Emotions at Work: Acknowledging Interspecies Emotional Labor of Guide Dog Mobility Instructors

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Abstract

Emotional labor is the management of feelings to present appropriate emotion displays in work-related interactions. This paper acknowledges the emotional labor of guide dog mobility instructors in their work for and with guide dogs. It is interspersed with personal vignettes from my time as a guide dog mobility instructor. While educating canines, instructors conduct both deep and surface acting to improve their relationship with and education of the canines they live and work with. Although challenging, it has the potential to be enjoyable. During their work with visually impaired clients, instructors may place a stronger focus on acoustic versus visual emotion displays. The hope is that initiating this discussion can motivate efforts to proactively support the emotional labor of instructors and improve their relationships with their guide dog co-workers and clients as a result.

Keywords

guide dog mobility instructor – guide dog – emotional labour – animals at work – emotion management

In her study of flight attendants, Hochschild (1983) defined emotional labor (EL) as an “induction or suppression of feeling in order to sustain an outward appearance” during work-related interactions. Although Grandey and Gabriel (2015, p. 324) feel that research on EL has become “stalled at a crossroads” in recent years following this initial introduction and elaborations,
acknowledging EL can illuminate “hidden injuries” within a topic of study (Hochschild, 2008, p. 80). This paper highlights some of the hidden injuries which can impact guide dog mobility instructors (GDMIs) in their work for and with guide dogs, by acknowledging the EL they perform for both canine (Canis lupus familiaris) co-workers and human clients. EL performed in human-human work has been researched extensively. However, existing literature concerning the emotional lives of GDMIs (for some exceptions, see Kohl, 2010; Pemberton, 2019; Putnam, 1954; Sanders, 1999) and interspecies EL (for exceptions, see Coulter, 2016a, 2020; Dashper, 2019; Macpherson-Mayor et al., 2020; Taylor, 2010; Taylor & Fraser, 2019; Tremoleda & Kerton, 2020) is limited.

While discussions of emotion management include emotion work, it refers to suppressing, redirecting, and altering of emotions in private contexts. EL, however, specifically addresses the professional management of a worker’s emotion displays while interacting with clients, co-workers, or employers which has exchange value (Hochschild, 1983; Lee & Madera, 2019; Whitaker, 2019). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that there exists an easily blurred reality in which EL can, and often does, extend to private, personal lives (Knight, 2020, p. 611). However, work such as that of a GDMI with regular social interactions inherently requires EL (Hochschild, 1983; Leidner, 1999, p. 84; Wharton, 2009), and Coulter (2016a, 2020) highlights this argument more generally within animal work. Indeed, feelings are often, as McCarthy (2017, p. 8) wrote, “social things.”

This is because, Hochschild (2008, 2009b) explains, emotions are generally induced by imaginations and memories of, as well as interactions with, other individuals throughout a lifespan. Furthermore, cultures develop unique prototypes for expectations concerning feeling, which, “like differently tuned keys on a piano, allows us to hear different inner notes” (Hochschild, 2009b, p. 31). Indeed, EL is strongly regulated by social and organizational expectations and practices (Hochschild, 2009b; Whitaker, 2019). It needs to be considered, therefore, that this paper may speak differently to GDMIs across varied geographic, cultural, historical, and organizational contexts. While the EL expected of GDMIs may vary, the guidelines they align to when performing EL are generally structurally comparable. As Whitaker (2019, p. 330) shared, to “bring yourself to work” is to undertake “specific forms of EL.”

Individuals perform EL differently by utilizing two primary strategies: deep and surface acting (Hochschild, 1983). Grandey and Gabriel (2015, p. 329) suggested that while not always independent of each other, they are the two, as Fouquereau et al. (2019, p. 269) observe, that have received the most academic interest. Deep acting involves stimulating and altering feelings to create authentic outward emotion displays to convey the expected professional
demeanor (Geddes & Lindebaum, 2020; Lee & Madera, 2019; Wen et al., 2019). A GDMI might feel frustrated, for example, when a client is taking somewhat longer to learn and, as Putnam (1954, p. 170) worded bluntly, "spoiling a favorite dog." Rather than displaying their frustration, a GDMI is expected to present a supportive, professional emotion display by fundamentally altering their feelings about the situation (if the well-being of the canine is not being negatively impacted by the client's actions). This might be accomplished empathetically by remembering what it was like to work with a guide dog for the first time. Liu et al. (2019, p. 579) refer to this as "faking in good faith." Less authentic than deep acting is surface acting (Hochschild, 1983). Here, an employee is presenting "fake" emotion displays and suppressing their true feelings rather than altering them (Fouquereau et al., 2019; Lee & Madera, 2019; S. Liu et al., 2019).

This paper is supplemented with autoethnographic data from the six years I spent as a GDMI in Germany. Being an anthrozoologist and certified canine trainer and behaviour consultant (by the IHK Potsdam), with experience educating 30 guide dogs, allows for rich insight. During each class1 from 2012 until 2018, I took notes as part of the protocol for my business, as well as personal journals. Von der Weid (2019, p. 8) describes a similar documentation process practiced during the education of guide dogs in Brazil. In addition, work-related notes documented dates and times, as well as detailed bullet-point lists of the events during each session. Humans and canines who are mentioned have been anonymized.

Autoethnographies can offer deeper reflections, discussions, and ways of learning about symbiotic transspecies interactions (Hamilton & Taylor, 2017, p. 124). They can assist autoethnographers in processing difficult experiences while offering readers insight, hope, and moments of reflection (Ellis, 2004). The aim is to engage the reader's emotions in a meaningful way through storytelling (Coulter, 2018, p. 58; Hamilton & Taylor, 2017; Harmon, 2019, p. 320). As Goode (2007, p. 126) wrote, remarks made by canine trainers, such as myself, while valid, should not be “treated as overall adequate formulations or descriptions.” Therefore, although I am a “critical insider” and “long term genuine participant” (Hodkinson, 2002, pp. 4–6; Sands, 2019, p. 372), this paper presents my experiences, without encompassing the experiences of GDMIs internationally. It acts as the first academic paper, as far as I am aware, written by a GDMI about their career (for an exception, see the self-publication of Kohl, 2010) or the EL of GDMIS. In doing so, its purpose is to acknowledge that GDMIS perform interspecies EL when working with both canines and clients.

1 “Class” refers to the, on average three-week-long, class where GDMIS instruct clients to develop as teams with their guide dogs.
**EL in Animal Work**

Animal work acts as an “organizing framework to highlight and think about the work done with, by, and for animals” (Coulter, 2016a, p. 2). Coulter (2016a, 2020) plays a key role in highlighting the EL expected of professionals conducting animal work and the coping strategies they develop to do so in a humane manner. I argue that expectations of EL are quite high for GDMIs. Heightened levels of emotion are involved in educating a guide dog, developing a team, working with a visually impaired individual, and the intensive care work required to do these simultaneously. Furthermore, the inspiration to work with individuals of other species is often emotion-based, and emotions will, indeed must, take a complex central stage in interspecies work-lives (Coulter, 2016a, p. 35). Sanders (1993, p. 205) extended this to relationships with companion animals, such as canines. Therefore, it is common for individuals involved in animal work to experience an overlap of their professional and personal identities due to the work and EL they perform (Coulter, 2016a).

Pemberton (2019) essentially discusses the EL of GDMIs without directly labeling it as such. When analyzing The Seeing Eye guide dog school during the 1930s in the United States, his stories suggest that EL rested at the core of a skilled GDMI because “an instructor's emotional discipline was of paramount importance in managing the training relationship and companionship with their canine coworker” (Pemberton, 2019, p. 95). A historical comparison of over 90 years is being made here and at later points, despite differing emotional and cultural regimes and geographic locations. The reasons I have done so are twofold. Firstly, the existing literature on the EL of GDMIs is highly limited, making reliance on historical writings not entirely avoidable. Secondly, what Pemberton describes is relevant to modern approaches to education in most guide dog schools (Berentzen, 2016; Kohl, 2010).

Putnam (1954) and Sanders (1999) explained how GDMIs and guide dogs often develop a strong bond which can act as a challenge during class:

> The dogs loved to work, and [...] they greet their heroes [the GDMIs] with furiously wagging tails and clamored to be the first. This was heartwarming, but once instructors had paired their dogs ... they had to ignore those pleading eyes and wagging tails, so that the dogs would transfer their affection to their masters. (Putnam, 1954, p. 179)

This can be a greatly conflicting time for both GDMIs and guide dogs, requiring a significant effort to manage emotion displays, something which existing literature does not do justice.
Furthermore, dialogues concerning the EL performed by disabled workers for able-bodied clients (Wilton, 2008), and able-bodied workers for, in this case, visually impaired individuals are lacking. Indeed, definitions of EL predominantly refer to visual displays and specify EL, as quoted from Hochschild (1983) above, as an effort to sustain an “outward appearance.” However, as is explored in the vignette below, GDMIs place extra care in managing how they reveal their emotions acoustically when working with visually impaired individuals. This is predominantly done by explicitly explaining the presence of certain sounds and minimizing, for example, sighs (i.e. of frustration or tiredness), distracting sounds (i.e. using a phone or turning their head away while speaking), throat-clearing, or mumbling. I propose that “acoustic emotion displays”, beyond speech and intonation, can play a significant role in the EL practice between GDMIs and visually impaired individuals and, therefore, the development of guide dog teams.

For example, at the beginning of my career, I was teaching a fully visually impaired client, Camila, and the guide dog I had educated for her named Bandit: Sitting together in a busy subway on a hot summer’s day, my lack of sleep the night before caught up with me, as the rocking of the subway and heat within the wagon left me feeling drowsy. I found myself lost in thought and absentmindedly sighed. Camila’s face twisted with concern, as she turned to face me. “Are you upset? Have I done something wrong?” Disoriented, it took some time to understand that it had been the sigh which had triggered this concern on her behalf. After reassuring her it had been meaningless, she nodded understandingly.

In such a scenario, a sighted client may have confirmed from my visual emotion displays that the sigh was not directed at her, whereas Camila needed an acoustic confirmation concerning the nature of my emotion display. Years later, a GDMI told me of an almost identical interaction with one of their former clients. In practice, the sounds we made acted as an acoustic appearance, and I began to suppress sounds, such as sighs, which could result in clients thinking I was distracted or frustrated in an effort to offer the expected professionalism.

Other times, I intentionally created sound. For a while, I wore three small hoop earrings in each ear. Enthusiastically nodding or shaking my head in agreement or disagreement emitted a distinct, light clinking sound. Clients often commented that they enjoyed hearing my nods of agreement, whether

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2 This is not a direct quote. I have paraphrased to offer Camila, and other individuals mentioned as part of my autoethnography throughout, as much anonymity as possible.
or not they were accompanied by words of affirmation. It offered acoustic insight into my emotion displays which they were unable to observe visually, allowing me to offer a richer EL performance. Therefore, I began to express enthusiasm, joy, or disagreement through the purposefully vigorous nodding and shaking of my head while replying verbally, as well.

**Feminization of EL**

The common belief that performing EL, as well as animal work, is “women’s work” can be deeply rooted within some societies (Coulter, 2016b; Hochschild, 1983; Tweedy, 2019). Especially to succeed within their respective male-dominated spheres, females working with and for other species will often hone their EL skills to present self-assuredness (see Cassidy, 2002, p. 35; Hurn, 2008, pp. 37–38). Hochschild (1983) explained that this might often be the case for females asked to perform high levels of EL at a young age when it is common for their identities to be less established. The unfortunate need for women to identify with their male counterparts and rid themselves of the feminine to be successful, while criticized if they act “too masculine,” has the potential, for some, to lead to further “identity confusion” (Hochschild, 1983).

Furthermore, Bolton (2000, p. 582) reports gynecology nurses describing their unit as a “closed world’ an ‘emotionful place’ and a ‘women’s world.’” I extend this sentiment to GDMIs, as their work is feminized, rife with emotion, and due to the career’s specialization, a “closed-off” world – both interpersonally amongst GDMIs and collectively from other workers (see also Goode, 2007, p. 211). Taylor and Fraser (2019, p. 344) observe the common circulatory dynamic experienced by women who “are marginalized because they are (too) emotional,” while “emotions are marginalized because they are (too) associated with femininity.” As was observed in the flight attendants in Hochschild’s (1983) research, female care and service workers who do not perform EL successfully or allow their curated emotion displays to crack will often be more harshly criticized than their male colleagues.

Such dynamics became especially clear to me during a conflict between a client and me. We had grown to be friends – something which can be common in the early years of a GDMI’s career, but more experienced GDMIs will often advise against. GDMIs are expected to act in a friendly manner. However, developing especially close friendships can challenge their ability to set boundaries or return to the professional role when needed. For example, I formed a more personal friendship while I taught Alina how to work with her guide dog, Quinn:
Breaks offset the many hours spent instructing the team and allowed for friendly, more personal relationships to form between the three of us while enjoying the first warm spring sunrays: “To finish off [our day], we sat by the [river] Main. [Alina] said it was all like vacation.” (excerpt from notes, 10 April 2015)

After some time had passed, a conflict arose between Alina and me, which resulted in us no longer working together.

She and Quinn had been having difficulties that would directly and negatively impact their safety if I did not intervene. Alina, however, did not wish to implement the changes I suggested. Now, without the professional distance which experienced GDMIs had advised being kept, matters became more personal requiring significantly increased levels of surface acting on my behalf.

I found myself standing on Alina’s doorstep. She shook her head aggressively. “You are younger than me. I don’t need to take instructions from you!” I sharply breathed out, gathering my thoughts before responding. We had been standing here, discussing this conflict for some time and I dug deep for crumbs of patience. At that moment, the hallway behind her was filled with the broad frame of her partner, who barked that we should “stop being such emotional women and just get over it”. After pausing for a moment, lifting my gaze to meet hers as I focused on steadying my voice, I explained, “It is my job to ensure that you and Quinn live and work safely as a team and that requires me to give instruction”. My knees felt weak and, although I presented a professional display, I felt shaken to my core and was painfully aware of the extent to which my mask was beginning to crack.

Becoming a GDMI at the young age of 18 had presented challenges throughout my career. At that moment, I asked myself, “If I’m doing deep acting for an audience from whom I’m disconnected, how can I maintain my self-esteem without becoming cynical?” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 134). I found no satisfying answer. With my self-esteem and feelings bruised, I had to walk away with the consequence of never seeing the canine I had educated for her again, a co-worker I had also grown especially close with. Having spoken to many GDMIs since that conflict, some with over 30 years of experience, it has become clear that most, if not all, GDMIs had countless such tensions with clients throughout their careers. It is common for individuals with what is perceived by some as a “lower status,” including young females, to possess a “weaker claim to the right
to define what is going on” – their judgments are often not as easily trusted as those of others (Hochschild, 1983, p. 173).

Pemberton (2019, p. 95) explains that The Seeing Eye exclusively hired male GDMIs because “instructors worked with a dominant masculine discourse of human emotional restraint set against the perceived uncontrolled emotion of human feminised bodies.” These practices have since changed significantly, yet it is worth noting this shift over time in expectations of GDMIs’ emotion management abilities and education methods used with guide dogs. For example, Berentzen (2016, p. 274 own translation) states that women are capable of being GDMIs and owning guide dog schools because they are not only “self-confident founders, but as 'emotional people', they often have the quality that a good dog handler needs.”

EL at Home

An interviewee speaking with Sanders (1999) shares the emotional tolls that being a GDMI can have:

I just sometimes get tired of dogs. I work with them all day and then when I go home there are all these dogs around frantically trying to get my attention. Sometimes I feel like I just can't stand to see another wagging tail. (Sanders, 1999, p. 90)

I observed this sentiment in myself, especially at the end of physically and emotionally challenging workdays. This passage highlights that GDMIs not only perform EL with their clients, but with the canines they work and sometimes live with, as well. I lived in a rather small flat with five, at one point six, medium to large canines at varying levels of their education. After an especially challenging day, I might have felt frustrated, claustrophobic, or simply exhausted, and wanted to relax. Instead, I performed deep acting to consciously alter my emotion display to that which was required to take care of the canines. I was responsible for their well-being and needed to offer them services (i.e., feed

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and groom them or go for walks) without imposing my frustration or other impending feelings on them.

**EL as a Teaching Skill**

Pemberton (2019, p. 95) explains that even during leisure time with guide dogs, GDMIs require “emotional self-discipline” when calling an off-leash canine to them, for example. GDMIs must have the “will power to avoid [...] using the name in angry [sic], corrective tone of voice” (Humphrey, n.d., p. 168; Pemberton, 2019, p. 95). This extends, as Pearson (2019, p. 741 emphasis in original) addresses, to trainers educating military dogs:

> With ‘soft dogs’ (*chien mous*) the trainer needed to persevere, while with ‘violent’ ones they needed to be ‘calm.’ Since the trainer bore ultimate responsibility for shaping the dog, he needed to be aware of his own emotional presence: a ‘violent and irritable man’ would never succeed in training a useful dog. The training manuals attempted to create an emotional stance for trainers: kind, patient, and attentive.

Similarly, flight attendants (Hochschild, 1983) and nurses are described as being expected to “maintain a friendly attitude while suppressing their true emotions” (Hong & Kim, 2019, p. 509).

Furthermore, EL can be required to offer vocal instructions that “stroke their canine coworkers with words” to make work “interesting and understandable,” as Pemberton (2019, p. 95) explains. GDMIs must pay attention to how they speak with canines, and a reward for “work well done should be delivered in a ‘happy and appreciative’ tone and at a low pitch to indicate ‘calmness, surety and friendliness’” (Humphrey, n.d., p. 149; Pemberton, 2019, p. 95). Indeed, a GDMI explained the importance of achieving “self-mastery of their body and emotions. [...] If you get can get that [sic], you are already half way toward being an instructor” (Humphrey, n.d.; Pemberton, 2019, p. 95). Although these comments refer to a historical guide dog practice, it rings true, as mentioned previously, to how GDMIs approach their work in most modern schools, although the exact approach will vary geographically and culturally.

Pemberton (2019, p. 95) noted that what GDMIs ask of guide dogs, such as which direction to turn, must be delivered with “specific caressing qualities rather than authoritative, harsh tones.” This allows for the development of trust between them, as the canine may perceive “the command, not as a demand for absolute obedience, but as a request their trainer trusted them to
comply with if it was safe to do so” (Humphrey, n.d.; Pemberton, 2019, p. 95). In Pemberton’s (2019, p. 95) work, “verbally caressing” guide dogs refers to “a form of ‘pay cheques,’ units of exchange to give recognition to the dog for an effective thought or safe decision.” This effectively links the work, in this case, the education, of a guide dog to involving EL, which, by definition, has exchange value and is paid for within professional services (Hochschild, 1983). In other words, EL performed by competent GDMIs is one part of the “payment,” or exchange, for the canine to practice the skills and EL they will later require in their career. This can only follow if a canine shows, through their breeding, personality, temperament, and reception of their education, that they are interested in and suitable for the work (see, for example, Coulter, 2020, p. 36). As Porcher (2017, p. 28) wrote, “cooperation [between workers] cannot be imposed.”

The ability to skillfully manage emotion displays can only be competently utilized in a believable manner if the GDMI is either highly skilled in doing so or feels that their efforts will be successful based on their relationship with a given canine. For example, Sanders (1999) quotes a GDMI touching on the emotional and personality mismatches between guide dogs and GDMIs:

Dick says, “Yes, they gave Uvi to me at first, but we just didn’t get along.” He goes on to explain that he defines himself as especially good at training “hard” dogs. He sees Uvi as a “soft” dog, meaning that she is compliant and sensitive. (Sanders & Arluke, 1996, pp. 75–76)

Dick may not have wished to work with Uvi, because he did not like her as an individual or he was perhaps not skilled enough in performing EL to offer Uvi the demeanor required for her optimal learning.

Relevant here is the concept addressed by Colombetti (2009, p. 7) that language can be “poorer than the experience.” Individuals might express in a “tame” tone why they did not want to work with a certain canine and seem calm, when in reality “repressing a more complex mix of rage and resentment, perhaps accumulated over time” (Colombetti, 2009, p. 7). Furthermore, Dick’s choice of the word “soft,” identical to the wording that Pearson (2019) used, speaks to the expectations placed on female guide dogs in particular, to perhaps conduct more deep acting than their male counterparts to appear especially accommodating, pleasant, and professional.
Enjoyable EL

EL can be an aspect of service and care work that individuals take great pride in and enjoy (see Hochschild, 2009a). The gynecology nurses mentioned previously (Bolton, 2000), referred to it as “part of the gift relationship consciously and freely given to patients. They [...] did not feel diminished or burdened by their emotional labour” (Smith & Lorentzon, 2005, p. 639). Such satisfaction was similarly observed in a woman working at a gas station: “In return for the effort of putting smiles on people’s faces, she gets a sense of personal satisfaction, as well as an acknowledgement of how good she is at providing service” (Tweedie, 2019, p. 191). Similarly, GDMIs can appreciate the joy that clients and guide dogs express because of their efforts in performing EL while instructing them. To some extent, this is reliant on a “good person–job fit”: individuals genuinely interested in their work and competent at it will usually require less effort to perform EL (Grandey, 2003; Grandey & Gabriel, 2015).

A GDMI’s satisfaction in their EL can take place during the performance or take the form of a delayed appreciation of a guide dog team’s success (and the EL required to do so). This is especially so when considering what Hochschild (1983) reminded readers: “even when people are paid to be nice, it is hard for them to be nice at all times, and when their efforts succeed, it is a remarkable accomplishment.” Indeed, von der Weid (2019, p. 3) shares a moment during her fieldwork observing a GDMI, João, who was visibly satisfied with their team’s development: “João enthusiastically comments ‘A big treat there!’ and I realize that I wasn’t alone in my appreciation of the dog’s performance. João smiles proudly.” Similarly, referring to care workers, Hochschild (2009a, p. 114) observed: “They have a sense of skill, and appreciate the results they achieve using it. [...] They find joy in subtle signs of progress.”

GDMIs will often experience overwhelming positive emotions, for example when a team has developed a strong bond and works together successfully. In such cases, they may need to regulate their emotions to remain professional until the class is finished, as was the case for me during Camila’s class:

About one week into her class, we were walking along a calm street. I found myself about five paces behind the team, offering instruction where needed. Camila promptly stopped walking and a sigh which came from the depths of her lungs burst from her mouth. Her head sunk into her hand, and she let the handle of the harness fall. Instantly filled with worry, the hairs on my arms and neck standing on end, I asked her what was wrong. Without turning around, she said the following, which left an impression on me for years to follow:
“It’s like driving a Ferrari ... I have goosebumps all over!” Then [she] gave my [Bandit], [her] dog now, a big, big hug. With a happy tear in my eye, I carried a huge grin for the rest of the day. (excerpt from notes, October 30, 2013)

Comparing the feeling of walking with a guide dog to that of a car is not entirely uncommon. Sanders (2000, p. 134), for example, quoted an interviewee explaining that “a guide dog is ‘a blind man’s Cadillac.’” With a shaky voice, Camila explained that she had not walked with such speed and ease since she was a sighted child.

I watched Bandit trotting alongside Camila, overwhelmed with happiness, the mix of emotion beginning to blur my vision. Clearing my throat, I concentrated on reading street signs to desperately keep myself from crying while still in Camila and Bandit’s presence.

I am sure my sudden silence and occasional sniff or throat-clearing told Camila that I was moved by our interaction. A deep sense of pride having coached them to find meaningful experiences within each other rose in me. Simultaneously, the grief of letting go of Bandit as his emotional attachment shifted to Camila swept over me. Seeing their success together was a distraction that supported my efforts to manage grief and other negative emotions to offer them both a calm, professional demeanor.

Managing emotions when a canine co-worker moves in with a client, especially for self-employed GDMIS such as myself who worked and lived so closely with them in comparison to employed GDMIS at schools that held canines in kennels or with volunteer families, can require high levels of EL. Although GDMIS often feel joyful that their canine co-worker has been matched well with a client, moments of grief will regularly need to be masked during this time:

I was saying “good night” to Luna, before leaving her [with her new visually impaired human partner] on the first day of class. I felt happy and content with the match and with Luna staying with Olivia that day, until it was time to leave the two alone and return home without her. As I reached down to stroke her, Luna licked my thumb, pressed her cheek deeply into my extended hand, and looked up at me with the calm, sweet manner she had. Immediately, a lump formed in my throat and my legs lost some of their stability. I heard the advice that my mentor had given me at the start of my career. She had seen an expression of grief pass over
my face upon departure from the first team I had developed and said: “It always feels like this. But we need to hold it back while we’re still with them, so they don’t get sad. Then you can cry as hard as you want on the drive home”.

Similarly, Boyle (2005, p. 45) quotes an emergency service worker explaining that “[y]ou can do your job, you can let the tears flow but ... you wait until you get home.” What Boyle and my former mentor touch on is the importance of ideally only expressing strong emotions, in particular, grief as mentioned above, within the personal sphere and not at work. However, as mentioned earlier, the lines between emotion work and emotional labor can become blurred when one is passionate about the work, as was the case when I almost cried while following Camilla and Bandit.

**Collective EL**

Especially when discussing employed GDMIs, the EL conducted amongst colleagues needs to be considered. Grandey and Gabriel (2015) acknowledge that this, referred to as collective EL, does not receive adequate academic attention. At times, such team solidarity can develop an “emotion-work system” (Hochschild, 1979, p. 562), where a GDMI tells a co-worker stories concerning the best or worst traits of a client, colleague, or guide dog, only to return to this co-worker when reinforcement on that view is desired. Hochschild (1983) observed two extremes of team solidarity: “It can improve morale and thus improve service. But it can also become the basis for sharing grudges.” Such herd mentality can play a central role in how GDMIs decide to manage their emotion displays. Therefore, general work engagement resulting from EL “is highly dependent on coworker relationships” (Lee & Madera, 2019, p. 1745).

Indeed, employees may suppress their feelings to not have a negative effect on their colleague’s work-day (whether canine or human) or advise a co-worker on how to best perform EL (Hochschild, 1983). One of my GDMI colleagues and I would often meet or call one another to express ourselves if we were sad, frustrated, or aggravated with a situation or client. However, such behavior tended to create an environment where grudges toward particular clients intensified as we fed off of each other’s frustrations and emotional states. Not only are human co-workers impacted by a GDMI’s negative emotions and experiences, but guide dogs can be as well, as canines can mirror the state of the humans they spend time with (Bekoff, 2018).
Conclusion

Patterson-Kane et al. (2020) state that increased research on assistance dogs has become paramount. While attention to the topic has increased and expanded into unexpected domains in recent years (i.e. Bremhorst et al., 2018; Guillo & Claidière, 2020; Huss, 2020; Mai et al., 2020; Oliver, 2020), little discussion has been had concerning the emotional experiences of both GDMIs and guide dogs during their shared work-lives. This, as far as I am aware, is the first work that explicitly acknowledges the EL of GDMIs. It does not, however, act as a universal commentary on the experiences of GDMIs across geographic, cultural, and historical contexts. Future research is needed to gain insight into comparisons of EL practices between specific guide dog schools.

EL is an intrinsic aspect of working for and with individuals of other species. This paper found that the feminization of animal work requires frequent and high levels of EL, as women are often perceived as more skilled at managing emotions. It can be common for GDMIs to conduct deep acting when frustrations arise to avoid imposing this or other impending emotions on canines. EL can be utilized by GDMIs in this way within their interactions with guide dogs outside of working hours, as well as a tool with which to improve their ability to educate them. Furthermore, EL can be an enjoyable aspect of working with and for individuals of other species – a skill to be honed or a gift to share with clients and canine co-workers. Although it is performed individually, the collective EL with colleagues and employers can play a key role in the work-lives of GDMIs. Furthermore, during their work with partially and wholly visually impaired clients, GDMIs may place emphasis on acoustic rather than visual EL performances generally presented in the existing literature.

Reading that their realities with EL are shared and inherent, to some extent, can have a reassuring and clarifying effect for GDMIs. Such reflection could inspire reassessments of their relationships with the canines they teach, and the emotion management involved in their interspecific work. The hope is that acknowledging the EL of both GDMIs and guide dogs can motivate efforts to establish education and organizational structures to support a move toward more humane interspecific work practices discussed by Coulter (see, for example, 2016a, 2020). This paper’s contribution, therefore, is to take the first step in acknowledging that GDMIs perform EL to manage their emotion displays in their interspecific work for both their visually impaired clients and guide dog co-workers.
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