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Emotional Labour and Occupational Identity:
Passionate Rationality in the New Zealand
Parliamentary Workplace

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Abstract

This thesis explores parliamentarians' emotional labour in their workplace, and argues the enactment of passionate rationality is crucial to how parliamentarians accomplish vocational authenticity. The New Zealand parliamentary workplace is characterised by an elaborate set of feeling rules and a complex emotional culture. On entry to parliament, parliamentarians go through a period of identity transformation akin to a moral career. Parliamentarians must manage emotion to achieve their occupational identities according to local feeling rules.

Based on analysis of in-depth group and individual interviews with parliamentarians, and focusing on the passage of the Civil Union Bill as an exemplar of parliamentarians' emotion work, three interpretative repertoires were identified in their accounts of emotion in the workplace. These repertoires, The Game, The Performance and The Crusade are work-place specific meaning-making resources whose flexible deployment enabled parliamentarians to assert claims of occupational identity and vocational authenticity.

These repertoires show the emotional labour involved in parliamentarians' negotiation of shared meanings around 'entering' the occupational role and asserting the authenticity of their new identities. In particular, The Crusade repertoire makes available the subject position of the Knight, the subject position important for accomplishment of being a passionately rational worker.

In this thesis, I introduce two new concepts for emotional labour in complex workplaces where that labour has both exchange and use value; emotional convection and personified emotion. Together these concepts allow for a more thorough theorisation of emotion work than do existing concepts of emotional labour.

Although developed in relation to the work of parliamentarians, personified emotion and emotional convection have utility for understanding other contemporary experiences of work where emotion management within a complex emotional culture is

fundamental to both occupational identity and the accomplishment of vocational authenticity.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	xi
List of Appendices	xi
Chapter One	
Exploring the Emotional Labour of Parliamentarians	1
Situating parliamentarians as emotional labourers	1
Parliament as a workplace	3
Emotional labour and occupational identity	4
Structure of the thesis	5
Conclusion	7
Chapter Two	
Contextualising Parliamentarians' Emotional Labour	9
Introduction	9
The sociological study of workplace emotion	9
Performing emotional labour	11
Extending emotional labour	13
Emotional labour in professional work	14
Critiquing extensions to the emotional labour concept	17
Organisational cultures and identities	20
Parliamentary workplaces	24
Occupational identities	25
Parliamentary work in New Zealand	26
The composition of parliament	27

Parliament's legislative process	28
Select committees	29
The job of the parliamentarian	29
Introducing Mixed Member Proportional Representation	30
The introduction of the Civil Union Bill	32
Locating the parliamentarian as a 'type' of worker	33
Emotion, organisational cultures and studying parliamentarians	35
Conclusion	36

Chapter Three

Theorising Emotion and the 'Self'	38
Introduction	38
Social constructionism as epistemology	39
The importance of language	42
Understanding emotion as a social construct	43
Clarifying emotion	45
Avoiding the reason-emotion dichotomy	46
Critique of social constructionist approaches to emotion	48
Understanding the self as a social construct	50
Symbolic interaction	51
The socially negotiated self	53
Goffman's theorising on the self	55
Implications of a socially negotiated self	58
Socialisation to occupational identities	60
Conclusion	62

Chapter Four

Researching Emotion at Work	63
Introduction	63
Research design	64
Ethical considerations	66
Approaching participants and doing the interviews	67

Interview details	69
Managing the data	70
Analysis	73
Accounts	74
Discourse analysis	75
Interpretative repertoires	77
Positioning	78
Reflections on the research experience	79
Observations on the research decisions	79
Liminality	81
Conclusion	82

Chapter Five

Becoming a Parliamentarian:

Identity Transformation and Vocational Authenticity	84
Introduction	84
From ‘me’ to MP: the moral career	85
Admission and mortification	89
Adaptation and release	93
Interpretative repertoires as guides to the workplace	98
The competitive imagery of The Game repertoire	100
The staged imagery of The Performance repertoire	102
The battle imagery of The Crusade repertoire	104
Emotion as part of an organisation’s culture	107
Learning to ‘feel’ differently	109
The ‘ideal’ worker and vocational authenticity	112
Conclusion	115

Chapter Six

Being Vocationally ‘Authentic’:

Passionate Rationality at Work	117
Introduction	117

The repertoires and their consequences for meaning	118
Understanding emotion through The Game repertoire	120
Institutional knowledge and practice	120
Buffering emotional experience	123
Understanding emotion through The Performance repertoire	126
Institutional knowledge and practice	126
Justifying emotional performances	130
Understanding emotion through The Crusade repertoire	134
Institutional knowledge and practice	135
Authenticating emotional experience	138
The ‘ideal’ worker constituted through the repertoires	140
Practicing passionate rationality	142
Conclusion	143

Chapter Seven

Debating the Civil Union Bill:

Asserting Authenticity through Passionate Rationality	145
Introduction	145
The significance of the Civil Union Bill	146
Making sense of the bill through the repertoires	149
The Civil Union Bill understood through The Game repertoire	150
The bill as a competitive game of tactics	151
Emotion as either tactical response or ‘out of bounds’	152
Team Mate, Game Players and Tacticians	153
The Civil Union Bill understood through The Performance repertoire	155
The bill as a scripted performance	156
Emotion as a performance technique	158
The Star Performer	159
The Civil Union Bill understood through The Crusade repertoire	162
The bill as a moral battle	163
Emotion as motivation for action	165
Knights and Enemies	167

Authenticity and passionate rationality	171
Conclusion	172
Chapter Eight	
Rethinking Emotional Labour	174
Emotion management and parliamentary work	176
The place for emotional labour	178
Extending theorising through emotional convocation	180
Personified emotion	185
Future directions for the research	188
Concluding remarks	190
References	192
Appendices	203

List of Tables

Table 2.1	Bolton's typology of workplace emotion	19
Table 4.1	Charting the changes of methodological orientation	74
Table 5.1	Terms and tropes associated with the three repertoires	99
Table 6.1.	Understanding and meaning-making through the interpretative repertoires	119
Table 7.1	Understanding outcomes of the interpretative repertoires	150
Table 8.1	Types of emotion management and their characteristics	181
Table 8.2	Extended typology of workplace emotion and emotion management categories	188

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Information sheet for small group interview	203
Appendix B: Cover letter	206
Appendix C: Information Sheet for one-to-one interviews	207
Appendix D: Consent form	210
Appendix E: Question schedule	211