



“THE ENTIRE DAY IS AN ACT OF RESTRAINT”

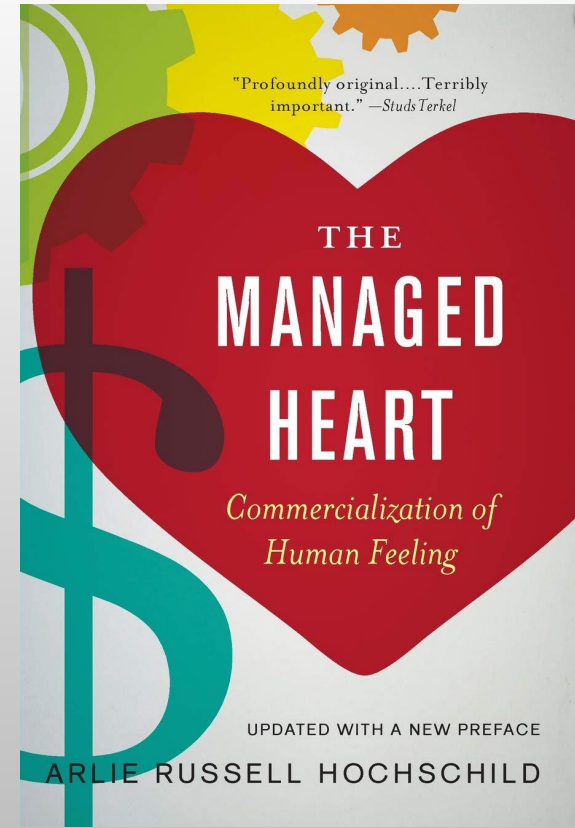
THE DEVALUING OF EMOTIONAL LABOUR IN LIBRARY WORK

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POLITICS OF LIBRARIES III CONFERENCE

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL LABOUR?

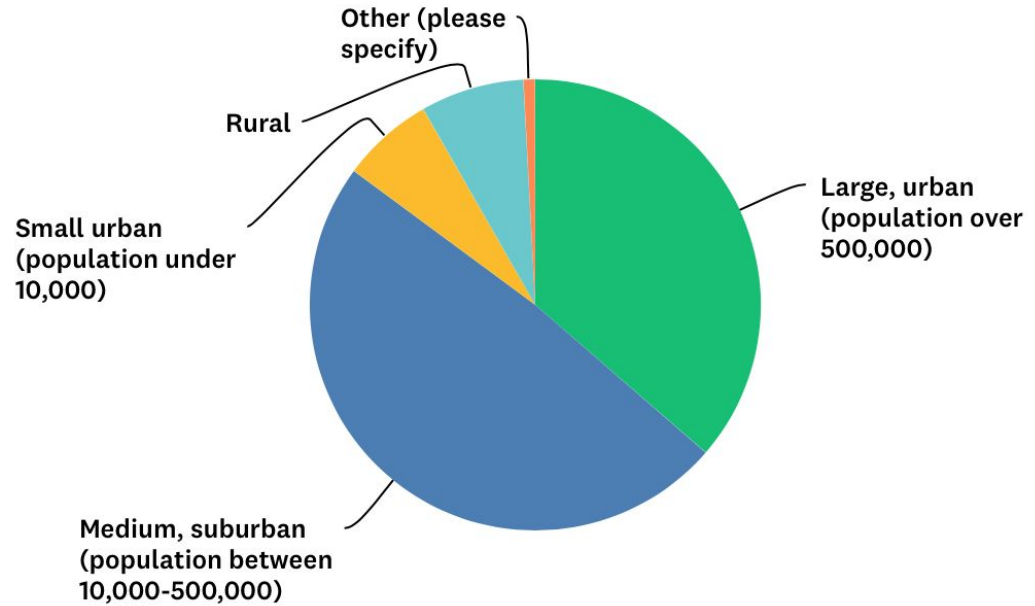
WORK IS CONSIDERED TO BE EMOTIONAL LABOUR WHEN ACTIONS “[REQUIRE] ONE TO INDUCE OR **SUPPRESS FEELING** IN ORDER TO SUSTAIN THE OUTWARD COUNTENANCE THAT PRODUCES THE PROPER STATE OF MIND IN OTHERS” (HOCHSCHILD, 1983).

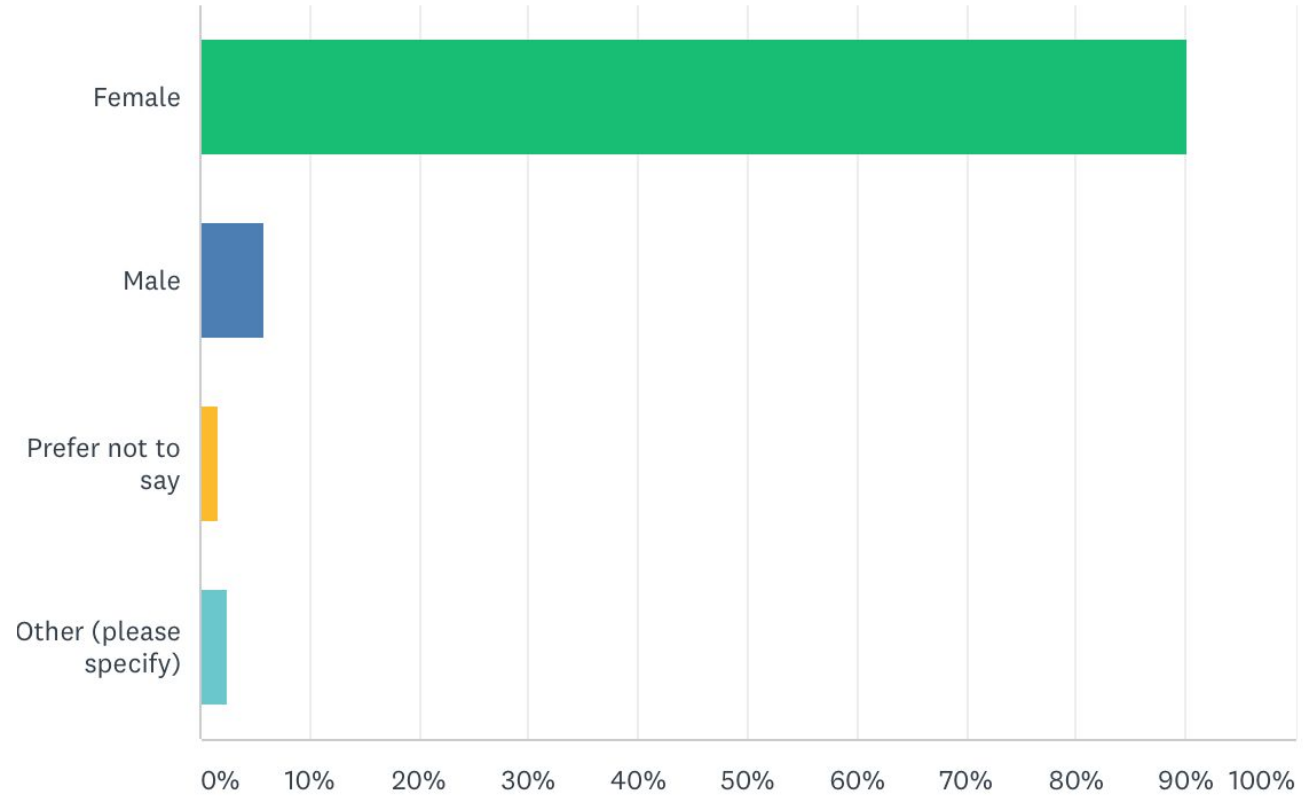


LIBRARY WORK AS GENDERED AND AFFECTIVE LABOUR



THE RESEARCH PROJECT





LIBRARY WORKERS REGULARLY EXPERIENCE...

(REPORTED IN OUR RESEARCH STUDY)



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

HIGH INSTANCE OF SURFACE ACTING AND HIGH COST TO SURFACE ACTING

AUTHENTIC EMPATHY

AFFECTIVE LABOUR

"HAVING TO SAY YES TO EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE"

PERCEIVED LACK OF SUPPORT FROM ORGANIZATIONS

AT ITS WORST: EXHAUSTION AND BURNOUT



GENDER AND SERVICE PHILOSOPHY

Historically, gendered professions are more prone to the negative effects of emotional labour.

Is the customer always right?



RUSA AND EMOTIONAL LABOUR

RUSA Guidelines

Reference and User Services Association

Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and
Information Service Providers

- Approachability
- Interest
- Listening/Inquiring
- Searching
- Follow-up

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/div/rusa/resources/guidelines/index.cfm>

- Emphasis on how to manage patrons' emotional needs rather than their information needs (Emmelhainz, et al, 2017)
- Reinforces library work as gendered and affective labour
- Guidelines place “responsibility for the success of a reference interaction solely with the library, [their] self-conduct, and [their] emotional labour” (Emmelhain, et al, 2017, p. 41)

STRATEGIES TO MANAGE EMOTIONAL LABOUR

- SUPPORTIVE CO-WORKERS, FAMILY & FRIENDS
- SELF CARE
- MINDFULNESS
- CONSIDERING LEAVING THE PROFESSION OR CHANGING CAREER PATHS
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BY LEADERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION (Matteson & Miller, 2014; Shuler & Morgan, 2013)
- FOCUS ON DEEP-ACTING SKILLS RATHER THAN SURFACE-ACTING OR DISPLAY RULES (Bono & Vey, 2007)





TRAINING AND EDUCATION ON EMOTIONAL LABOUR

WORKPLACES COULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR LIBRARY WORKERS IF THEY FOCUSED ON:

- TRAINING (INCLUDING DEEP ACTING)
- UPDATED HIRING PRACTICES
- UNDERSTANDING, OPENNESS, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

POST-SECONDARY CURRICULUM IN LIBRARIAN & LIBRARY TECHNICIAN TRAINING PROGRAMS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, COMMUNICATIONS,
CUSTOMER SERVICE
- MENTAL HEALTH & SELF CARE

CHANGE OUR PERSPECTIVE OF AFFECTIVE LABOUR

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- ACKNOWLEDGE!
- POLICY CHANGES
- EMOTIONAL LABOUR TRAINING
- SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
- EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN HIRING
- SELF-CARE TECHNIQUES ARE IMPORTANT (BUT NOT ON THEIR OWN)

We'd like to know ...



Does this resonate with you? Are you outside of the public library realm and have had the same experiences?

What are the solutions? What strategies have you used?

MORE INFORMATION

NOW PUBLISHED:

Rodger, J. & Erickson, N. (2021). The emotional labour of public library work. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research*, 16(1).
<https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v16i1.6189>

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