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Beyond Cognition: Affective Leadership and Emotional Labor

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ABSTRACT

How do the concepts of *emotional labor* and *artful affect* translate into our understanding of leadership? Where would one find *affective leadership* in practice? In order to address these questions, we draw upon our larger study into the workdays of civil servants. Based on interviews and focus groups, we set forth in their own words how social workers, 911 operators, corrections officials, detectives, and child guardians experience their work. We reveal the centrality of emotion work in the service exchange and underscore affective leadership in practice. We conclude that the most important challenge facing public administrators is not to make their work more efficient but to make it more human and caring. Affective leadership, and a recognition of the centrality of emotional labor therein, are the means by which this approach is championed.

Beyond Cognition: Affective Leadership and Emotional Labor

Leadership boils down to a series of social exchanges in which the leader can drive the other person's emotions into a better or worse state (Goleman 2006, 276).

Leadership touches the human spirit, and touching the human spirit has always been the work of art and aesthetics. It's not surprising, therefore, that good leaders have always thought of leadership as more of an art than a science (Denhardt & Denhardt 2006, 175).

A focus on *diversity leadership* may encourage us to rethink our assumptions about what it takes to be an effective leader – or more precisely to be an *affective* leader. How do the concepts of *emotional labor* and *artful affect* translate into our understanding of leadership? Where would one find *affective leadership* in practice? In order to address these questions, we conducted field research into the daily work experiences of public servants on the front-line of service delivery. The purpose of this paper is to use their ‘stories’ to advance our understanding of leadership and to shine a bright light on the skills that are inherent to its practice.

How might leadership relate to emotional labor, you ask? In a speech delivered by Alice Rivlin at the 2003 conference of the American Society for Public Administration, she outlined the requirements of successful leadership. Among these she included “unwarranted optimism.” What does it take to exude “unwarranted optimism” day in and day out? We argue that it is a form of emotional labor.

Goleman’s centrality of *social exchanges*, and Denhardt & Denhardt’s focus on the *art of the dance* point up the relational aspects and *artful affect* of leadership – that is, to an appreciation of the emotive aspects of leadership. We use their platform to dive into the “emotional stew” (Goleman 2006, 278) of the workplace, and begin with an explication of concepts.

First, what is emotional labor? It is a component of the dynamic relationship between two people: worker and citizen or worker and worker. Any definition of emotional labor begins with the seminal work of sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983). Hochschild uses the term to mean “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” intended to produce a particular state of mind in others; “emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has *exchange value*” (p. 7). Emotional labor is a “gesture in a social exchange; it has a function there and is not to be understood merely as a facet of personality” (Hochschild 1979, 568). In other words, the worker must perform the work in order to complete the job; it is a type of labor (see Guy & Newman 2004).

The term emotional labor shares similarities as well as differences with physical labor – both require skill and experience and are subject to external controls and divisions of labor. The English language comes up short when we try to describe emotion work. A number of terms capture one aspect or more, but none captures its entirety. For example, this list names a number of dimensions to emotional labor. Some jobs require workers to exercise several of these; others require the performance of none, one, or only a few:

- Verbal judo: used in law enforcement to describe “tough talk” banter

- *Caritas*: captures the caring function in human services
- Gameface: used in law enforcement to signify displays of toughness
- Compassion fatigue: used in social work to describe burnout resulting from too much *caritas*
- Emotion management: focuses on the worker's job to elicit the desired emotional response from the citizen
- Professional face: used to describe the status shield that workers don to distance themselves emotionally from the interaction. It is a role-playing function.
- Show time: similar to gameface
- Deep acting: refers to convincingly pretending to feel a given emotion
- Emotional chameleon: the ability to switch expressions of emotions on and off
- Good cop, bad cop: role playing in which one worker pretends to be sympathetic while the other pretends to be tougher than tough
- Spider sense: the ability to intuit the other's emotional state
- Rapport: the ability to establish a deep understanding and communication with the other
- Stage left: refers to play acting and expressing an emotion, as if on stage
- Emotional suppression: that which is required to disregard one's own feelings
- Emotional mirror: the ability to reflect and adopt the emotions of the other
- Emotional armor: the ability to gird oneself against one's own emotional response
- Emotional equilibrium: refers to maintaining a balance between extremes of emotion
- Emotional Teflon: the ability to protect oneself from an emotional reaction
- Emotional role playing: the process of play-acting, as if on stage
- Emotional anesthesia: the lack of any emotional response; may occur after prolonged exposure to extreme emotional stimuli
- Emotional engagement: the ability to connect with the other and empathize
- Emotional mask: that which results when workers convincingly suppress their own emotions in order to act as if they feel a contradictory emotion, or no emotion
- Emotional façade: the ability to express an emotion one does not actually feel

As the list shows, there are a variety of dimensions that attach to emotional labor. Although some workers can don emotional armor and endure emotionally draining experiences, others are less capable. Although some are energized by emotional encounters, others find them exhausting. Whereas some are skilled at emotional suppression, others are excellent at developing rapport and emotional engagement. Emotion work is as individual as cognitive work. It is a skill and is subject to individual differences.

We propose that these same dynamics are at play in affective leadership. Writing in the 1920s, Edward Thorndike proposed that *social intelligence* – interpersonal effectiveness – “was of vital importance for success in many fields, particularly leadership” (Goleman 2006, 83). Some eight and a half decades later, Daniel Goleman developed his model of social intelligence as organized into two broad categories. First, *social awareness* – what we sense about others – includes primal empathy, attunement, empathic accuracy, and social cognition. *Social facility* (or relationship management) – what we then do with that awareness – includes synchrony, self-presentation, influence, and concern (p. 84). For Denhardt & Denhardt, “a person attuned to the rhythmic flow

of the particular situation will have an advantage in energizing others and will be a more effective leader” (p. 63). Part of such attunement is the ability to listen:

Listening well has been found to distinguish the best managers, teachers, and leaders. Among those who are in the helping professions, like physicians or social workers, such deep listening numbers among the top three abilities of those whose work has been rated as outstanding by their organizations (Goleman 2006, 88).

While the term “emotional labor” is used only once in Goleman (2006) and not at all in the Denhardt & Denhardt (2006) work, their terminology is consistent with many of the dimensions of emotional labor skills. Selected phrases from their referenced works illustrate the point:

- Adeptness at reading people
- Emotional tango, a dance of feelings; a nonverbal duet
- Interpersonal/emotional thermostat
- Emotional contagion
- Emotional economy, the net inner gains and losses we experience with a person
- Interpersonal judo, our ability to change another person’s mood, and they ours
- Neural puppeteer
- Emotional suppression
- Social chameleons
- Emotional resonance
- Emotional radar
- Emotional connection
- Rhythmic mirroring
- Empathetic listening
- Improvisation and “faking it”
- “Carrier wave”

This is the language of emotional labor. We contend that this vocabulary, in turn, translates into an understanding of the skills of affective leadership.

Emotional Labor versus Cognitive Work

There’s no scientific answer to the most difficult problems that leaders face, and those problems are not amenable to solutions sought through the application of rational analytic techniques
(Denhardt & Denhardt 2006, 10).

Cognitive skills and emotion work skills are separate but related dimensions for successful job performance. The former includes the application of factual knowledge to the intellectual analysis of problems and rational decision making process. The latter includes analysis and decision making in terms of the expression of emotion, whether actually felt or not, as well as its opposite: the suppression of emotions that are felt but not expressed. More specifically, emotional labor comes into play during communication between worker and citizen and it requires the rapid-fire execution of:

1. *Emotive sensing*, which means detecting the affective state of the other and using that information to array one's own alternatives in terms of how to respond
2. *Analyzing* one's own affective state and comparing it to that of the other
3. *Judging* how alternative responses will affect the other, then selecting the best alternative
4. *Behaving*, such that the worker suppresses or expresses an emotion -- in order to elicit a desired response from the other.

Service exchanges between worker and citizen require the worker to sense the right tone and medium for expressing a point and/or feeling and then to determine whether, when, and how to act on that analysis. To ignore this combination of analysis, affect, judgment, and communication, is to ignore the “social lube” that enables rapport, elicits desired responses, and ensures that interpersonal transactions are constructive. As Goleman (2006) reminds us, excellence in people management cannot ignore affect. It has real human consequences and matters if people are to perform at their best.

Turning to our present study, we reveal the centrality of emotion work in the service exchange and underscore affective leadership in practice. We do this by drawing upon our larger study into the workdays of civil servants. Based on interviews and focus groups, we set forth in their own words how social workers, 911 operators, corrections officials, detectives, and child guardians experience their work. We then extrapolate their experiences to a consideration of what makes a successful – an affective – leader. Our research sites include an urban county office, the Cook County Office of Public Guardian in Chicago; a city police department, the Tallahassee Police Department Dispatch Unit; and a state agency, the Illinois Department of Corrections.

The Cook County, Illinois Office of Public Guardian *“A Million Crises Every Day”*

The origin, growth, and vision of this unique agency emanate from its initial and longtime leader, Patrick Murphy. In 1978, amidst a corruption scandal in a small, newly formed Cook County department, then-Governor Jim Thompson appointed a charismatic and idealistic young attorney to the public guardianship agency to demonstrate his administration's commitment to good governance. This attorney, Patrick Murphy, was meant to serve as window dressing for three months, after which the scandal-of-the-moment was predicted to blow over. During more than 26 years, Mr. Murphy single-handedly built the OPG from a handful of attorneys, social workers, and assistants – six employees in all – to its current status: nearly 300 employees, half of which are attorneys, serving over 15,000 clients. If he was grateful to the governor for his position, one might not be able to tell: Not only did Murphy investigate his own agency's fund allocations, but he also pursued charges against Governor Thompson. Unlike the typical political appointee, Mr. Murphy also states flatly and without any hint of hubris that “the politicians can't touch us” (P. T. Murphy, personal communication, August 13, 2004). He has built an office with a strong reputation for citizen advocacy, and years of diligent service delivery have allowed everyone at OPG to proceed boldly, with little fear of the vagaries of favoritism or the calculus of horse-trading by county- or state-level power brokers.

The Office of Public Guardian had been shaped by Patrick Murphy's leadership and vision so much so that we heard "OPG" and "Patrick" used synonymously on more than one occasion, as in "I came to work for Patrick" rather than "I work for OPG". Such organizations can suffer institutional crises when longtime leaders leave. After 26 years at OPG, Patrick Murphy ran for a judgeship on the Cook County Circuit Court in reaction to the county's mismanagement of a tragedy that struck the agency. It proved to be a testament to the staff's dedication to mission, to Murphy's stewardship of a resilient organization, and to the strength of its new leadership that the new director, Robert Harris, could seamlessly assume the mantle as director of the agency on January 1, 2005.

Mission trumps structure at OPG. Senior attorneys mentor and advise attorneys with less experience, and Incident Review Teams have point persons, but evidence of institutional hierarchy is almost nonexistent. Organizational form follows agency function.

Working at the Office of Public Guardian is not for the impatient, those easily discouraged or upset, or anyone who demands a set schedule. OPG does not intercede when a family is functional. Like 911 operators, OPG is involved only when something has gone wrong. Very wrong. The consequences can be life-threatening. Working with children, teenagers, and elderly clients brings about "a million crises every day." These range from breakdowns with living situations, whether in long-term foster care, group homes, or adoptive homes to discipline problems at school or trouble with the law; to problems with caretakers involving abuse of the client, substance abuse, or other endangering situations, to sickness or injury, to problems with family visits. The Incident Review Team is brought in on cases only when such a crisis has occurred, so whereas attorneys are able to see their clients when things are going well, caseworkers and investigators witness crisis after crisis.

Emotion management demands are high on caseworkers, attorneys, and investigators, who must manage heavy caseloads while communicating effectively with young clients, their biological parents and their current caregivers; and other therapists, social workers, school teachers, judges, and health care workers, each of whose backgrounds differ greatly from one another and probably from the attorney's own. Neither attorneys nor caseworkers nor investigators can display shock or distress when a client reports abuse, neglect, or endangerment; and each must engender the sort of trust necessary to elicit that kind of information. Investigators must develop rapport and intuit the correct approach for eliciting honest information that will be helpful in pursuing the child's best interest. Success results in assisting the child and feeling that one's work is worthwhile, while failure results in misinformation and burnout. Here we let an investigator's words demonstrate his experience of emotional labor:

I can turn it on and off at whatever I have to do . . . you have to be able to communicate with people out in the street . . . I can just be whoever I have to be; if I have to be a nice guy, I'm fully comfortable talking to whoever, whatever; I can cozy up and talk to the neighborhood drug addict and get him to give me information . . . I just have to the ability to turn myself off emotionally and not let my personal feelings become involved.

Note the quote below from a caseworker. As she describes what it takes to develop rapport with the children on her caseload, she is talking about emotional labor. She must cause the person she is interviewing to trust her enough to provide the information she needs to perform her duties. This requires discerning the motives and proclivities of the client and acting in such a way as to establish a constructive relationship. Although her job description spells out the educational and licensing requirements of the job, those ‘knowledge, skills, and abilities’ only get her hired. They do not accomplish her job. That which is required for her to perform successfully are not only the “objective” requirements, but also the emotion work necessary to build rapport with clients:

There are some people you click with – you just have that connection. There are some you don't. A person can rub you the wrong way and be really hard to get to. I try to think what emotional string I can pull to get the person to relax; to calm down; to talk to me. It doesn't work to meet anger with anger. You have to stay professional, you have to stay calm, and to some degree you have to understand. We're dealing with people. If we're dealing with machines, yeah, I would be successful all the time. You know, it's another face, another personality, another person with issues in front of me.

We have to develop these relationships...in order to get our clients to...tell us the deepest, and darkest, and whatever's going on, right?...I mean we see a variety of clients...severely sexually abused...I also knew that there was some alleged accusation that the mother may have been poisoning the kids when they went for visits...you have to establish a rapport – a connection.

Multiply each home visit, incident review, or hearing by the number of cases in the heavy caseloads carried by each attorney, and one gets a glimpse of the nature of emotion management demands by county workers at OPG.

Tallahassee Police Department 911 Call Takers

Leading is about using all your senses (Denhardt & Denhardt 2006, 67).

For any one of us who has ever felt apathetic toward our government, spending time at a 911-call center provides a powerful antidote. Jobs that require front-line customer service during crisis situations are emotionally intense. Such is the case for emergency dispatch operators. Of particular interest is the language call takers use to describe their workday and how they perform emotional labor. Interviews reveal how they describe the work they perform and how they exercise emotion management, including that which is required (a) to hold their own emotions in check, (b) to display competence and *caritas*, and (c) to express emotional sensitivity that calms callers.

A call taker who trains new hires to answer 911 calls explains the skills that are sought:

For the most part, we're looking for people that can think outside the box. We've got 5 basic questions that we ask, but you have to be able to take the response that you get and think, 'ok, this person just doesn't sound right – something else is going on here or the story doesn't sound right; the pieces aren't fitting together.' You have to use your spider sense a little bit.

Interviewer: *What do you mean by 'spider sense'?*

Ans: You know, that little feeling when your hairs turn up on your arms or on the back of your neck. Things that you pick up on that are gonna make or break what happens to the officer when they get on the scene and if you miss someone in the background hollering that they have a gun or you miss the popping noise in the background or you miss something critical you've now put the caller's life or the officer's life in jeopardy.

Of particular interest is how dispatchers balance the technical and emotional demands of the work. During the normal course of an 8-hour shift, a dispatcher may be called upon to bounce back and forth between offering emotional comfort to callers in crisis to answering prank calls to providing basic technical information to standard non-emergency calls. When dealing with an emergency caller, the level of emotion work rises dramatically and is an important element to minimizing further harm or saving a life. The example below demonstrates several levels of emotion work: empathy, emotion suppression, as well as managing the emotions of the caller.

Citizens don't realize that just because you're sitting behind a phone and all they're hearing is a voice doesn't mean that you're not feeling what they're going through because sometimes it is terrifying to us because you can't help but put yourself in those positions. You don't want them to know you are scared, too. I mean that's the bottom line – they're reacting to what you do so you don't have any choice but to try to stay calm.

And the main thing we have to do is keep them on the line and reassure them that help is on the way. It seems like it's a long time when you're in that position and we're trying to ask them questions and it seems like it's taking forever. We can't just let it be dead silence. We have to incorporate conversation throughout that time while we have that person on the phone to just keep them calm and let them know that someone is coming to help.

Emotion work has both positive and negative outcomes. On the one hand, the intrinsic value of the job itself and the opportunity to serve others represent a powerful motivator for many emotion workers. On the other, burnout is tangible, palpable, and all too real for many of our respondents. Burnout is characterized by an inability to disengage (“escape”) from the work, by an overwhelming grinding pressure, a callousness, an inability to maintain a professional perspective, a sense of hopelessness, apathy, despondency, and a lack of trust.

I think the toughest part about my job is you have 1900 inmates, and you have 400 staff. You know, you gotta go out and talk to those inmates.

Working in Illinois corrections facilities is not for the faint of heart. The prison population in Illinois grew from 36,543 in 1994 to 43,418 in 2003, an increase of almost 19%. Another 33,702 offenders are on mandatory supervised release. By the end of 2003, the adult prison population was 38.2% over its rated capacity (Illinois Department of Corrections 2003 Statistical Presentation). By FY 2010, the prison population is projected to increase to 48,513. Such overcrowding exacerbates an already high-pressure environment, especially within the facilities where fewer staff are responsible for greater numbers of offenders at a time of budgetary cuts. Working within the facilities can be dangerous. The threat of personal danger is a characteristic occupational hazard. According to the most recent (2003) Annual Report, person offenders (largely murder, weapon, and assault offenses) and sex offenders account for half the prison population; drug offenders represent about 25% of the population. Overcrowding fuels the sense of danger. Skilled emotional labor can de-escalate potentially volatile situations. Denhardt & Denhardt provide an example. A director of a community mental health facility faces down a highly disturbed man who is screaming profanities and making demands:

Her first words to the man were bold and to the point, almost mirroring his own intensity. It was almost as if she had started signing harmony to his lead. But then she took the lead and began to talk him down little by little... 'I knew when that man came in he wasn't dangerous. He just needed some help. What I had to do was find a way to connect with him and bring him in' (p. 69).

Parallel to the annual growth of prison populations, "Corrections is one of the fastest growing areas of employment in the nation" (Quinn, 2003, 281). One of the greatest challenges to the DOC is in recruiting and retaining high-quality staff members. However, the increase in a better-educated workforce often corresponds to increasing levels of job dissatisfaction among corrections employees (Quinn, 2003). The organizational structure, based on military-style chain of command and bureaucratic division of labor techniques encourages a sense of disjointedness within the staff. Evaluations are based on a hierarchical system that rewards recordkeeping and regulated performance. Election cycles often result in managerial house cleaning, particularly in this agency, where a recent statewide election resulted in a regime change in the executive and legislative branches. Even more recently, investigations into patronage hiring have targeted DOC, among other state agencies. Turnover as a result of political appointments often result in situations where staff members are more experienced with corrections issues and policies than are their supervisors. When speaking of new managerial appointments, one employee commented, "These new bosses have to be taught...They don't want to learn how it's done before making changes. They want changes before figuring out how the system is set up." "It seems like the 'new management' cares as little as the last administration. More paperwork has been added, less promotional opportunities," was a common sentiment. Another respondent summed up the situation:

Lack of permanent supervisors with any management skill is a major cause of very low morale in my department. They are unskilled in making decisions that best suit the

interest of our agency and department. My co-workers and I bring forward issues that need [to be] addressed, and they do not respond until it becomes a crisis. When it's too late, we have to clean up the mess.

Employees feel that their job skills and expertise are not valued: that they may be able to contribute ideas for improvement of corrections processes and procedures is not acknowledged, much less encouraged. "My biggest complaint is that the people working in the trenches are not allowed to assist in decision making processes which directly affect their work environment." Additionally, the employees themselves feel unappreciated. "Productivity would improve if upper management took time, on a regular basis, to do walk throughs and talk to employees...Just to say hello [and] thanks for the job you're doing." Listen to a warden characterizing his work:

I think my job is dealing with people every day...I think that it [emotional labor] does [relate] a lot with [my job]. I think it does a lot with everyone's – emotional labor, but I don't think you really – you don't come into a prison setting and think that. I don't think anyone does...I think that's [engaging in emotional labor] every single second of my day.

As the warden intimates, emotion work is practiced and lives depend upon it. Acting professionally is consistent with the worker's expectation of appropriate behavior and therefore, seems not to require the degree of emotional labor as when the worker must suppress emotions or pretend to feel emotions. Goleman (2006) puts it this way:

The very best police officers are adept at exercising influence, in the sense of constructively shaping the outcome of an interaction, using tact and self-control...They approach volatile people with a professional demeanor, calmly and attentively (p. 95).

The words of a correctional officer illustrate the point:

On a lot of days there are some times when you feel like you might want to explode because it doesn't seem like you're getting your point across, or whatever, but then what comes to mind is that I am the professional. And that I'm paid to be in control of my emotions. I'm supposed to be a role model here too, you know, and I'm supposed to be in control. I take a few deep breaths and I just deal whatever it is that I have to deal with. I might even step back, you know, depending on the situation. Time allows for me to you know walk away, kinda regroup, come back and talk again . I enjoy what I'm doing so, um, a lot of things that other people view as stressful you know may not be for me.

The above vignette also illustrates the importance of "time out," of taking a restorative break from the grinding pressure of the job. Relatedly, Denhardt & Denhardt quote one of their interviewees as follows: "taking enough personal time, through time away from the job, off time, down time, to stay fresh' was...essential to artistic leadership" (p. 127).

Listen to a correctional counselor characterizing his work and the tools of his trade:

[An inmate] can go from cooperative to uncooperative, fine to suicidal, you know...learning to read people...I just watch the body language. That's the biggest thing I do...I watch the eyes. The eyes tell a ton. Hand movements, you know, shoulders – you know it all plays into the game of reading the body language to tell is this person – is he gonna – is he docile or is he gonna be violent.

Gender discrimination and “chauvinism” are primary factors for job dissatisfaction among female staff. Supervisors determine the workplace atmosphere and evaluate staff performance and as with many correctional facilities, sexism remains a problem, especially among older male guards (Quinn, 2003). Gender discrimination often has a negative effect on professional advancement as well as on overall job satisfaction for women. One respondent commented: “Another factor for job dissatisfaction for me has been working for ‘male chauvinist’ bosses...Are we happy about being talked down to and treated inferior? It is the ‘all males club’ and discrimination is alive and well.”

Budget constraints and efficiency initiatives contribute significantly to overall job dissatisfaction. “The stress comes not from the job...but by the threat of layoffs, reduced budgets, lack of promotion and staff doing the work of vacant positions.” This is echoed by a co-worker: “I am happy to be employed at the salary I receive but I feel as if I am another number on a chopping block.” “I get the most stress from the job because we are required to do more with fewer people due to budget constraints and to a political environment that tries to overcome statewide budget problems by eliminating jobs that are necessary,” adds another employee.

To contrast these three agencies, OPG is a professional workforce that deals with immediate needs of clients but whose actions are constrained and complicated by formal legal proceedings. DOC is a workforce subject to the inertia of a large bureaucracy whipsawed by political winds, where workers deal with felons who do not want to be where they are. The work of 911 call-takers employed by the Tallahassee, Florida Police Department presents a more remote type of emotion work, in which the worker never has face-to-face contact with citizens and rarely gets feedback on the results of a day’s work, yet often engages in “raw” emotion work. We turn next to the relationship between emotional labor and leadership.

Affective Leadership

[People] are rarely “energized” without some kind of an emotional commitment. For this to happen, the leader must trigger, stimulate, or evoke an emotional response on the part of potential followers so that those people will become engaged and active...The capacity to energize others through touching the emotions is the key to the art of leadership (Denhardt & Denhardt 2006, 18).

We agree with Goleman and Denhardt & Denhardt that leadership is more art than science – more emotive than cognitive. In so doing, we describe the role of emotional labor in public service as a *performance art* allowing public servants to represent the State. Further, we agree

with Thomas Downs, former CEO, AMTRAK: “The assertion that real leadership is a performance rings true to me...Leadership really does have an audience, does have emotional content, and does leave the participants uplifted when done right” (Denhardt & Denhardt 2006, no page number). We propose the term ‘artful affect’ to help further the process of understanding what public servants do, and what affective leadership entails. *Artful affect* involves managing one’s own affect as well as that of the other person in the exchange. Practicing artful affect is both proactive and reactive. It requires the artful sensing of the other’s emotional state and crafting one’s own affective expressions so as to elicit the desired response on the part of the other. Goleman intuitively has these skills:

That wavelength-sensing waitress embodies the principle that getting in synch yields an interpersonal benefit. The more two people unconsciously synchronize their movements and mannerisms during their interaction, the more positively they will feel about their encounter – and about each other (2006, 31).

While Goleman is speaking about a waitress and the “subtle power of this dance,” his reference to “getting in synch” with another is transferable to the helping professions and public service more generally. It is one act in the repertoire of emotional labor skills. So too is the “constant silent chatter, a kind of thinking aloud that offers a between-the-lines narrative, letting the other person know how we feel from moment to moment and so adjust accordingly” (p. 33). The act of making such adjustments, and the focus on connectivity are hallmarks of the practice of emotional labor and affective leadership.

For managers, awareness of artful affect facilitates discussions of, and training for, emotionally reactive situations. Goleman reinforces the point: “Socially intelligent leadership starts with being fully present and getting in synch. Once a leader is engaged, then the full panoply of social intelligence can come into play, from sensing how people feel and why, to interacting smoothly enough to move people in a positive state” (2006, 280). Patrick Murphy, Cook County Public Guardian, was the embodiment of such a leader. He had what the Denhardts refer to as the ability to see not just the “dots,” but ways of “connecting the dots” (p. 31). He was a master at connecting with his staff on an emotional level. Denhardt & Denhardt say it best: “Leaders connect with us emotionally, in a way that energizes us and moves us to act” (p. 164). No ready example springs to mind when reflecting back on our interviews at the DOC, nor during the focus group sessions at the TPD. These agencies were characterized by a militaristic command and control style, with a concomitant sense of low morale and lack of trust. The absence of emotional engagement is apparent in the following vignettes from the DOC:

One thing it’s taught me that I hate is that I don’t trust anyone. I hate that part. I think that hurts everyone too. You can’t trust anyone...I know they cheated me. I see that with everyone. That’s why I always say you can’t trust, you know, I don’t trust anyone...not like I did before I started working here.

I have zero confidence in my management which I think is the cause for our very low morale. It’s terrible that filling out this survey is a highlight of my day.

Emotional labor is a critical component of fully one-third of all occupations, and is fundamental to public service and public management practice. In the best of circumstances, emotional labor is recognized so that job applicants can be screened for it, new employees can receive training in it, all employees can be evaluated for their adeptness at it, and especially skilled employees can be compensated for excelling in its performance. The need to recognize emotional labor is on the rise. Evidence from our interviews indicates that the demand for emotion-intensive work only increases, despite, and sometimes because of, hiring freezes or attrition. Government workers face greater and greater emotion management demands and fewer resources to address those demands. Many occupations with great emotional labor demands are among the fastest growing in Department of Labor forecasts through the next decade. Moreover, some of those highly relational occupations have been eliminated due to automation and outsourcing. Combining the data on employment growth in demanding emotional labor occupations with evidence that hiring has not kept pace with agency needs may suggest that the increases in emotional labor jobs in government represent no more than a shadow of the real demand for emotional labor in government. Burnout and compassion fatigue are the silent partners in many human service roles. An affective leader can help people contain and recover from their emotional stressors on the job.

The fact that there is a large service component to public service jobs should not surprise us. The need to select workers who are skilled in relational work should not surprise us. The lack of recognition of emotional labor should surprise us. So too should the limited scholarly recognition of affective leadership:

[I]t is clear that the artistic dimension of leadership is both the most often practiced and the least understood...[R]ecently leadership studies have focused more on the science of leadership...In contrast, a new understanding of the artistic dimensions of leadership...not only provides a language for understanding and giving voice to these less-recognized but extremely important aspects of leadership, it also permits leaders far more breadth and flexibility in their actions (Denhardt & Denhardt 2006, 165).

We live in a service economy. Service with a smile, long the mantra in the private sector, is gaining ground in the public realm. A customer-service orientation is bound up with care and emotion work. So, too, is helping those who are in dire straits. The Oklahoma City bombing, 9/11, earthquakes, floods, tsunami and earthquakes bring care work and emotional labor to the fore in tragic relief.

The aim of public service work is responsibility toward the community. The insight, anticipation, and tenor of the communication between persons prior to, during, and after the exchange require energy, focus, and sensing; in other words, emotional labor. As we move farther and farther away from organizations designed to operate assembly lines, we must devise new structures that capture today's work and skill requirements. Employees who are sensitive and skilled at the relational side of face-to-face public service help to humanize government. Because higher performance is the goal of the nation's agencies, emotion work should be recognized and built into job descriptions and reward systems.

The reality of many public service jobs demonstrates the incompleteness of standard job definitions, recruiting, and selection processes (see Mastracci, Newman, & Guy, 2006). For example, according to Goleman:

Typically the emotional component of health care jobs does not count as “real” work. But if the need for emotional care were routinely regarded as an essential part of the job, then health workers could do their jobs better. The immediate problem comes down to getting more of these qualities into medicine-as-practiced. Such emotional labor can be found nowhere in the job descriptions of health care workers (2006, 260).

The lack of acknowledgement of these skills hides an essential consideration in the selection of staff, contributes to depressed wages for a required job skill, and renders such labor invisible, a “talent” that cannot be taught. Drawing from the Office of Public Guardian, the following description is given of the recruitment process for lawyers. It demonstrates the shallowness of formal job descriptions and how informal processes during the interview fill in the gaps:

We have unique job descriptions that spell out formal job requirements, such as licensing, and so forth. But in the interview [with lawyer applicants] we often talk about the social work aspect of our job – as if the social work aspect somehow encompasses what we are trying to say with potential employees – that there is a lot of the job that is more emotional, more hands on, more involved with a client.

In other words, the job description describes the formal requirements of the job but fails to delineate the emotional skills and abilities that will be required of incumbents. This failure to accurately specify the nature of the work and the requisite “interpersonal chemistry” (Goleman 2006, 279) means that the job description details only the cognitive tasks required by the job. It is left to informal person-to-person communication to explain the emotion work requirements.

Why should we care about emotional labor and the art of leadership? We suggest that the skills inherent in their practice are essential – indeed the essence – of service to the public. Each of the three agencies examined here represents the front lines of the service exchange between government and its citizenry. Citizen satisfaction – customer service – matters. An emotional-engaged leader plays a pivotal role in its determination.

Citizen Satisfaction

They need to make a personal connection and understand how the patient perceives the illness and treatment. In other words, they need to deploy empathy and build rapport
(Goleman 2006, 263).

In an environment where understaffed public services must meet the same “customer” expectations as business establishments, positive exchanges become a benchmark for performance. When citizens meet friendly street-level bureaucrats, they are more likely to have a positive assessment of services rendered and of public services in general. Just as citizens like their own Congressman but revile Congress as an institution, citizens may complain about government, *per se*, but rate a particular agency – or worker – positively.

The goal of citizen satisfaction is met through maintaining a work environment that rewards positive exchanges between citizens and the State. And this requires workers who are capable, experienced, motivated to perform, and who take pride in their work, and leaders who recognize and champion this cause. The subject of job satisfaction is an important variable in this equation. There are two sides to emotion work. On the constructive side, it gives meaning to the exchanges that occur between workers and citizens, leading to job satisfaction. On the other side, too much of it with too little reward contributes to burnout. Looking first at the constructive aspect, the comments below describe how workers express the rewarding aspects of their jobs:

Nobody's getting rich here and it's not like you get any kind of reward from it. People hang in here because they think it's important and they feel like what they do matters.

I must be just emotionally drained, but in the same token when we've done something really great here it's, nothing beats that feeling. You go home and it's like, wow, I've really accomplished something. You know that's why I never got into the corporate world or did anything like that – you can't beat this – this feeling...Here you see the fruits of your labor...I directly impact the lives of our clients from doing my work here and it's for the better and it's just – nothing beats that feelings, it's a euphoric feeling.

On the other hand, emotion work can result in burnout if the employee fails to develop coping mechanisms. The comments below demonstrate this.

In my first year, I did not take a day off – I worked Thanksgiving – I worked every holiday, thinking somehow that if I gave it enough, I would solve all this stuff. That's just not true, so I have learned. I've actually started playing the piano again, which I haven't done in 30 years.

I come in early, I stay late. But when I leave here I really do have the ability to put my work behind me. I don't like to take work home because I like to keep the separation. I can feel when I need to be away from here for a little while and I try to pay attention to that and to honor that because I know that if I do that then I will be refreshed and better able to do my job and be more productive.

You're constantly balancing all of those things and ultimately you have to put it into little pockets because otherwise you can get overly stressed and become ineffective. We talk about that a lot and it doesn't do to get over the top with it because then you stop being effective.

As awful as it is, you have to have a strong enough constitution that you have to deal with whatever is there, and at the same time not be so blunted that it doesn't matter anymore...the greatest danger in these kinds of jobs and I think you see it with case workers that are – frequently is that they get so used to the abnormal that it begins to look normal and that's when you start having problems. If you begin to think that every

house should have green plastic bags with dirty laundry and garbage all over the place and you begin to think that's the norm, you're in deep trouble and then you need to leave because I think you have to be able to still be appalled and annoyed and shocked and angry and all of those things without, as I said, going over the bend with it.

Another difficulty in delivering public services 'feelingly' occurs when the citizen simply does not understand capacity limitations. This produces a mismatch between citizen expectations and practical reality. It complicates matters and makes the work of public administrators more difficult. For example, two call takers for the police department have this exchange:

Citizen expectations can be difficult to deal with: People call – then call back in and are like well why haven't y'all solved my crime yet? We don't solve crimes in an hour like they do on TV, you know.

Conclusion

'You can't be a true leader without connecting.... When you start thinking about it, leveraging the organization, it's all emotional.' You have to capture the hearts and souls and minds of people. Then you can get their energy (Denhardt & Denhardt 2006, 80).

As Alvin Toffler observed, it is erroneous to think that a style of leadership that worked in the past could work in the present, much less the future. Just as the world has progressed from the Industrial Revolution to the age of technology, "there must be a Leadership Revolution" (Parker & Begnaud 2004, 2). Emotional labor and affective leadership are joined in this movement.

The work of government is people-work with all its foibles. The formal language of our field misses the mark when applied to care-centered and emotion work. "If we want public administration scholarship capable of speaking truth to power, it must speak in a language that is meaningful" (Guy 2003, 652). Relationship, rapport, interaction, compassion, service, personal, intervention, connectedness, and *soulwork* comprise the vocabulary of this relational administrative perspective. Emotional labor is inherent to effective public service. It adds the 'live' dimension to knowledge work in person-to-person transactions and requires the employee to 'work feelingly'. Humanist Aldous Huxley captured this sentiment over sixty years ago: Our institutions are "organized lovelessness" (Huxley 1945, 96). "When people are treated as numbered units, interchangeable parts of no interest or value in themselves, empathy is sacrificed in the name of efficiency and cost-effectiveness" (Goleman 2006, 252). Many of our respondents at the DOC and TPD expressed a similar sentiment.

Emotional competence varies with the individual. At high skill levels, it prepares the worker to dig through considerable complexity and make a reasoned, often nonverbal, instantaneous response. Less skilled workers make inappropriate responses or responses that fail to facilitate the interaction. Emotion work is learned, just as cognitive work is. The emotional domain is as legitimate as the cognitive domain, and is more immediate and forceful.

Studies comparing exemplary leaders with mediocre ones have found that the competencies that distinguish the best from the worst in human services have little or nothing to do with technical knowledge or skill, and "everything to do with social and emotional intelligence...What

distinguishes leaders...goes far beyond that knowledge, into interpersonal skills like empathy, conflict resolution, and people development” (Goleman 2006, 261, emphasis in original). Compassionate public service needs caring leaders, ones who themselves can give their staff “the sense of a safe emotional base to work from.”

Connectivity and relationship-building are key leadership traits. So too are the skills of developing rapport and emotional engagement. “The best bosses are people who are trustworthy, emphatic and connected, who make us feel calm, appreciated, and inspired” (Goleman 2006, 277). “‘Feeling connected’ ...refers not to some value niceness but to concrete emotional links between [leader and worker]...One powerful method to foster such links is to build ...the sort of attuned relationship between [them]” (Goleman 2006, 282). Leaders set much of the emotional tone that flows through the halls of their organizations; this in turn has consequences for how well the collective objectives are met. Leaders need to nurture “social wisdom,” the qualities that allow the people we connect with in the workplace to flourish (Goleman 2006, 315). For Denhardt & Denhardt:

Leadership is far more deeply rooted in the human psyche than we tend to acknowledge. We think that is because the world has focused excessively on the science of leadership, a topic that is amenable to the rational use of technique, and has vastly underestimated the art of leadership, which clearly is not. Recognizing the artistic dimension of leadership, however, compels us to acknowledge and give further thought to the inner resources required by the leader (p. 160-161).

The most important challenge facing public administrators is not to make their work more efficient but to make it more human and caring (Stivers forthcoming). Affective leadership, and a recognition of the centrality of emotional labor therein, are the means by which this approach is championed.

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