complexity of emotional labour within an organisational context which is neither fully marketised, nor fully welfarised, a position many welfare organisations now find themselves in.

Hochschild's 'emotional labour'

For the purposes of clarity, it is important to track Hochschild's (1983) conceptual contributions before turning to the substantives of the case at hand. Hochschild's work rests on the distinction between what she refers to as 'emotion work' and 'emotional labour'. Emotion work is the experience and process of managing and presenting emotions in our private lives, this 'work' is undertaken with family, friends, partners. Emotional labour, by contrast, is '... the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' (1983, p.7) by, in her original formulation, service workers. In the 'public sphere' of emotional labour, those working on the frontline experience the commercialisation of feeling as 'private sphere' feelings are mustered, managed and deployed into a package of emotions consumed by customers as a commodified interaction. The organisation is central to this process of commodification as it shapes and seeks to control the form, timing, giving and withdrawal of emotional feelings, moods and their display so that they come "more to belong to the organization and less to the self" (Hochschild, 1983, p.198). The script which seeks to 'codify' emotional display, and which is the central focus of this paper, Hochschild calls the 'feeling rules'.

Feeling rules and their display

Hochschild's (1983) work on emotional labour considers not only the accomplishment of cultivating and managing emotion at work, but how workers' are encouraged to align their genuine emotion with an organisation's 'feeling rules'. Feeling rules are the social norms that seek to guide what to feel, when to feel, where to feel, who to feel with and for, how long to feel, and how fervent our emotions should be. They are an organisational frame that guides actors to interpret their work and work-related encounters through appropriate displays of emotion. The precise nature of the feeling-rules, their construction, implementation and how they are experienced, varies. But they share a common feature: they inscribe managers' attempts to re-work employees' interpretative schemas. Feeling rules come to be through interaction; through the complex of interplay between colleagues and clients, through managerial supervision, appraisal and training. They are not a free standing list of prescriptions, they are not definitions of emotion floating above the

accomplishment of everyday work, rather they are aspects of the interaction order, feeding and shaping local cultures and practices. They are thus both a medium for encouraging some ways of being and doing 'work' and an outcome of repeated embodied practices which are organisationally recursive (Williams, 1998).

Feeling rules are also concerned with governing emotional display. These display rules cover when and how to show requisite emotion as laid out in the organisation's feeling rules. Display rules refer to standards for organisationally appropriate emotional expression in work-related contexts. Organisations set and impose display rules implicitly and explicitly to provide employees with a sense of 'how we do things around here.' Induction, recruitment, training, written policy, performance appraisals, and supervision are all sites for enculturating employees into display rules (Hochschild 1983).

Feeling rules backstage

In keeping with Hochschild's gaze, much research on emotional labour focuses upon 'service encounters' – between sales staff and customers, nurses and patients, teachers and pupils. This paper does not delve into the well-trodden terrain of the ways in which professionals regulate their display of emotion in order to give rise to, suppress, or manage the responses of others in such encounters. In the case of social work, this 'frontstage' terrain of interaction between social worker and family, has been covered adeptly by a number of authors (Ferguson, 2016; Winter et al, 2018; Lavee & Strier, 2018). Nor does this paper attempt to assess the 'impact' of emotional labour on workers as others have done (Timmons & Tanner, 2005; Turnbull, 1999; Leeson, 2010). Instead, this paper is concerned with the 'backstage' - how management sought to imbibe and encourage the display of feeling within internal team practices and how professionals responded. The lens therefore is geared inwards – towards the organisation itself. In this ethnographic case, managerial attention was centred upon the demonstration of feeling in written accounts and in the marginalia of social work documentation. This is unsurprising given the 'invisible' nature of much social work activity which takes place away from the managerial gaze (Pithouse, 1987). Social workers, in practice retain a high degree of autonomy through the 'unmanaged spaces' (Bolton, 2005: 102) that still exist within the interstices of organisations.

To rewrite the feeling rules often demands a rupture in policy and practice, or a shift in the cultural orientation of an organisation (Turnbull, 1999; Johnson, 2015). This case was no different and to understand how the 'bring yourself imaginary' came to emerge, it is necessary to consider the rupture provided by the implementation of 'personalisation.'

Personalisation: The context for the rupture

Much has been written about personalisation (cf Needham, 2011; Houston, 2010; Garrett, 2012) - the swathe of loosely-linked policies which have gripped the minds of English policymakers and politicians over the past decade. Central to these initiatives is the narrative of 'choice and control'. However, how this is to be realised, from whose vantage point and with which tools remains deeply contested (Lymbery, 2013).

Personalisation has become known for its ideological and linguistic flexibility which offers both political potency and frontline ambiguity (Needham, 2011). Firstly it promises 'choice and control' to service users. In the English case this has been symbolised by devolving finance to service users enabling them to purchase support from the public, voluntary or private sector. In this regard it builds upon the 'culture change' and 'modernising' agendas of New Labour's Third Way (Newman and Vidler, 2006) and upon successive Conservative measures to 'open up' markets in public sector provision. It is the market which provides the new axis around which professionals are to rotate as service users are given choice and control through the devolution of financial power, symbolically and practically through the creation of personal budgets from which they purchase services, goods and support.

Secondly, personalisation accelerates the redefinition of the subjectivity of the citizen and of the public service professional. The state and its actors no longer 'fix' problems, or 'fit' individuals to services; rather they guide, support and enact the voice and will of service users through their frontline encounters and purchasing behaviours. Citizens are not merely buying support to meet socially-defined need; they are enacting a right to choose, building a biography around their choices. There is a shift from an internal emphasis on bureaucratic rules to an individualised orientation within hitherto public welfare work (Gilbert, 2002; Clarke, 2004). In place of directives about organisational processes and regulatory requirements, the personalisation agenda seeks to invest work with meaning. Gone are the days of a language of inputs and outputs, rules and procedures, instead are encouraging mantras of flexibility, liberation and creativity.

It is these mantras that feed into the construction of the 'bring yourself to work' imaginary. The personalisation agenda commonly paints a picture of 'freedom' and 'choice' enabling social workers to 'reclaim' and 'return' to true social work practice (Hudson, 2009; Duffy, 2010)— relational and immersive, a 'new spirit' as Garrett (2012) notes, freed from the suffocating bureaucracy of the past. Freedom is conjoined with the demystification of the welfare state and of professional power and expertise in particular. Garrett (2012) makes his argument wisely, for at the same time as the projective tenor of feeling, hope and authenticity permeates think pieces about personalisation, there is next little discussion of the place of social work in official policy pronouncements and guidance (Lymbery, 2013).

The creation of quasi-markets, the broadening of social work roles, combined with a heady emotive backdrop in Bourdieusian terms, 'remakes the world' for professionals on the frontline who find themselves positioned precariously within these various demands and expectations (Latimer and Munro, 2015). As Bjerger and Bjerregaard (2017: 100-101) depict, in such spaces professionals are, 'caught in a twilight zone... a work situation characterized by pluralistic, often paradoxical demands and conceptions of welfare services; between ideas of entrepreneurship and private sector strategies and practical, material conditions grounded in more traditional principles of public administration.'

Introducing the case and method

The data discussed derive from a six month study of a team of children's social workers and their managers, who were tasked with implementing personalisation in their everyday practice with disabled children and their families. The aim of the study was to explore how personalisation gets done on the frontline of social work practice. It is concerned with the work of social work explored through an organisational ethnography. Its focus was on the performances of personalisation which unfold at the intersection of people, systems and practices in the everyday work of one team. The research paid particular attention to changing performances of face/identity work, of altered practices of account-giving and of new interactions with audit wrought by personalisation operating within a mixed economy of welfare. Participant observation enabled me to focus on the less explicit aspects of organisational life, including, as addressed here shifts expectation around emotional display and its governance (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

The team consisted of eight social workers and was headed by an experienced team manager. The team carried out social work with families who had a disabled child, and were tasked with implementing a local form of 'personalisation'. Families were encouraged to take a personal budget in order to purchase support for their child, from a 'menu' of services offered by the public, private and voluntary sectors. This represented a significant departure from the team's former practice. Workers continued to undertake statutory duties of assessment, review and home visits, but were additionally responsible for finding and brokering services on behalf of families, and costing and auditing personal budgets.

The fieldwork consisted of 400 hundred hours of observations. Observations included everyday activity in the team office, team meetings, management meetings, group supervisions, and one staff training day. Lunch breaks were shared with team members when possible. I engaged in informal conversations in the office, attended meetings, and shared car journeys to and from events. I recorded fieldnotes during the day, and typed them up the same evening alongside the creation of analytic memos – notes to myself of ideas and questions to follow up on. My observations

were supported with semi-structured interviews with all staff. Interviews explored the changing nature of social work practice, the challenges of delivering 'choice' and the move to personalisation. The interviews lasted between 90 and 120 minutes, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Ethical approval for the research was given by the University of [blinded for peer review] ethics committee.

Data analysis

On exiting the field, fieldnotes, documents and interviews were transcribed and uploaded to NVivo. Following Charmaz and Mitchell (2001), a modified grounded theory method was used to analyse the ethnographic data which enabled me to explore key incidents and events. Memos were written whilst in the field supporting me to 'puzzle out' (Becker, 2014) threads and traces of inquiry to pursue further. This also befitted the abductive analytic strategy of the study as a whole (Blaikie, 1993). On exiting the field, interview transcripts were analysed for their thematic content using researcher-generated codes which had emerged as key lines of inquiry in the field, e.g. costing, child protection, 'gatekeeping'. I then coded at three levels - locally emergent categories for analysis (participant talk), my own categories built upon observation in the site and meta-level themes (policy discourse). I placed primacy on local turns of phrase, concerns, methods of work provided by participants. They offered nuance and complexity to the self-generated or meta-level themes and acted as a check on my own sensemaking. I annotated fieldnotes with thoughts, events and related speech forming a kind of analytic chain. These were then read against coded transcripts to engage in a form of falsification.

Bring yourself to work emerges: Personalisation as rupture

In my interview with the director I asked questions about how personalisation came to emerge in the site, what key organisational moments were and the place of devolved finance. His responses were rich with personal references and anecdotes from his own professional history and ambition (cf Author, 2019). He told me that the emergence of personalisation in the site was part of his 'journey' and was part of his 'commitment to being a cradle to grave worker, as long as they keep employing me to do what I am doing, I'm likely to be doing this for the next ten years and I'll continue that trajectory.'

The team was aware of his long-term commitment to changing frontline practice which his professional biography reflected. It was a touchstone for local sensegiving activity (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) – a living example of what commitment, passion, empathy in practice looked like. This was noted by all team members, 'we're 100% being driven by him' said one, whilst another commented, 'the ideas about this way of working very much sits with X [the director].' His deputy, the group manager said

to me during a car journey, 'he's there to spread the gospel'. As we spoke, his biography became interwoven with a specific worker imaginary of his own – the 'bring yourself to work' professional.

'I have a way of thinking about where I put people and one of the questions I ask myself is, 'Does this person bring themselves to work?' Somebody who brings themselves to work, so they understand themselves, you know, the philosophy 'know thyself' – they know where they're coming from, they understand their own prejudices. They're the people who love what they do, so work isn't tiring its energising. That person is likely to be able to embrace the personalisation work and there are no limits. The person who quite likes to be a local government functionary is going to struggle.'

The account is future-directed, professionals are cast as becomings - which management, led by the director, sought to realise through training, supervision and managerial directive. They're committed, creative, reflexive, they love what they do as it is an extension of the self. One way in which the bring yourself to work figure seeks to muster emotional connection is through the willing and enthusiastic breaching of the boundaries formerly separating 'home' and 'work'. To 'bring yourself to work' is a call to marshal ones personal and affective resources. The director made this explicit as he told me,

'The most consistent message I have for my team is that the disabled children we work with should be considered in the same way as you'd consider your own. The wishes and dreams of the children we're supporting should be the same wishes and dreams you'd want for your own children.'

The allusion to family life for professionals working with children is a powerful one. It provides a useful way of capturing the emotional and social skills of workers in a recognisable familial frame - enhancing the required emotional labour of the work itself. The relational quality of 'wishes and dreams' and the deliberate quashing of personal/professional boundaries seek to forge collective identification. In Hochschild's (1983: 56) terms the organisation is seeking to bring 'genuine' emotion into line with institutional ambition. Rather than hide, suppress or deny those unique elements of self that make up the individual person at work, family practices and ambitions are encouraged.

To bring this figure to life, a number of ritualised encounters between employers and managers were created. Group meetings, various presentations, training sessions were core to this activity. He explained,

'I'm trying to slowly inject values partly through documents, partly through if you sit in any meeting with me, I drop in on the monitoring group or team I will give little lecturettes on topics, so people will have a few minutes, bite-sized, I'm now going to "tell you". It won't matter that some people won't be able to articulate things quite as clearly as I do in a small 'p' political way. But if they internalise the practice, that

somehow they internalise the increasing respect for families, showing care, compassion, enthusiasm, empathy, that'll be a success.'

To 'bring yourself to work' is about undertaking specific forms of emotional labour - compassion, enthusiasm, empathy, commitment, creativity. Here, and in many other instances including the 'lecturettes' I witnessed, the Director attempted to specify the kinds of emotional labour required of successful, and thus exemplary employees. Over time, this codification of emotional labour became ubiquitous and familiar, a backdrop to everyday working life. They became the feeling rules, the expectations for the display of emotion.

During one of his 'lecturettes' in a management meeting he said,

'I want our staff to deeply engage with families and show that in their work. I want our teams to really get to know these children, to have and show the children they support the same care and ambition they have for their own children. I want to be able to see the child in the documents. It's about high expectations and having them for yourself and for the children we work with.'

He wanted to see social workers draw upon what Hochschild (1983) would call, 'private' emotions in their work. This close identification was referred to in our interview together,

'I want staff to really identify with families, someone who seeks to see the best in families. You know, someone who manages and absorbs their crankiness, puts it down to them having a bad day and moves on. If you bring yourself to work, you're flexible, you muster and manage your own sentiments carefully, you reflect on them, aware of your prejudices.'

Feeling rules were not merely geared to impression management, or as Hochschild (1983:35) put it 'surface acting', but were concerned with the production, enculturation and maintenance of a certain kind of morally-imbued professional identity. The organisation sought 'deep acting' (Hochschild, 1983:35), where valorised feeling is self-induced in the undertaking of professional practice in line with organisational desire and expectation.

This was a local interpretation of the place of emotional labour under personalisation, but management had much to draw upon from the broader landscape. The demand for relational connection, to 'bring yourself to work', has been rendered explicit in works by the thinktank IPPR (2014) who argued for 'deeper relationships' between workers and citizens, whilst assuming that the emotional labour this requires is an endless resource. Workforce Scotland (2015) encourages public sector workers to, 'be brave, sensitive, mindful, daring' in their work. These two examples belie the backdrop of numerous studies on corporate culture which over the past two decades have discovered similar calls for workers to emote and 'be themselves' (Spicer, 2011; Fleming & Sturdy, 2011). The local authority at hand is not the first to call for

workers to 'bring themselves to work'; on the contrary they were tapping into a much larger zeitgeist.

The 'bring yourself to work' professional is cast in opposition to another imaginary, 'the local government functionary.'

'For too long, local government functionaries weren't thinking. They were doing things for panels and paperwork, not for children and families. What we're doing is injecting back into the workforce a sense of value and purpose. So for me there's something about success will be workers being able to engage in the creative process. The person who quite likes to be a local government functionary is going to struggle because what we're doing with personalisation is about conversations and engagement, offering ideas, personal responses. Now the people that love what they do, that isn't tiring, it's energising. But those just doing the mechanics, but don't understand why and engage with it, well it'll always be hard work for them.'

The local government functionary is tied to process in a factory-like world of fixidity. The bring yourself to work professional is supple, weaving patterns of engagement; the local government functionary is 'unthinking' a procedural being, one devoid of deep reflexivity with the self and the work. The functionary's unwillingness to 'bring themselves to work' or to align their personal affect with their professional work casts a question over their practice and suggests a moral failing. The functionary is 'just doing the mechanics'. Ritualised encounters which sought to move practice away from the functionary were commonplace, but the organisation went further – building an informal architecture to monitor and assess the adept display of feeling rules associated with bringing themselves to work. The demonstration of feeling rules became key indicators for auditing professional practice.

Disciplining and auditing the feeling rules

Over the years, social care has been identified as an environment rife with micro-management and tight monitoring (Parton, 2008). Social workers' report increasing pressures to display their decision-making activity through clunky ICT technologies, online case notes and reporting, increased surveillance through repeated inspections (Hall et al, 2010). They at every turn must 'show their working out'. The director's emphasis on personalised responses and the adept display of feeling has to contend with such a context. To 'bring themselves to work' must be enacted within bureaucratic confines which demands social workers display accounts of their work at every turn.

The feeling rules (to demonstrate commitment, empathy, passion, creativity) became performative expectations through the bi-monthly meeting of the so-called 'Monitoring Group'. The director, his deputy, the team manager and other managers from across the children and families service group attended these meetings. I was

told that this organisational routine was about lightly surveying the paperwork social workers' had submitted from initial assessment through to family spending and purchasing decisions. I was informed that the group was there to 'monitor' what was being purchased and how. Yet in the eight meetings I attended, which commonly lasted for 3 hours at a time, this 'light touch' was not apparent. There was a much deeper scrutiny at play. Paperwork submitted by social workers was pored over, looking for evidence not only of coherence between the child's assessed needs and family spending decisions, but that social workers were 'deeply engaged', with their work. Group members would scan documentation for evidence of 'engagement', 'commitment', 'creativity' and that workers were 'building meaningful relationships' with families. The group evaluated assessments and financial plans, but they were also keenly exploring how well the feeling rules were being performed. This meeting provided a space for the moral interrogation of the work and of the person undertaking work with that family.

The group could send workers back to re-assess children, to re-calculate budgets, or could criticise workers for a 'lack of engagement'. The feeling rules were invoked in evaluating how successfully workers had 'ingested the values'. The monitoring group could become agitated if they felt workers were not taking 'ownership' for their decisions. The Director saw this as evidence of 'workers not thinking for themselves', and saw the budget process as a useful device to tackle a culture of 'buck-passing'. He told me that the practice of commissioning was a facet of a new culture:

Social workers are posed with a fundamental shift where they have the power to commission directly with and on behalf of a family. All of this forces decision-making and accountability, they are required to be more responsible for decisions made and to account for them – I hope people will become proud of their work.

Managers would often complain that the paperwork submitted did not demonstrate the requisite level of 'ownership'. Fieldnotes from one of the monitoring group meetings demonstrate this:

Manager 2: Some of them [social workers] are stating in their paperwork 'subject to ratification by monitoring group'. It makes me cross. It's the shifting of responsibility to us. It's their work. Their family. They need to justify it, show us they really get the family.

Director: They're [social workers] posed with a fundamental shift, they have the power to commission directly with and on behalf of a family because they know [his emphasis] the family. If I can see the child, see the relationship then they can practice with money now.

Manager 3: All of this should force decision making and accountability, they are required to be more responsible for decisions made and to account for them. I'm just not seeing the deep engagement.

Director: I know, I hope people will become proud of their work. But it's an adjustment taking ownership, documenting how they got there.

Manager 2: I'll have a word in supervision. They've got to show us they get it.

The ambition was that the introduction of costing, commissioning and auditing practice would promote a culture of 'personal ownership and engagement'. The rationale for rewriting the feeling-rules, while expanding market-based 'choice', was premised on understanding family preferences, routines and aspirations in a deeper way: one that required emotional labour.

Workers were accountable by proxy as reams of information and paperwork generation were bundled together, tying professionals to their work through an extensive paper chain. Not being able to demonstrate 'real engagement' had consequences. Workers would comment on being told to re-assess children for eligibility or to provide a more precise support plan. As documented in the fieldnotes above, supervision could become a site to 'have a word' – to correct a lack of emotional display in written work. Social workers could feel guilty when this occurred,

'I feel bad that what I've written apparently isn't what managers want and you've almost let the family down because you haven't justified it in the correct way even though you know that the family need it.'

Following a supervision, a worker told me they were chastised for producing paperwork which was not 'real' and did not 'capture the child', whilst all were encouraged to take steps to better 'engage' with their work commonly through the provision of training. This chimes with Gibson's work (2019) which underscores how important feelings of pride and shame are for organisations when seeking to construct and alter forms of practice. Workers' organisational identities could be destabilised and threatened by being cast as the 'local government functionary'. As Alvesson and Willmott (2002:629) found, 'defining a person by defining others' is a powerful way to regulate identity. Being cast as a recalcitrant body, 'not getting it', 'not moving on' could be a source of real discomfort. As Bolton and Boyd (2003: 304) suggest, the ceremony of surveillance 'opens the emotional labour process to critical scrutiny'.

Frontline responses

The schism between the feeling rules and the culture of quantification and process was felt on the frontline. It led to the creation of two strategies: 'getting by' through discretion, and 'getting back' through resistance. For those 'getting by', the accounting work was a 'sideshow' to the 'real work' of spending time with families. For instance:

'I have been really naughty, so far I've put in no paperwork and I probably will get pulled up on it at some point. But to me, why fill in all this paperwork for something that does nothing? To me it's just extra paperwork that I don't really have the time to do, and unless it's going to make a difference to my kids at the end of it, I'm not doing it!'

Another stated: 'All I'm concerned about is that my families get what they need at the end of the day'. Those team members are using the same feeling rules to 'get by' within the organisation; by focusing on the work they had done, and by emphasising the interactional heart of their work, they espouse the feeling rules as an act of subversion against bureaucratic demands.

They sought to deliver on the promises they had made to get 'closest to the child' and to 'deliver for the family' by challenging the organisational 'roadblocks' they identified. Those workers were keen to demonstrate their active agency, often in spite of the rules of the organisation. They made clear their emotional labour to managers and peers in person, spending as much time with families as possible. In doing so, they live by their own conceptions of appropriate emotional labour. They thus work around the organisation's demands. They were far from being 'crippled actors' (Bolton 2005), but maintained their 'authentic selves' by working against organisational procedures. In speaking the language of engagement and relationships they felt able to ignore the strictures of documentation. As Johnson writes of the phenomenon in a different setting, 'the internalised service principles and related feeling rules had been turned around against the company' (Johnson, 2015: 123)

Importantly, this is not a case of 'two tribes', as though management and staff were fundamentally at odds. There was a commonality of discursive repertoires used to describe what it means to do and 'be' a social worker. Much of this was encompassed in the 'bring yourself to work' imaginary – to relate, to have integrity, to practice with compassion and passion. Over a coffee with two workers, this shared vocabulary became apparent,

'I love it! I love, I like the whole sense of being able to empower people and letting them decide where they want their life to go. So to me that's the optimum bit of what your role should be, facilitating somebody to pick and choose. I'm here with a lot of enthusiasm for that. I think it's being more respectful, committed; you have to think on your feet, try things out. It demands more from you. There's a lot of back and forth time with families, you go and suggest things, you let people think about it then you go back another time.'

The other added,

'I try to always keep my practice as person-centred as I can which is difficult as sometimes I feel that it ends up being very process-centred. So much paperwork! I keep bringing it back to the person, to their needs, the whole time trying to think

creatively, you know what could they do, thinking a bit outside the box. It's hard to show that in the forms, but I do my best to show that I do get these families.'

But as others have found (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), discourses of identity are received and interpreted in specific contexts, they are open to contestation and challenge. Organisations cannot simply 'impose' professional identities even where concerted action is taken to rethink and reorient work, through role change or rewriting the feeling rules (Watson, 2008). For a number of workers, the feeling rules were out of step with the practice and procedural demands of the work. The imaginary simply didn't hold in the face of changing practice demands. These workers adopted a strategy of 'getting back' which pivoted on quiet resignation and resistance. During a team meeting, one said pointedly to the team manager, 'We used to do social work, now we do costings'. In reply another said they were concerned about 'being outsourced, as much of their work was 'an admin job'. The feeling-rules – 'being there for the child' and 'deep engagement with the family' – were experienced as incompatible with costing and audit. Here, the procedural work has introduced 'competing bases of identification' (Knights and McCabe, 2003: 1589). These social workers found themselves caught in a shifting nexus of contradiction and struggle over what it means to 'do' social work. Where some workers brushed off demands, several spoke of being 'resigned to their fates' or were considering moving roles: 'I don't want to be in this team for too long. You want to protect your job and not be outsourced'. Many felt precarious. They experienced a dissonance between the costing work they were now tasked with and the moral appeal – the 'calling' – of the vocation they had qualified in. This group saw the feeling rules as strategic manipulation (Goffman, 1959), to achieve a market-based system: 'it's all about the money; I can't be committed or enthusiastic when it's about cost'. As one quipped loudly during a training session, 'I feel like a mathematician these days. It's not what you come into the job for'.

For these workers, the feeling rules were experienced as a displacement device to smooth over the incongruities between cost and care rationalities (Trydegård, 2012; Waerness, 1984). When managers appealed to them, they were often met with a form of 'soulless conviviality' (Gorz, 1989: 145): workers would go through the motions of the work but would 'not be taken in by it'.

Conclusion

The 'bring yourself to work' imaginary was a talismanic figure for the organisation. It was a central for rewriting the feeling rules, becoming the blueprint for the kind of emotional labour the organisation sought to inspire. In exploring the contours of the 'bring yourself to work' professional, the paper in line with others (Gibson, 2019, 2016) has identified the importance of 'backstage' emotional labour in shaping what is possible and permissible in contemporary welfare practice. This imaginary was

concerned with the production, enculturation and maintenance of a certain kind of morally-imbued professional identity. It stood in contrast to the 'local government functionary' which hovered as warning for staff, demarcating poor practice and conduct. These twin figurations show the importance of imaginaries for steering and shaping both professional practice and its emotional display.

During my time in the site what emerged was less a resistance to the feeling rules per se, to be committed, empathetic, passionate, creative, to forge 'deep relationships' through this emotional labour. Many of the frontline team we're keen to work in this way. Rather, the problem was the commodification of those connections, and the requirement to demonstrate them on demand through impersonal chains of documentation. The introduction of marketised tools (personal budgets) within an existing framework of bureaucratic demand curtailed the ability to 'live by' those feeling rules. Many social workers did want to 'bring themselves to work' but the procedural demands of that work undermined that calling.

This social work team found themselves enmeshed between market practices, bureaucratic forms of accountability and affective invocations. This is because the feeling rules were rewritten whilst the social work role became still more heteromorphic. Professionals were to be entrepreneurial support planners, adept diagnosticians, orchestrating commissioners, detailed reporters, accountable agents and family advocates. Accounts of professional judgment were interwoven with processes of calculative decision-making and emotional labour as boundaries between them became blurred. This is important for other welfare bodies who are considering implementing their own form of personalisation, for it will be always already caught within existing frameworks for accountability and process. Personalisation is layered on top of pre-existing statutory and professional systems, it doesn't remove them.

The tropes of corporatized idealism (creativity and flexibility) rubbed up against bureaucratic necessity (to account for, capture and audit spend) and professional values (care rationalities and ethical practice). This gave rise to discursive and practical contradictions. Social workers experienced contradictions between managerial exhortations to emote and to relate - to 'bring themselves to work' - and the disembodied processes of paperwork generation and financial audit. Yet, it would be wrong to suggest that these professionals were alienated from their emotional labour in the way Hochschild (1983) described. There was little indication that workers felt a loss of control or ownership of their labour. There was, however, a schism between the demand to act within the feeling-rules and the organisation's emphasis on cost, quantification and bureaucracy.

Taken together, feeling rules and their surveillance cannot be simply disentangled from the upheavals of role and practice caused by an expansion of a policy culture of marketisation. Whilst many saw costing and auditing as a mere tool to deliver upon the promise of choice, for some it started to dominate the work. This led to the

workaround by those 'getting by', enabling them to 'stay true' by resisting the strictures of paperwork generation. For others this led to collective actions of 'getting back'. Managerial attempts to rewrite the feeling rules are not intrinsically alienating nor do they result in the production of docile bodies 'transmuting' their feelings (Hochschild, 1983: 19). Yet, when the tools of the market collide with the call for individual emotional display a space is created with the potential to commodify relational and interactive exchange; the qualities of affective bond become ripe for audit and assessment.

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