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The Work of the Funeral Director: Emotional Labor, Friends, and Family

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By

Cami J. Cho

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Cami J. Cho

Author's Name

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Date

Jackson College of Graduate Studies at the University of Central Oklahoma

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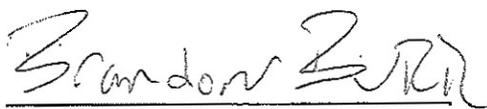
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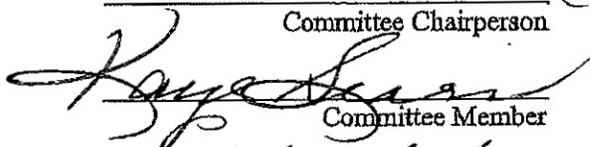
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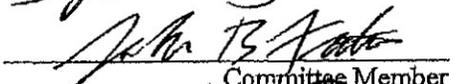
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mentor and friend, Dr. Gary Steward, Jr., who has believed in me from the beginning and never once gave up on me. I would not be where I am today without your faith and inspiration. You kept pushing me forward and challenging me to reach the goals that I never thought would be possible.

And

To my children. Justin and his wife Chelsea, JaLee, Payton and his wife Darian, Bryton, and Ryleigh. Thank you for your never-ending support and loving me even during the difficult times when I wanted to give up but none of you would let me. To my boyfriend, James, who was with me through the hardest moments and encouraged me to keep pushing forward and not look back. And last, but never least, my 'work family' at UCO. You are the best cheerleaders!

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ABSTRACT

In 1983, Arlie Russell Hochschild's groundbreaking work on emotional labor generated a torrent of interest among researchers that produced a robust body of literature over the past several decades. The theoretical scaffolding of her work builds on key concepts of dramaturgy, exchange theory, and to a lesser extent, conflict theory. Emotional labor is the management of feelings or emotions in exchange for a wage. The work of the funeral director is at the same time, a service that few wish for and high potential for emotional labor. Assessing and understanding the families they serve and returning the appropriate display rules. This study seeks to explore the relationship between emotional labor, the work of the funeral director, and its effect on the family and friends.

There have been few studies conducted on the emotional labor of funeral directors and the effect on their family and friends. Negotiating the emotions displayed by grieving families in addition these interactions may influence their own family, is just one of the consequences of this profession.

In-depth interviews were conducted with six participants. Of the six participants, three are current funeral directors, and three are no longer working in the industry. The researcher determined that the work of the funeral director is divided into two domains: technical skills and

social skills. The social skills encompass the largest proportion of the work of funeral directors and is inextricably connected to emotional labor. The researcher found that the emotional labor of participants was taxed by three interrelated factors, including the demands of the job, the impact on personal relationships, and the acumen for reading client emotional cues. The latter was exacerbated by family dynamics, the context of death, and the age of the deceased.

Keywords: emotional labor, funeral director, family, grief

Chapter One: Introduction

Background

This research examines emotional labor among funeral directors and the impact of their work on relationships with friends and family. Hochschild's groundbreaking research initially published in 1983 initiated a deluge of research related to emotional labor and consequences of such tasks, largely bound within the service sector. The funeral director must navigate a difficult path in providing services to grief-stricken families and must exhibit a wide range of emotions including strength, compassion, sympathy, empathy, somber, vulnerable, etc.—yet the toll of this emotional labor has not been widely investigated as to the extended influence on personal and social relationships. This introduction chapter provides a brief history of the funeral director profession, how this history ties to the present-day experience of the funeral director, and how the emotional labor of funeral directing may influence relationships with family and friends.

Statement of the Problem

A critical variable between the client and funeral director is trust. A lapse in judgment related to the management of emotions can lead to negative outcomes. Bailey (2010) aptly describes this issue by identifying the contradictory roles of the modern funeral home; the business imperative of profit and the appropriate social display of emotions. In other words, funeral directors are in the business of profiting over the grief, sorrow, and loss of loved ones. These contradictory roles may contribute to emotional dissonance and adverse outcomes. Bailey, as do other researchers, claim that prolonged emotional dissonance has been shown to increase a wide range of adverse outcomes such as job satisfaction, exhaustion, depersonalization, and burnout (Bailey, 2010; Dijk & Brown, 2006; Hochschild, 1983; Jeung et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2009; Wharton & Erikson, 1993).

From Undertaker to a Licensed Funeral Director

The modern-day licensed funeral director in the United States emerged from historical developments that are intriguing, yet curiously and perhaps, uniquely American. While the word 'undertaker' has a long history in Europe, dating to the 14th century, it became a euphemism for the funeral director as early as the late 1600s (Grammarphobia, 2007; Steward, 2017).

It is commonplace to assume that the word 'undertaker' is associated with burial procedures, including the final resting place of the body below ground. Others assume that the origins connect to the mythology of the underworld (Steward, 2017). These notions of the word are misguided. The term appears as early as the 1400s and referred to as a "contractor or projector of any sort…" (Etymonline, n.d.). By the 1800s, the undertaker was associated as one who assisted families or undertook roles or tasks that were the obligations of the family (Canine, 1996; Kastenbaum, 2012; Laderman, 2003).

The description of 19th century America, as related to death, can be described as ubiquitous. Death was everywhere. Death rates were high in all age cohorts, from young to old (Kastenbaum, 2012; Laderman, 2003). Rituals related to the funerary were public. Mourning dress was observed; black crepe on doorposts was common (indicating a family in mourning) (Canine, 1996; Fritch, Chappell, Beasley & Steward, 2018; Kastenbaum, 2012; Laderman, 2003). Most importantly, was the role of the family in the funerary. The family prepared the body for public viewing (many middle classes and certainly all upper-class homes dedicated a room called, the viewing room), and coordinated the rituals that characterized burial practices existing in 19th century America (Canine, 1996; Laderman, 2003). To be sure, the funerary was not monolithic, but reflected a great deal of diversity among ethnic groups, indigenous people, and immigrants (Canine, 1996; Farrell, 1980). A common thread that tied diverse burial rituals in

the 1800s was an unmistakable pragmatism; that is, the biological degradation of the body shortly after death and the need for disposition (Kastenbaum, 2012; Laderman, 2003).

> *"In the end, the body, so beloved and indulged when alive, breaks down rather violently in death, dissolving as a result of the work of various chemicals released by dead tissues, and losing any vital connection between post-mortem identity, either as spirit or memory, and the natural materials disintegrating into their final skeletal form"* (Nuland, 1998, p. 122).

The biological decomposition of the deceased influenced action on the part of families and communities. The association of death and decomposition was the cauldron that gave rise to the vast array of funerary rituals and underscores human creativity (Canine, 1996).

As the 1800s unfolded, profound changes in demographics and the emerging modern city characterized in the U.S. The role of the undertaker was changing as well, especially regarding the scope of activities (Canine, 1996, Farrell, 1980; Fritch et al., 2018; Laderman, 2003). The practice of embalming, with its origins traced to the latter part of the Civil War, provided the niche and a skill that advanced the professionalization of the undertaker. Embalming attenuated the decomposition of the deceased and fit with the ethos of an ever-increasing mobile society (Canine, 1996; Laderman, 2003).

The skill of preserving the dead, though formidable, was not enough to supplant the role of the family's engagement of funerary obligations. The decoupling of family involvement required a cultural paradigm shift in the way Americans socially constructed death (Fritch et al., 2018; Steward, 2017). By the 1880s, the newly emerging funerary expert was the mortician. By the 1900s, demographic and technological changes, medical advances, and an increasingly secularized culture prompted an American public eager to distance themselves from the death

rituals that defined the 1800s (Kamerman, 1988). Meanwhile, the role of the mortician grew in frequency and scope of operations. As death became something to avoid in polite society, morticians were willing to assume what had been the responsibility of the family (Kamerman, 1988; Laderman, 2003).

By the end of the first quarter-century of the 1900s, the mortician became known as funeral directors, mourning dress disappeared as well as black crepe on doorposts, and viewing the deceased in the home migrated to the funeral home (Canine, 1996; Fritch, et al., 2018; Kamerman, 1988; Laderman, 2003). Additionally, caskets were the preferred nomenclature for coffins; the shape of the coffin no longer resembled an outline of the human body, cemetery's and graveyards became lawn parks and/or memorial parks, and death recedes to the background of polite society (Canine, 1996; Kastenbaum, 2012; Laderman, 2003). By the 1960s and 1970s, many social commentators, like Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and Jessica Mitford, criticized the American way of death and aptly described U.S. culture in terms of death-denying (Kubler-Ross, 1975).

Over the past 120 years, the professional funeral director has been inextricably enmeshed in the dramatic cultural paradigm shift in attitudes toward death (Kamerman, 1988; Laderman, 2003). While change is endemic to culture, attitudes toward death have remained relatively stable. One might argue that the steady diet of carnage connected to entertainment (movies and television), video games, some sports, news, etc. reveals changing attitudes toward death. It is outside the scope of this research to address this dispute, but Geoffrey Gorer's work on the pornography of death aptly pushes back on the argument (Gorer, 1955). To be sure, culture and the funerary have dramatically changed over the past 50 years. Celebrants (rather than ministers), destiny funerals, and tailor-made memorial services, have competed and supplanted the

traditional American funeral. These changes do not reflect a change in attitudes toward death, rather, how we choose to celebrate one's life. The avoidance of death is ever-present, a legacy of the 20th century (Gorer, 1955).

The funeral director is the face of an industry that offers services to a reluctant clientele. In addition to grief-stricken customers, the funeral director must navigate through a vast array of public-facing emotions, loaded with potential land mines or social miscues. To make matters worse, the cost of services has been relentless criticism of the industry since the 1960s (Mitford, 1963). While many researchers considered this criticism exaggerated, it portrays an unkind image of the funeral director profiting on the misfortunes of others and exploiting the grief and guilt of the living (Laderman, 2012).

The Focus of this Research

This research focuses on the work of the funeral director and the impact of this work on relationships with family and friends. As stated, the theoretical perspective that frames this research is Hochschild's (1983) emotional labor conceptualization. Her influential work in the early 1980s has spawned a generation of research on emotional labor, its effects, and preventative measures to mitigate the negative consequences. Hochschild's research investigated the effects of emotional labor on flight attendants and bill collectors. However, the emotional labor of other service sector occupations, including funeral directors, is mentioned in her book, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*.

Curiously, a review of the literature found only two research projects dedicated to funeral directors and emotional labor. The first is "*Licensed Funeral Directors: An empirical analysis of the dimensions and consequences of emotional labor*" by Smith et al., (2009). They researched the dimensions and outcomes of the emotional labor of licensed funeral directors in a southern

U.S. state, arguing that the funeral director routinely confronts the unpleasant specter of death perhaps the most avoided phenomenon in American culture. The funeral director must not only possess the technical expertise but also manage or display the appropriate emotions to grieving clientele. The second, *"When commerce meets care: Emotion management in U.K. funeral directing"* by Bailey (2010). Bailey (2010) in her research, was exploring *emotion management* of funeral directors. The researcher, before her study, believed that funeral directors were in the profession for the profit and not for the care and compassion, in which the job necessitates, for others.

There is limited existing research on emotional labor and its impact on family and friends. Much of the available research reveals an indirect effect on family and friends. After a thorough search of the literature, there was no research to date on the relationship of emotional labor and correlating impact on family and friends related to the work of the funeral director. This project addresses two important areas that are deficits or gaps in the scientific literature. The first is emotional labor of the funeral director. Although Hochschild (1983) mentioned funeral directors in her original work, there is a shortage of research on this occupation. This project will significantly increase our understanding of the conflicting roles and the awareness of emotional displays by the licensed funeral director. Second, this research explores the impact on the relationships with family and friends of the funeral director. This project will seek to tease out these connections, and if they exist at all—because there is only one thing that every single individual will experience at some point in time in their life, and that is death. The researcher now turns to the review of existing literature.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Hochschild's groundbreaking work in 1983 on emotional labor generated interest among researchers and produced a robust body of literature over the past several decades. Her book, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feelings,* examines two groups of service sector workers: flight attendants and bill collectors (Hochschild, 1983). Hochschild's (1983) work is largely predicated on Erving Goffman's (1959) theoretical framework of dramaturgy, but also acknowledges (to a lesser extent) ideas from Marx's alienation, Homans exchange theory, and Freud's psychology of emotions (Hochschild, 1983; Goffman, 1959).

Whatever debt is owed to Marx, Homans, and Freud, the majority share of credit belongs to Goffman and the dramaturgical perspective. The theoretical scaffolding of Hochschild's work builds on key concepts of dramaturgy and impression management (Brissett & Edgley, 1990; Goffman, 1959). Central to Hochschild's work is the concept of emotional labor, and ultimately the management of feelings or emotions.

The concept of emotional labor has often been referred to as being the performance of emotionally acting. Emotional labor is simply the exchange of emotional displays for wages or other compensation (Grandey, 2003; Maschal & Jackson, 1985). Morris and Feldman (1996) describe emotional labor as the, "effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions" (p. 987).

The management of feelings or emotions is not a novel concept. Emotional labor first emerged as a theory in the 1970's during which the delivery of service provided to consumers began to change. Before Hochschild's concept, each customer was dealt in a monotonous and robotic form. This exchange began to change to incorporate a more personal aspect into the interaction. Employees began approaching customers with the aim of creating a relationship

rather than just a service encounter. In a service relationship, the customer and the provider get to know each other, they expect and anticipate future interaction, and over time, they develop a history of shared interaction that they can draw on whenever they complete some sort of transaction (Gutek et al., 1996). The consensus in the theory of emotional labor is that the employee can control their reactions. Another interpretation of emotional labor can be defined as the "degree of manipulation of one's inner feelings or outward behavior to display the appropriate emotion in response to display rules or occupational norms" (Chu, 2002, p. 58).

The theoretical lineage is rooted in Goffman's ideas of dramaturgy. Dramaturgy rests on a theatrical metaphor to describe the complexity of social life; rife with terms like actor, stage, performance, audience, front stage/back stage, props, scripts, etc. (Brissett & Edgley, 1990; Goffman, 1959). Brissett and Edgley (1990) detail two key concepts of dramaturgy which provides the platform for Hochschild's (1983) work. The first is what they call the "dramaturgical principle." This means that humans, knowingly or unknowingly, are forever expressing themselves through discursive and non-discursive ways. From this perspective, human expression, in all its forms, is deeply embedded in the idea that "meaning" is an accomplishment rather than some social fact. Brissett & Edgley (1990) state, "… meaning is a continually problematic accomplishment of human interaction and it is fraught with change, novelty, and ambiguity" (p. 7). The dramaturgical principle views humans as an endless source of expression or outpouring of self on to the world, whether they are aware, partially aware, periodically aware, or unaware altogether (Brissett & Edgley, 1990; Goffman, 1959).

The second concept is "dramaturgical awareness." This means that a person may at times, be aware of their expressiveness to "…organize one's experiences, communicate more effectively with other people, manipulate and deceive them, or present oneself in a more

favorable light." (Brissett & Edgley, 1990, p. 7; Goffman, 1959). In other words, people may intentionally display a discursive and non-discursive expression with the goal of establishing or communicating a specific meaning. Although this dramaturgical awareness is often overlooked in everyday interaction, people are most sensitive in certain social contexts in which an individual wants his or her intentions, motives, and meaning clearly manifested (Brissett & Edgley, 1990; Goffman, 1959). A few examples include a job interview, an apology to a significant other, or a first date. As evidence of managing the meaning we convey, people often quip about the legacy of the first impression.

The dramaturgical principle and dramaturgical awareness are the basis of Goffman's impression management (Brissett & Edgley, 1990; Goffman, 1959). The latter occurs when an individual presents the self in a manner to achieve a goal or set of goals. Often, the presentation of self is a complex mix of variables, including cultural norms, target audience, roles, and a host of developing factors. What is essential to the presentation of self is the evolving quality of the interaction. While social scripts and understanding the audience are important guides, nothing can be taken for granted. Even the most charitable audience may prove to be more fluid than expected. It is in this space that meaning is established through the management and presentation of self (Brissett & Edgley, 1990; Hochschild, 1983).

Hochschild extends key concepts found in dramaturgy to the economic service sector in which she argues that employees are compensated to manage their emotions and feelings to meet the standards or prescriptions (later called 'emotional displays') defined by the organization (Hochschild, 1983). The standards of emotional displays are not only rigid, but subject to supervision by others (Hochschild 1983; Jeung et al., 2018; Van Dijk & Brown, 2006; Wharton,

1993). In sum, emotional labor occurs when employees adjust their emotional state to satisfy the dictates of the organization (Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996).

In her book, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling,* Hochschild (2012) contends that emotional labor not only encompasses sets of behaviors and corresponding emotions, but how these emotions are to be displayed. She refers to these as "feeling rules." These 'rules' inform us of "what I should feel" (Hochschild, 1983). Appropriate feeling rules, for example, is that one should be "happy on their wedding day" or "sad at a funeral." Participants are expected to manifest feelings appropriate with cultural conventions (Hochschild, 1983). It should be noted that Hochschild's usage of 'feeling rules' was later supplanted by the term 'display rules' in subsequent research (Jeung et al., 2018, Van Dijk & Brown, 2006).

The core of emotional labor revolves around the concept that emotions can be controlled and should be controlled to conform to "social rules" (Ritzer, 2013). The perception of display rules is connected to two important conceptual elements existing in social life. The first is the social status. Social statuses are defined as "a socially recognized position in society" (Hindin, 2007; Macionis, 2008; Merton, 1957; Ritzer, 2013). These social positions are independent of any given individual. This conception of social status provided a means of understanding ongoing social positions that are present on the one hand, and negotiated by each generation (Hochschild, 1983). Social statuses can be divided into a myriad of schemas, such as familial statuses, occupational statuses, deviant statuses, master status, status set, status inconsistency, just to name a few (Hindin, 2007; Macionis, 2008; Ritzer, 2013).

The social role is the second important concept and is a compliment to the social status. A role is the collection of socially expected behavior that is attached to each social status (Hochschild, 1983). The expectations are not just limited to behavior, but includes attitudes,

cognitive or knowledge, responsibilities, etc. (Hindin, 2007; Macionis, 2008; Merton, 1957; Ritzer, 2013). For example, the roles attached to the social status of a physician include, high levels of education, expertise in medicine, ethical treatment of patients, trust, responsible, a caring demeanor, compassion, etc. When actual expressions (discursive or non-discursive) are consistent with the cultural expectations (roles), social life unfolds without notice (Hindin, 2007; Macionis, 2008; Merton, 1957; Ritzer, 2013). However, deviations from cultural expectations may invite negative social reactions, such as criticism, loss of clients, or revocation of a license to practice medicine in the most scandalous violations (Hindin, 2007; Macionis, 2008; Merton, 1957; Ritzer, 2013).

Hochschild's (1983) management of feelings (emotional labor), clearly scaffolds to the ideas of social statuses and roles. However, she skillfully builds into her theoretical framework two important features. First, she limits the scope of the role to include only feelings or what others call "emotional display." While the role includes many dimensions, she limits only to those things that span the emotive spectrum and the corresponding social rules to the social setting (Hochschild, 1983). Second, and perhaps more significant, she transposes cultural expectations with organizational expectations. In this manner, the employee is obligated to a strict set of emotional display rules and in return, the employee is compensated with a wage (Hochschild, 1983).

The migration of emotional display rules from cultural expectations (i.e., society at large) to organizational expectations (i.e., local or transnational) is no small matter. Inappropriate emotional display for a particular social phenomenon in the larger society, for example, may elicit highly mixed responses from the audiences; from no response to applause/affirmation to harsh criticism (Wharton, 2009). Emotional displays, which violate traditional conventions, are

just as likely to provoke no response from the audience to strongly negative reactions. This is the evolving quality of the social performance and the establishment of meaning in each social encounter (Brissett & Edgley, 1990). In most cases, however, one's livelihood is not jeopardized by violations of these display rules in the larger community. At one time or another most have worked in a profession and exposed to very disrespectful and insensitive individuals. But no matter what personal or work-related issues and emotions we are dealing with, a happy face and attitude translates into the exceptional job performance review.

The migration of prescribed emotional displays from cultural conventions in the larger society to an organizational setting (local) has profound implications (Hochschild, 1983). For one, the risk of financial loss is much greater since an employee is compensated with a wage for compliance to prescribed emotional displays (Hochschild, 1983). More importantly, the organization closely monitors emotional displays and violations are more readily seen by way of a supervisor, who is charged to monitor, among other things, the employee's emotional displays. Compliance to a narrow set of emotional displays becomes a managerial goal (Hochschild, 1983). Violations may include a range of negative consequences, including verbal warnings, write-ups, additional training, probation, or termination of employment.

In addition, Hochschild (1983) initially limited emotional labor to the service sector. While her research specifically investigates flight attendants and bill collectors, she mentions and implies that funeral directors are among those occupations that merit observation (Hochschild, 1983). Since the 1950s, the service sector has grown exponentially compared to other sectors. For example, farming and related work accounted for 25% of the work force in the United States in 1900. Today, that percentage has rapidly declined to less than 2%. On the other hand, the service sector employs nearly 80% of the nation's workforce (Plecher, 2019). Hochschild's

insistence on attaching emotional labor to the service sector had significant theoretical and practical implications (Hochschild, 1983). Although her research centered on the negative psychological effects of expressing emotions to fulfill job standards, positive results were also conceptualized and identified by other researchers (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987).

The Nuts and Bolts of Emotional Labor

Hochschild's (1983) borrowed from the work of many past philosophers, such as, Marxism, Goffman's interactionism, and even a small dose of Freud and his ideas on the psychology of emotions. Because of the lack of the subject, she situated a foundation in which emotional labor could be incorporated into the commercial world and the circumstances in which employee's and employer's find themselves on almost a daily basis. Hochschild does borrow from Marx's theory of alienation, in which she explains how harm can lead to emotional labor; a feeling, smile, or a relationship with the customer is owned more by the company than to the individual, as she explains "The emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 5).

Emotional labor covers a broad spectrum of information on not only what it is, but how to act in situations (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1983; Jeung, 2018; Kruml & Geddes, 2000). The employee must understand how their emotional state can affect the customer and, in turn, the organization (Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996). As stated before, Hochschild (1983), emotional labor is the management of feelings on the part of an employee; that is, to display feelings or emotions that are congruent with structural prescriptions or organizational emotional display rules. This display is ultimately the decision of the employee and their willingness to conform to the company's policies and expectations (Brotheridge &

Grandey, 2002). In trying to bridge a gap between what we feel and what we "ought" to feel, many take the guidance from "feeling or display rules" about what is owing to others in each situation. Based on a private mutual understanding of feeling rules, we make a "gift exchange" of acts of emotion management.

Deep Acting

Hochschild (1983) defined two possibilities which exist when emotions or feelings are not congruent with organizational emotional display expectations as 'surface acting' and 'deep acting'. She along with other researchers (Grandey, 2003; Shirom, 1989), expressed that the state or 'feeling' described in Hochschild's book as 'deep acting'. Deep acting is when an employee is actively changing or manipulating their own feelings to produce the reaction in which is anticipated by the customer. The process of changing our inner emotion to become like the emotion of the audience and authenticity being present is described as 'deep acting' (Hochschild, 1983). In private life, individuals try to suppress love, envy, and anger through deep acting or "emotion work", just as they manage their outer expressions of feelings through surface acting (Jeung et al., 2018). The suppression of true emotions is more difficult to do for most people. Deep acting could disturb one's sense of his or her true self, and the results might eventually lead to emotional distress and a decrease in their ability to identify or even experience real behaviors (Hochschild, 1983). The problems or complications with this behavior can place a tremendous amount of stress on an individual and they may begin to struggle with compartmentalizing their own real emotions with the "faked" emotions once they leave their place of employment (Freudenberger, 1975; Hayes & Weathington, 2007). This in-authenticity can be transferred into the private life of the individual and affect the family and friends in undesirable ways.

Smith et al. (2009) goes a step further with Hochschild's definitions of "feeling rules". Hochschild (1983) only used surface and deep acting, whereas Smith et al. (2009) defined deep acting into two categories. These categories were *passive* deep acting and *active* deep acting. In the passive deep acting phase, the employee genuinely experiences the emotions in which are expected. But in the active deep active phase, the employee does not feel the expected emotion, therefore, must depend upon their "training and personal experience to help invoke the appropriate emotions within themselves" (p. 31).

Others have found positive consequences, showing that deep acting is a factor that helps increase job performance and can have a positive relationship with emotional labor (Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983). As stated before, Grandey (2003) believes this behavior is more genuine to the individual, therefore, the intent becomes authentic to the audience; thus, deep acting has been called 'faking in good faith' (Jeung et al., 2018) When the individual exhibits this behavior, it can lead to the increase of profit for the company or business because there will be improved service delivery (Grandey, 2003; Prentice & King, 2011; Singh et al., 1994; Zeithaml et. al, 1996). Individuals who have a secure connection with their occupation tend to be sincerer while they are performing their tasks and duties (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Suh et al., 2010).

Surface Acting

The other emotional display, which is called *surface acting*, is described by Hochschild (1983) as occurring when individuals conform to emotional display to match social or organizational expectations. She indicates, "the individual's conformity is contrived or faked, and fundamentally discordant with the true emotive state" (p. 89). The term fittingly describes this display as surface only, and conflicting with feelings (Hochschild, 1983; Maslach & Jackson, 1985). In social life, this may be at odds with how the individual feels (Hochschild, 1983).

According to Jeung et al. (2018), when an individual's outer expressions are suppressed and in conflict with the feelings, the employee must engage in surface acting to be in accordance with rules of the employer. Jeung et al. (2018), "surface acting is 'faking in bad faith'…the employee conforms to the display rules to keep the job, not to help the customer or the organization" (p. 188). Surface acting is described as the act of expressing an emotion without feeling that emotion (Hochschild, 1983), which includes actions that are used to cover any negative emotions with positive actions. An example of this would be a bank teller who smiles continuously at a customer even though the patron has been very rude. Surface acting may seem as though it would be easier to perform, but some complications can appear when the pretense is not genuinely felt (Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983). Surface acting can eventually lead to emotional dissonance, causing a person to become unsure of their own identity. Both surface and deep acting require the control of emotions to cater to the conditions of the workplace.

The Toll of Emotional Labor

Emotional labor is what an individual does when their feelings must be suppressed for the sake of the customer or client. In other words, it's emotional control. Task performance and strategy is increased through emotional labor, and it has an impact on the administration of service (Jansz & Timmers, 2002). Strategies displayed by frontline staff in-service roles may increase adverse outcomes by activating negative ideas like emotional dissonance and self-alienation (Jeung et al., 2018).

Emotional dissonance is an outcome of emotional labor. Emotional dissonance was defined as the conflict between truly felt emotions and emotions that needed to be displayed in organization (Morris & Feldman, 1996; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987; Zapf et al., 1999). In other words, dissonance occurs when individuals are unable to control their emotions and their true

reactions become a barrier to their career achievements. Emotional dissonance can lead to one not being able to find the boundary between their real emotions and the false ones (Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 1993). The constant manipulation of emotion undertaken by employees is required due to the demands of job requirements of having to be always polite and courteous to the customers, regardless of how the consumer might be treating the employee. Emotional dissonance has been defined as a stressor, negatively impacting perceived work outcomes and affecting the functionality of the family in a detrimental fashion. (Erikson & Wharton, 1997; Grandey, 2003; Grebner et al, 2003; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). There is limited research on emotional labor and emotional dissonance and the effects it has on the person and the family of the employee (Aziz, 2008; Erikson & Wharton, 1997; Jeung, 2018; Kruml & Geddes, 2000).

Another result of emotional labor, or the process of regulating one's emotions in line with organizational display rules during service encounters, is burnout (Mustafa et al., 2014). Burnout was first acknowledged as a psychological concept in the 1970's (Grandey, Deifendorff, & Rupp, 2012). It was defined in those years according to three main characteristics: "emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduction in perceived personal accomplished (Fearon, 2011)". The act of acknowledging the three features plays a significant role in identifying the causes of burnout in many fields. All three are dangerous, but if caught, can be manageable.

Burnout is a negative effect of emotional labor. Research by Maslach and Johnson (1985) found "…burnout for individuals is defined as the emotional exhaustion and disparagement that result from an individual's job" (p. 99). Another study by Laschinger (2009), defined burnout as a psychological condition of exhaustion, pessimism, and inefficacy which is experienced as a response to long-lasting work stressors. Burnout can create a depleted emotional state for many individuals in their occupations. Because of the complications and many forms of burnout, most

do not recognize the symptoms until it is far too late. Burnout can cause emotional and physiological damage to an individual if it not acknowledged early and dealt with properly. There have been many studies conducted on the cause of burnout and conclude that some individuals are at a higher risk (Hayes & Weathington, 2007; Zellars et al., 2004). Burnout is not an acute issue but rather an ongoing development that arises over a long period.

Lifestyle burnouts and emotional dissonance are very common today and especially among funeral directors (Kruml & Geddes, 2000). Some reasons for these results are: too many expectations, too many responsibilities without help, sleep deprivation, and the lack of a supportive family. Moreover, research shows that professions that exposed to these repercussions tend to experience a lot of physical illnesses, psychological deficits, and social impairment that prevent them from performing correctly in their responsibilities (Hazell, 2010). For example, nurses, doctors, firefighters, police officers, and funeral directors to name a few are in these types of interactions daily and need to be aware of the risk and take the precautions to avoid the outcome. Once an individual experience any of these types of fatigue it could lead to precarious results like high job turnover, absenteeism, low self-esteem, health problems, or a decrease in overall life satisfaction (Hayes & Weathington, 2007; Hochschild, 1983; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). While working in a tense and stressful job with excessive exposure to customers or clients, a hidden "killer" lies waiting to come forward.

The control over one's feelings can be indicative of stress, burnout, and a strain on the relationship between the employee and their job (Hochschild, 1983). Many vocations experience highly stressful situations. These stressful jobs are often present with unfamiliar and uncertain challenges every day. Hayes and Weathington (2007) define stress as "…any circumstance that places unique physical or psychological anxiety on a person such that requires an infrequent or

extraordinary response occurs" (p. 566). A chaotic or high-pressure environment while performing challenging, tedious, and stressful work, such as funeral directors face daily, could lead to fatigue and weariness (Hayes & Weathington, 2007). Some studies have also shown that prolonged stress is being one of the leading causes for burnout and emotional dissonance among many professions. Also, stress can result from job-related factors, such as task overload, conflicting tasks, inability to do the task assigned because of lack of preparation or experience, vague or inadequate information regarding the assignment and many more negative experiences (Hayes & Weathington, 2007).

Furthermore, another factor that has been identified as a common trigger to burnout in many professions is the extended work shifts of twelve hours or longer. These extended hours exhaust workers, and some work these shifts over multiple weeks which impact their health and well-being (Stimpfel, 2012). Additionally, the professions that require long working hours are associated with more tendencies to experience burnout and job dissatisfaction which would end up leading to the desire to leave the job (Stimpfel, 2012).

All these results are debilitating conditions that can develop in anyone, regardless of their occupation (Epp, 2012). Recognition of potential factors should signal to hospitals, health care providers, and funeral directors, to name a few, to take the necessary measures to prevent the consequences of emotional labor. Burnout is an occupation-induced psychological condition that is opposite to engagement. Moreover, it is also considered a spiritual occurrence in which a person experiences "disillusionment deep within the very essence of who they are, in other words; a collapse of the human spirit (Epp, 2012, p.1208). Hochschild (1983) argues, "burnout spares the person in the short term, but it may have a serious long-term cost" (p. 188).

As with burnout, emotional exhaustion can be produced from a significant source of work-related strain, which can often manifest itself in workers as a general demise in emotion, interest, and sometimes trust of others (Reichel & Neumann, 1993). Occupations that are not gratifying or do not have customers that recognize their labor or effort, can lead to the burnout and emotional dissonance, among many other implications described early in this review.

For an organization to prevent these types of conditions in its workers, they must understand that the problem must be attacked at the organizational level, as well as the personal level. It is necessary to take measures at the same level in order to decrease the negative impact it can have on professionals in many fields. In other words, prevention not only has to be implemented at the organizational level but also on the personal level for it to be more productive. It is important to consider that the personal strategies will not change the organizational issues that lead to burnout in health care, but they can help the professionals to cope better by enabling them to respond more positively to their own needs (Fearon, 2011).

The personal measures that can help in the prevention of all of these possible consequences are: making healthy lifestyle choices, such as taking a vacation, eating a balanced diet, limiting alcohol, caffeine and nicotine intake, and getting enough rest to help reduce stress and prevent burnout (Epp, 2012). Kruml and Geedes (2000) goes on to state in their research that if individuals would spend more time relaxing, socializing, and doing hobbies, their well-being will be well-rounded and balanced.

Effects to Family

There is a juncture in an individual's life in which will come exhaustion, exasperation, or feelings of defeat because of job-related issues; this is normal. According to Mustafa et al. (2014), if individuals attempt to go for an extended period without having breaks from stressful

environments, burnout is inevitable, and stress at the workplace will follow the individual to their home life. Research has shown many causes and solutions which have been identified to help the individual adjust and maintain their well-being for the benefit of the person and the family (Kruml & Geddes, 2000; Van Dijk & Brown, 2006). Support is an essential aspect of recovering from a stressful burnout.

As stated in Chapter One, a search of the literature only yielded two studies on emotional labor and the funeral director. While there is a little in way of research, these two-studies merit discussions. In Bailey's research, she focuses on the individual's motivation instead of their behavior to determine their emotional display. Bailey (2010) explained that there are many individuals from the public perspective that believe the funeral director is only in this profession for the money. As of 2019, the funeral director averages around $50,000 a year (Career, 2018). This seems unlikely to be the primary motive for becoming a funeral director. Contrarily, other researchers have argued that many pursue the career to assist and help care for the family of the deceased (Hanson, 2017; LeRoy, 2018).

In the funeral service sector, the expectations of the interaction between the funeral director and the client must remain consistently compassionate, professional, and positive when interacting the families (Bailey, 2010). Funeral directors not only deal with the deceased, but they are also in the presence of the bereaved. One must have the appropriate social skills to comfort and empathize with those who mourn (Dorsey, 2009; Smith et al., 2009). It seems like the end of the world when someone dies for the those 'left behind', but this is the space in which the funeral director's work begins. "It is one of the few industries that survive as a result of death" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 30). Although they may be surrounded by death daily, funeral directors are people who go home and continue living their own lives.

The Smith et al. (2009) study considers the effects of emotional labor for funeral directors. They are interacting with family members who are dealing with one of the most emotional inducing aspects in life and that aspect is death. Hochschild mentions funeral directors briefly in her book. The work of funeral directors is not considered one of the professions in which the employer has the control over the employee and their emotional management but instead, their emotive performance is being controlled by the social norms and expectations surrounding death and they must act accordingly (Smith et al., 2009).

Summary

In summary, the researcher has provided an overview of Hochschild's theory of emotional labor as well as detailing the underpinnings its major components. The cascade of research over the past three decades has been phenomenal. As shown, researchers have teased out both positive and negative outcomes of emotional labor. Negative effects include depersonalization, alienation, emotional dissonance, and burnout. The funeral director must navigate a host of social cues and display rules while working with a grieving clientele. This is exacerbated by cultural conventions and attitudes that can be described as death denying or death avoidance. The multiple roles and complex display rules make the work of the funeral director difficult with high potential of emotional labor. While the literature provides examples of an indirect relationship between emotional labor and family and friends (through burnout), more research is needed to strengthen the relationship or impact of emotional labor on family and friends.

This research fills two gaps in the literature: First, there have been only two research projects investigating the work of the funeral director through the lens of emotional labor, and second, the impact of the funeral director's work on family and friendships is very much in its

infancy. Now that the background support of this research project has been outlined, I turn to the design of the project in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter detail the design of this research project. Key areas include, an overview of quantitative and qualitative research strategies, the in-depth interview, participants (including recruitment and sampling process), the instrument, and research ethics, confidentiality and the *Institutional Review Board* approval process.

The Case for Qualitative Research

The research design that was used for this project comes under the canopy of qualitative methodology. Qualitative and quantitative research strategies have a goal confirming knowledge or discovering new insights into human phenomenon (Dabbs, 1982). Discoveries may confirm and build on existing theoretical models or expand into new areas that lay the foundation for new or novel theoretical approaches (Berg, 2004). The two approaches are potentially effective in gathering information and insights into cultural life. Although these research strategies may intersect and share a few goals, the design of each is quite different (Berg, 2004; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

A fundamental means of understanding the difference between the two approaches is to conceptualize quantitative methodology as the "quantity" of something and qualitative research strategies as the "quality" of something (Dabbs, 1982; Patten, 2002). In other words, quantitative methods frame the research problem by generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into useable statistics (Berg, 2004; Salkind, 2003). Much of this work uses numbers and measures gathered from a large sample population (Berg & Lune, 2013). Data is gathered largely using surveys, online questionnaires, or online polls, as these methods can produce numerical results (Berg & Lune, 2013; Patten, 2002). Quantitative research is most often framed by deductive reasoning. Sometimes referred to as "top to bottom" or "top-down" approach,

beginning with theory, followed by the hypothesis, observation, and finally confirmation (Patten, 2002). It is a formal, objective, systematic process. Through rigorous statistical analysis, researchers can confirm or disconfirm a hypothesis (Patten, 2002). The analysis may reveal trends and correlations to determine a statistically significant sample that can be generalized to the larger target population (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

On the other hand, qualitative research focuses more on the meanings of the data by drilling deeper into the underlying issues (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). To this end, the researcher gleans insight that often transcends mere numbers and statistics. Qualitative research includes, but is not limited to, observations, participation, and in-depth interviews for gathering data (Berg & Lune, 2013; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016; Salkind, 2003). Unfortunately, many people believe qualitative research is not as scientific as quantitative methods largely due to the use of words instead of numbers (Berg & Lune, 2012; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

Qualitative research methods often provide a more vibrant and in-depth picture of social life, and was developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena (Berg, 2004; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). The researcher is the primary determinant of both data collection and analysis (Patten, 2002). Qualitative methods use the inductive reasoning process, meaning a "bottom to top" approach or building from the ground up (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Contrary to quantitative strategies, qualitative research may begin with a research topic or question followed by observation; discovery and identified patterns; revisits and refines the research question, and concludes with theory building (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Patten, 2002; Berg, 2004).

Qualitative methods routinely use words rather than numbers to clarify participant's perception, state of mind, justifications or rationale, etc. (Berg, 2004). These human experiences

defy a numerical or quantifiable appraisal. Many researchers who wish to understand the complexities of human experience routinely use qualitative strategies (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016; Berg, 2004; Salkind, 2003). The in-depth interview, for example, may produce data that is rooted in authenticity. Like all qualitative methods, the in-depth interview requires a great deal of time and reflection in each of its phases (Mayer, 2015).

The In-depth Interview

In the social sciences, the in-depth interview provides the opportunity for the researcher to gain insight into individual experiences, attitudes, justifications, and the imputation of meaning to their social world (Berg, 2004; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). The interview provides a unique opportunity for the researcher to understand the participant's thoughts and experiences apart from other methods. According to Salkind (2003), the goal of the interview is to "explore a topic more openly and to allow interviewees to express their opinions and ideas in their own words" (p. 190). As with all qualitative research, the in-depth interview uses unconstructed logic to ferret out the perceptions of the participant (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). That is, the quality, meaning, context, or image of the reality of their subjects (Creswell, 2013). Interviews and observations are more suited for discovering meanings, values, attitudes, opinions, and beliefs because they are unfettered by pre-set, close-ended questions that characterizes survey research. In other words, spontaneity and authenticity are often in favor of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Creswell (2013), the in-depth interview is one of the primary methods of data collection under the canopy of qualitative research.

There are four fundamental phases to the in-depth interview, beginning with the preparation phase, followed by the initiation phase, the exploration phase, and concluding with the termination phase (Northouse & Northouse, 1998; Salkind, 2003).

The content and purpose of the research project is nestled within the "exploration phase" of the in-depth interview (Northouse & Northouse, 1998; Salkind, 2003). Salkind (2003) argues that this phase is enriched through the implementation of open-ended questions, reflection, interpretation, and clarification. Open-ended questions, for example, are broad and are not intended for a simplex, clear-cut answer. They do not call for a specific or limited response and, therefore, give the participant full control over the information shared (Berg, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Salkind (2003) found that reflection, for example, is about acting as a mirror to the participant. This means not only the participant's words, but equally to the thoughts and feelings exuded by them. Stated another way, the researcher must reciprocate the participant's expression without reflecting their own opinions (Northouse & Northouse, 1998). This also involves internalizing the participant's expression, analyzing, and helping to explore in more depth (Berg, 2004; Salkind, 2003). It may also involve echoing the perspective of the participant with the goal of underscoring the emotions and opinions that are revealed from their verbal and non-verbal communication (Northouse & Northouse, 1998). The skill of reflection allows the interviewer to understand the feelings of the participant in conjunction with their experience to gain the most information from the interview (Northouse & Northouse, 1998). In other words, the interview is stymied without constant reflection by both the interviewer and the interviewee. As the interviewer, continuous reflection on the researcher's words, gestures, and interviewing skills will ensure a successful interview or improvement for the next one (Ocklers et al., 2007).

Interpretation provides an interviewee with a deeper understanding of their own feelings, opinions, and situations, which, in turn, might redirect their thoughts to give a richer meaning of their answer (Kardushin, 1998; Northouse & Northouse, 1998). Clarification is another key component in the exploration phase. In sum, it aims to achieve a common understanding of the

content in the interview (Northouse & Northouse, 1998). The researcher must skillfully ask for more detailed explanations, clearer communication, and relatable examples without trespassing the participant's sense of privacy (Salkind, 2003).

In an interview, the dialogue plays a critical role in the exchange of information, analysis of this information, and planning resolutions and goals (Berg, 2004, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Each skill adds a unique dimension to the dialogue and ensures a deeper understanding of the perspective of the participant (Cochinov, 2007). Conducting the interview allows the researcher to identify how each individual skill influences the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the interviewee. Being receptive to these influences, develops the researcher personally and encourages a better understanding of the interviewee's personal viewpoint from an empathetic dimension (Northouse & Northouse, 1998). The interview skills used in the exploration phase provide a platform for achieving a successful interview. The knowledge gained, empathy shown, and the interviewer reflects on their role as well as the responses and reflections of interviewee (Olckers et al., 2007). Each skill will play a role in the data that will be gained from the in-depth interview.

Although the in-depth interview may provide a wealth of valuable detailed data, the method is not without limitations. For one, the researcher identifies individuals who have experiences related to the research question or problem. This can prove challenging at times depending on the research topic (Creswell, 2013). Akin to participant issue, are questions related to access. Some populations are difficult or impossible to access. Another critical aspect of the interview, shared by all qualitative research methods, involves a full understanding of the situation or research subject, rather than the examination of superficial characteristics (Berg, 2004; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Many researchers describe qualitative methods by using the

analogy of peeling off the layers of an onion. Several layers must be removed before the researcher can get to the core of the study, data collection, and analysis (Berg, 2004; Saldana, 2015).

To mitigate limitations, the researcher will build rapport with the participant. Establishing rapport is fundamental to the in-depth interview. This means that the participant should feel understood, accepted, and the interview conducted within an environment in which information can be easily exchanged (Berg, 2004).

In sum, the researcher determined that the in-depth interview is the best fit for understanding how the work of the funeral director affects family and friendship networks. Conversely, how do families and friends mitigate or exacerbate the consequences of emotional labor of the funeral director.

Participants

Participants were selected through a purposeful sampling strategy. As a starting point, six recent graduates of the funeral service program at a large commuter university in a metropolitan area in the southwest part of the United States were identified. Contact information was obtained by a combination of social media and referrals (like snowball sampling technique). The criterion for the initial list of participants was a graduation date of more than five years ago (i.e., 2014).

Participants who live within the greater metropolitan statistical area of central Oklahoma were interviewed face to face. Two of the six participants live outside the state of Oklahoma. In these cases, a telephone interview was conducted. All participants passed the Oklahoma Funeral Board exam and were licensed to practice as a funeral director or embalmer. In order to make appropriate comparisons, the researcher required a minimum of at least two years in the profession.

Instrument

A semi-structured interview schedule or questionnaire was constructed for this research project. This approach balanced the extremes of structured and non-directive types of interview schedules. The former relies on predetermined questions while the latter is wide-open with little, if any, questions. The semi-structured schedule had the advantage of developing guiding questions on the one hand, while on the other hand it allowed the researcher latitude in exploring participant responses and understanding their experiences in the context of the research question.

The interview schedule for this project evolved over three distinct drafts. The initial draft included four demographic questions and eight essential questions. The second version was prompted by the review of the researcher's thesis committee, suggesting the inclusion of three additional questions. The final draft was galvanized after conducting a pilot interview.

Six of the twelve questions were related to demographic information, including age, gender, race/ethnicity, marital status, children, year graduated, hometown, and licensure year. The remaining six items are essential questions. These include satisfaction with the profession; emotions related to working with grieving clients; differential management of emotional display; incongruent feelings; coping strategies and effect on family or friends. All questions were open-ended to provide optimal opportunity for participants to address each question. The researcher developed two or three probes for each of the essential questions. The use of such probes was situational and an emergent quality of the interview.

Finally, the researcher documented the interview. An audio recording of the sessions was considered. However, the cost of transcription cost and investment of time were deemed as prohibitive. Rather, the researcher used a field technique developed by Geertz called "jottings." These are simple and cryptic written notes through the interview. Immediately after the

interview, the researcher wrote a full account of the interview. Any question of "missing data" was evaluated after each interview.

Analysis

The researcher used content analysis to identify and determine themes emerging from the interview data. Content analysis is research strategy of making sense of a large amount of qualitative data by reducing its core themes and meaning (Berg, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Krippendorf (2018), content analysis has four main purposes. "to ask what, how, and to whom something is said; why something is said as well as asking with what effects something is said" (p. 7-8).

These key principles of content analysis guided the researcher's analysis of the interview data. The anticipated outcome from this approach is an organizational schema that provided the researcher with a means of understanding and identifying patterns of regularity (Krippendorf, 2018). It also enabled the researcher to evaluate the accuracy of the interpretation of the interview data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To accomplish this task, the researcher used a coding convention to organize the data into a multitude of ideas. Some researchers refer to this as "open coding" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is a means of identifying every distinct idea within the fabric of the interview data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Straus & Corbin 1998). This technique enabled the researcher to identify the details of the data. The multiplicity of ideas garnered from open codes led to the researcher's use of code structures or axial codes (Berg, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Axial coding is a more in-depth analysis through of the interview data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Axial codes allowed the researcher to find comprehensive themes in the interview data by combining key words (open codes) through word-affinity mapping (Steward, 2017).

Using this process allowed the researcher to digest and organize large amounts of raw data into both detailed ideas and meaningful categories or themes (Berg, 2004; Straus & Corbin, 1998).

Approval of the Research Project

Current institutional policies related to ethics and scientific research are rooted in several landmark policy and legislative cases, beginning with the Nuremberg Code of 1949 (Berg, 2004; Berger, 1990). Much of the momentum in research ethics stemmed from the troubling revelations of the bio-medical experiments conducted by Nazis scientists. The Nuremberg code, and later the Declaration of Helsinki (1964), were foundational to our current understanding and practices (Levine, 1986). The former advocated for the protection of subjects by affording the "voluntary" component of participation (Gray, 2002; Jones, 1993). The latter was a set of guidelines adopted by the *World Medical Association* involving medical research (Jones, 1993).

The advent of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) is the result of these significant historical events. The IRB was part of the National Research Act, signed into law in July of 1974, with the goal of protecting human subjects (Berg, 2004). It functions to provide oversight and evaluate all aspects of research projects: the design of the research, the recruitment process, the sample, informed consent, the risk/benefit balance, privacy and confidentiality, data storage and protection, and safeguards for vulnerable individuals (Berg, 2004).

The approval to conduct research requires and application. As part of the process, all researchers associated with the project were required to be certified by a third party. The researcher's institution uses an organization called CITI, which stands for the *Collaborative IRB Training Initiative.* The course on Human Subjects Research (Basic) is composed of 21 modules and is both tedious and thorough. The training requires a combined pass rate at least of 80%. The

researcher for this project was certified by CITI (Record #32454896) on July 17, 2019. The IRB approval (#2019-122) was on September 9, 2019.

In order to ensure confidentiality, the researcher assigned a number to each participant. In addition, the researcher reported results in the aggregate when appropriate. At times, individual quotes were reported. In such cases, the researcher referred to the quotes as a generic "participant" or "director".

To ensure privacy, all interviews were conducted in a public setting or on the premise of their employment. All measures to establish rapport and provide a safe and comfortable setting was a primary concern of the researcher. The participants were given and requested to sign the informed consent form. All participants willingly signed the informed consent form. Finally, the data will be stored in a locked file cabinet located in a locked office of one of the thesis committee members.

In summary, in-depth interviews was the research method for the collection of data. Each interview lasted 30 minutes at a minimum up to 55 minutes. The interview transcripts numbered more than 30 pages. Chapter Four presents a detail analysis of the data.

Chapter Four: Results

This study explores the relationship between the work of licensed funeral directors, emotional labor, and impact on family and friends. Previous research was limited in linking emotional labor and the work of the funeral director. Canvassing the literature provided little evidence to explain these relationships. The data from this project provides some insight into the complexity of the profession. This chapter presents the results in two substantive sections, including participant characteristics and the work of the funeral director. The researcher divided the work of the funeral director into two major sub-divisions; technical skills and the social stage. The latter is further divided into two categories; demands of the job and families in grief.

Participant Characteristics

Six participants were interviewed from December 2019 through March 2020. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes (minimum) and 55 minutes. Three of the interviews were conducted in person and three were remote (phone). Of the six participants, three were current funeral directors, and three were no longer working in the industry. However, one participant stated that he was planning to return to the profession.

Two of the participants (33%) were raised in a family-owned funeral home. Their fathers were funeral directors. They reported a familiarity with the work as children and teenagers. One participant aptly described his childhood memories, "…I grew up in a funeral home and can remember my dad getting called at all hours of the day to pick up a body. Holidays and birthdays were just another day for us." Interestingly, familiarity with the work of a funeral director may not be an advantage in terms of remaining in the business. Stated another way, being born into the business does not guarantee that one will remain in the profession. One of the participants is currently a funeral director while the other decided to leave the profession. The latter participant

expressed the desire to return to the profession during our interview, stating, "I miss helping families in difficult times and the gratifying feelings that come from it."

Four of the six participants made the decision to pursue a career as a funeral director while in college. Participants seemed to have similar experiences. One participant's experience serves as a typical example. He went to college for dentistry; early in the program, he took a Psychology of Grief course and decided to change his major to funeral service. The participant said, "it was a totally different journey than I ever imagined." Another participant was working with a funeral home as a 'pre-need' counselor. He relished the opportunities to work with grieving families so he returned to school to get his funeral director's license. One participant went straight into the Funeral Service program. The satisfaction of bringing clarity to the families during their time of loss was very rewarding for them. The last participant wished to go into the medical field. Early in her studies, she enrolled in a class in mortuary science. This sparked an interest for her and she claimed afterwards that she was "hooked."

All participants reported that their decision to become a funeral director was rooted in a deep desire to help people. One participant, for example, stated, "I see this as a ministry, a way to serve people." Another claimed, "I started in the nursing program but realized after my first elective class on grief I could really help grieving families."

Participants varied in age, marital status, and family size. They ranged in age from 30 to 65. All but one was married or in a serious relationship and two of the six have at least one child. Three of the participants were male and three were female.

The Work of the Funeral Director

The researcher identified two domains related to the work of the funeral director; technical skills and the social stage. Technical skills encompass that part of the profession that are routine,

mundane, and can be learned or acquired through formal education or on the job training, such as internships. The researcher discovered that this domain of work is 'low emotional labor potential.' In contrast, the social stage is the term that serves as a canopy to describe that part of the work in which the funeral director interacts with clients. The social stage is rife with complexity, novelty, and activities that the researcher identified as 'high emotional labor potential.' As will be shown, these conceptual categories are a contribution to the literature and the research tradition of emotional labor.

Technical skills

As stated, technical skills include the day-to-day operations or routines of the profession, including issues such as: legal requirements related to body disposition, death certificates and other legal documents, sales of merchandise, budgets, communications to clients (legal or technical), and paperwork related to procedures peculiar to the funeral home. The funeral director may also work with families in the field of financing and insurance, pre-need packages, etc. These activities collectively have low emotional labor potential. Overall, participants indicated that their college degree provided the requisite training to meet many of these demands. For example, one participant reported, "College prepared me well for the technical aspects of the job." Another stated, "I felt prepared for the physical part of the job, like preparing the bodies and death certificates, etc." Finally, a participant claimed, "getting the body ready for viewing was something I learned in school. While I knew the 'how to' I also realized that I needed some practice."

One of the participants reported that he was selling insurance when hired by a funeral home to sell pre-need packages. He claimed, "I just needed a job and had been selling insurance. Then I went to work for a funeral home for "pre-need" counseling and selling policies. It is a lot

like insurance in terms of varying income because it's based-on commission." One believed he was well prepared [college education] but added, "…you learn something new about the industry and the families you are working for… I felt very prepared, but every situation is different."

Although the participants in this study voiced confidence in performing the technical aspects of the work, it does not imply that they are immune from occasional mistakes. For example, one sheepishly noted, "I accidentally downloaded the wrong song one time. I was so used to downloading Amazing Grace, but the family wanted Elvis and the Gatlin Brothers. As soon as I heard the first note, I just knew it was wrong. At that point there is no rewind." Another funeral director reported that they had ordered the wrong-colored flowers, "I ordered the right type of arrangement, but the wrong color. I was in a hurry and did not confirm my order. I was embarrassed and this taught me a huge lesson in planning the funeral."

A few participants reported technical glitches during the service that they coordinated. One director for example, shared, "we have a checklist that we go through before the service, but one day I was rushing from one deal to the next and forgot to check the batteries in the mic… and wouldn't you know, the damn batteries were dead." These types of technical mishaps occur, and while unfortunate, the participants acknowledged that they are recoverable. However, the researcher found that mistakes made in this part of the work, while they are generally low emotional labor potential, can be elevated to high emotional labor potential because of a family members' reaction. As an example of the elevation of a low emotional labor potential to a high emotional labor, a participant shared,

> "Managing customers was very difficult because cemeteries enormous. You have over
> 14,000 burials in this one cemetery, and you have marker duty where you must keep the
> sites clear. Families would come by and be upset about grass, weeds, mowing, dirty

markers, or not be able to find the marker. People would scream and yell at me because they felt their loved one was disrespected. I did everything I could to keep from screaming back… it was maddening and not even my fault. I don't run the cemetery."

This is just one of many examples in which the technical side of the work, which is low emotional labor potential, can migrate or elevate to high emotional labor.

The Social Stage

As stated, the social stage is the term that describes the canopy that encompasses the complexities of the client-professional relationship. The social stage represents the greater proportion of the work of the funeral director and is the domain with high emotional labor potential.

By social stage, the researcher defines this as the area in which the drama or interaction with clients plays out. In emotional labor terms, the social stage is the space in which the researcher must be most sensitive to client cues and respond with the appropriate display rules. Social stage in this context does not imply or impute insincere or disingenuous motives to the funeral director. In this sense, the word is theoretically neutral, defining the social space in which the drama unfolds between the professional and the client.

The researcher found that funeral directors must negotiate two interrelated factors associated with emotional labor and the dynamics of family and friends. The two factors are the demands of the job and families in grief.

Demands of the Job

All participants stated unequivocally that the profession, while rewarding, is rife with occupational demands that are sources of burnout. The researcher identified two realities that are

the obverse sides of the profession. These involve the expectations of long hours and the correlate of low salaries and benefits.

The participants unanimously stated that long hours are the expectations of the profession. Highlighting this expectation, one participant said, "I am always on call. Funeral homes are always open. It doesn't matter if its Thanksgiving, Christmas, or the Super Bowl, I am always working or ready to work." Another funeral director exclaimed, "The last company worked me to death, 24/7 and took advantage of me." One echoed a similar observation, "the funeral business is open 24/7, 365 days out of the year. It is not conducive to normal life".

An unfortunate trend in the industry, in addition to long hours, are low salaries, benefits, and lack of opportunities for advancement in many funeral homes. Four of the six participants reported that the salaries were low, especially considering the hours that the funeral director is expected to work each week. One of the participants, who is no longer in the field, said, "I finally figured it out, I was making less money than people do working for fast food joints." Another director claimed having difficulty in making her student loan payment. One of the participants who had a share of ownership in a business commented with some sarcasm, "Why do you think I mow my own lawn [funeral home], do my own accounting, and until recently, was the janitor."

The combination of these two factors was the primary reason for two of the participants' decision to leave the profession. One former director tersely stated,

> "Pay is not great. You are always on call. Then the salaries do not help soften the
> blow of the being on call all the time. When I first got out of college, I remember
> thinking to myself that this is more money than I have ever made. After several
> years, I just couldn't justify all of the time I put into the career."

Another participant cited long hours and low compensation claiming, "I am convinced that pay and too many hours lead to the high attrition rate in our profession, or at least partly based on these things." In the case of one funeral director, who did advance in a corporate funeral home, said, "I was made a manager one day and got an increase in salary; I waited for training in management and finally left after sticking it out for three years. It was a horrible experience. I was yelled at by both families [clients] and people who worked for me."

The long-term effect of excessive workloads is discouragement and potential risk of burnout. As one director said, "I got to the place where I was working way more than anything else. I did not have any semblance of work-life balance." Reflecting on this thought, a participant stated, "… holidays and birthdays are just another day on the calendar for the funeral director… and trying to make plans was very difficult."

In addition, the hours and low pay challenged healthy relationships with family and friends. In fact, all participants shared their frustration with dividing their time between the funeral home and their family and friends. One participant, for example, reported a common sentiment, "I was working 60-70-hour weeks… which caused a horrible strain on my relationship [partner]." Reflecting on demands of the job, a director noted, "One struggle was even having a significant other just because of the work schedule, I mean, making plans was almost impossible. It wasn't his fault, but he didn't know how to cope with my obligations." Finally, a participant commenting on this lack of predictability of schedule recalls, "I remember when my kids were young I just couldn't make plans; then when I did and had to break promises, it was very difficult for the family and it takes a toll on wife and kids."

The demands of the job are not just unidirectional. One of the participants interviewed toward the end of the project underscored an interesting reality. She comments, "after graduation

a lot of my friends were hanging out and getting married. I was invited to everything and was asked to be in the weddings of my friends. I had to back out at the last minute on two ceremonies because of the job. It got to the point where I was not even invited." This experience sheds light on the reciprocity on friendship networks and the demands of the job.

One of the funeral directors seems to have achieved a balance. He views his work to minister to others. He comments, "… my strategy is to take time off to get away from work. I take personal "self-care" days to be able to push through. It took some time to get used to, but my wife supports my strategy. It helps too that she works part time in the business."

Families in Grief

Death denial and death avoidance permeates the marrow of U.S. cultural conventions. Scholars have noted that funeral service clients most likely lack experience and more than likely are not prepared to make difficult decisions (Corr and Corr, 2013; Kastenbaum, 2007; Canine, 1996; Kubler-Ross, 1975). Few things in life, if any, prepare the client for end of life issues of loved ones. Additionally, many clients unwittingly hold stereotypes about the funeral director as exploitive and deceptive. The scene is exacerbated by grief, emotional distress, and for some, feelings of guilt. These are just a few of the complications that make the social stage precarious.

While the success of each funeral director is subjective, there are surprisingly similar measurements. One director stated it this way,

> "I see my job as helping people through their journey. They come to me emotionally sad and I feel obligated to help them in their journey back to some normalcy. It will never be the same, but they need to know that tomorrow they will wake up a little better than today. It's a journey for them. It's a journey for all of us, really."

Two other participants underscored the metaphor of a "journey" in their self-evaluation. Other participants measured their impact on the family in less theoretical terms, but rather just an expression of appreciation. For example, one director commented, "I feel like I served the family when the family is satisfied." Another participant conveyed a similar sentiment, "it feels rewarding when serving the family. Hearing the family say 'good job or thank you' is how I know deep down that I helped."

As stated, the social stage is the place where the drama unfolds. While a multitude of novel complexities could beset the interaction between the professional and client, it is clear that the participants in this research refer to this part of the profession as one that you learn on the job and not from a textbook. One participant aptly said, reflecting the thoughts of others, "There are some things that college cannot prepare you for in this industry." Dissimilar to other social activities, the context of the funeral director's social stage is brimming with sadness, confusion, guilt, anxiety, shock, and uncertainty. One funeral director summed it up this way; "Grieving people don't know what's going on when in shock, and I may have to ask them questions repeatedly. Some families make jokes, but it is hard to know when they are kidding." Therefore, the social stage of the funeral director is unlike any other context for social interaction.

To that end, all participants claimed that central to a successful outcome was the ability for funeral directors to be able to recognize and assess the social and emotional cues of the client. As one participant stated, "You have to be able to read every emotion in the room and navigate through the conversation." Similarly, another mentions, "…you can't read everyone all of the time. But I try to read the room and figure who plays what role… I stay monotone if I cannot read every single person in the room. This is my advice to new directors. It is safer this way." If the social stage was only low risk or low stakes, it would be difficult to explain why funeral

directors exhort new directors to 'play it safe.' A participant shared similar feelings, stating, "Some families go from one emotion to the extreme opposite within seconds. You cannot get too comfortable because some are easier to read than others. Adjustments are needed. Just don't get too comfortable."

One of the impediments for reading or assessing the emotions of the client are dynamics within the family and interactions among family members. One participant stated,

"Family fights are very emotional. But families are all different. A lot of them fight and are very angry. That is why it is important to take a preliminary emotional check to get an idea of what is going on with the family and then just go with it. This became easier with experience and improving my people skills."

Another participant echoed similar thoughts, but added, "…one strategy that I use during family turmoil is to make sure that everyone is heard. Sometimes this is tough to accomplish but I have found that it can disperse some of the anger."

One director claimed that he has experienced a greater frequency of family arguments during the consultation. He opined, "I believe this issue [family arguments] is not new, but seems to be growing in frequency. I believe its related to the changing family make-up. I have arranged services in which there were so many pairs of siblings with stepchildren and step grandchildren. Each group had argued for their own preferences; that resulted in an impasse." Several directors agreed and identified the breakdown of the family as the culprit for family conflict. One director conveyed, "You have to read your families; know them. Try to establish a rapport with them, and remember, this might be several spouses to the deceased, along with several sets of stepchildren". Another complicating factor in the interaction between the funeral director and client is the context of death, which includes type and trajectory of death. Participants all

reported that the sadness surrounding the profession is ubiquitous, and at times, personally overwhelming. As one practicing funeral director mentions, "Grief has a complicated nature, it seems that the way people die really matters." He added, "it's much easier to make the arrangements for a 96-year-old woman who lived a long and healthy life." Another participant echoed similar sentiments,

> "I have found that it's not as difficult, all things being equal, to create a service for the elderly. While the family is sad for the passing, it was expected. In some ways, you become an event planner. And I don't mean that in a negative sense."

In this and similar cases, the family is not surprised by the passing of a loved one, as age is the most significant variable. Conversely, the more problematic arrangements are for the young. As one participant shared, "I think everyone in the industry can agree that arranging a service for children and babies are heart-wrenching." Every participant shared this sentiment.

In addition to the age of the deceased, the unexpected passing complicates and increases the variety of potential problems between the funeral director and client. Suicide, accidents, and unexpected deaths increase the complications and make high emotional labor potential more likely.

As stated, the social stage is the space in which the funeral director must navigate a host of potential obstacles in helping the clientele through their journey. Families in grief present both common and unique situations for the funeral director. This social space is most precarious; as there are many opportunities for the social situation to go awry. Anger, resentment, or criticism from the client presents challenges to the funeral director. This space is subject to high emotional labor potential. Consider the following account from one participant,

"I was counseling with a family with an unexpected death. The room was very tense. It felt like a rollercoaster of emotions. I was praised by some of them [family members] and cursed by others during my time with them. The room was intense, and I did everything possible to remain calm and professional." Another participant remembered, "You need to be able to empathize with certain losses. I remember an arrangement that was extremely sad. I was doing my best given the situation. But sometimes you get emotionally abused by the family, which is what happened in this case. I learned that if you don't have thick skin you won't last long in this career."

One funeral director, who is no longer in the field, claimed; "There were times when I was blatantly disrespected by the family. It wore me out when I was treated so poorly. I tried to be professional every day because that's what was expected, but some days were harder because of the blatant disrespect from some families."

All the participants claimed that there is some "acting" that is required to survive this career. By acting, the participants mean that their heart or emotions are not consistent with the professional standards or display rules. These are the 'rules' in which Hothschild referred to in her emotional labor theory. When asked to comment on the most challenging aspect of the job, one director reflected, "Managing my emotions, at times, I let people see my emotions. There is a degree of acting. Sometimes I have to leave the room if I get too upset." Another participant claimed,

"A complicated situation means a completely different response. Sometimes your heart doesn't work, but you try to be professional. You must show professionalism. You must act the part, and then take off the costume. People skills are at the center of this career." The same participant went on to say, "It got easier dealing with the families as my people

skills improved. Families are all different. Many of them fight and are angry. I try to be a

calm presence to the family and that was very fulfilling. But the family interaction is

most challenging. You have to take a preliminary emotion check to get an idea what is

going on with the family and then just go with it."

The degree of acting and the specifics of each family was underscored by all the

participants. One participant, for example, said,

"The type of death matters. I let people see my emotions. At the end of the day, you

always have to be genuine. You must be a servant. Treat others like you want to be

treated. But it is very situational. When working with the family I always want to

understand the background before walking into that environment; for example, is it a

stillbirth or a suicide? Both have a bearing…"

The art of acting professional has been presented in the mix of negative reactions from the family

toward the funeral director, however, there may be other emotions that are managed due to the

prevailing display rules. An intriguing comment by one of the directors underscores this point.

"oh, yea, it is hard to mask emotions. I remember a time when I had a concert to go to

later that evening. I was very excited about it but I had a grieving family earlier that day.

I was so excited on the inside but you have to stay professional and keep your emotions

intact. I wanted to provide good service for the family. I had to keep my excitement in

check."

The normative expectation for the funeral director is one of service and assistance to

grieving families. This expectation was deftly conveyed by a participant; "The family needs you

even though you don't feel like expressing any emotions and you have to remember you are

representing the company." A former director noted, "A funeral career was incredibly rewarding

but it was emotionally draining. It seemed like I was always worn out making sure my face and heart were the same." One participant drew an analogy to an actor, stating, "it is like an actor who goes and acts all day and then he has to 'take off the costume'."

For example,

> "it is difficult to leave the work at the office. There is a degree of PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder]. Tough times at home when kids are reading jokes to you. At times, I must distance myself from my kids. I have thought about going to a therapist."

Another participant echoed a similar observation, admonishing all directors with the following, "You can't bring your life at the funeral home to your home and you can't bring your home life back to the funeral home." The job can also take a toll on the family in other ways.

> "I learned that I had to take care of myself before I could take care of others. Working 60-70 hours a week caused a horrible relationship with my boyfriend. The only social support that I received was from my mom and dad. I felt guilty for leaning on them so much."

> The career for some of the participants was a novelty for their significant other. For example, one director shared,

> "my boyfriend was very supportive, especially early on. He was fascinated with the dead in the beginning, but started seeing my depression and would encourage me to get out of the industry… mainly because I was sad all of the time. I was treated horribly by management and by some of the clients."

Some learned to cope with work matters by hanging out with friends or some other hobby. Others have been successful with personal strategies to combat emotional labor. For example,

"First, I try not to take the work home. I try to leave it at the office. My strategy is

simple; I get out of town to 'get away.' This is my main coping skill. I take a lot of solace

in my own family. I try to be 'stingy' with my time but I have noticed other funeral

directors who don't prioritize family and end up being alone. I just try to set a time and

go home."

It is common for the funeral director's primary relationship to suffer. One director, mused

about her coping strategies and impact on her home life, saying; "Animals are a coping strategy

that I have used in the past. It's hard to leave work at work. I just would go home and go to bed. I

struggled with depression and was married briefly." The same participant also added, "My

husband could not provide the emotional support I needed. He gave me too much space. My

coworkers were better support than he was. I finally just left the job."

Another example of the impact on the family and coping skills was stated this way;

"Many others in the industry cope by turning to alcohol and drugs. I do not do that. I golf,

fish, and spend time outside. My wife can tell when I am stressed and will give me space.

People compress the situation. My wife realizes my role in this profession and we both

see it as a ministry. Over years, she has become supportive and knows when to let me

decompress alone. I guess I have also learned to compartmentalize it to some extent. I

have learned how to switch it on and off."

Finally, a participant has learned to cope by providing a beautiful example of joining families in

their grief and then separating. He explains,

"you have to have a "Velcro heart". You must be able to detach when necessary. Many

funeral directors tend to "glue" their hearts in place and it is very hard for them

emotionally. I think about Velcro where I join them in grief and separate after they are on the road to recovery."

In sum, the researcher has described the two domains of the funeral director: technical skills and the social stage. The researcher also provided evidence that the technical skills have low emotional labor potential, while the social stage has high emotional labor potential. As shown, complications that affect the social stage could begin as a low emotional labor potential but with a small error made in the technical skills aspects of the funeral director role can immediately escalate the stage to a high emotional labor potential. This is where Hothschild's emotional labor theory comes to surface instantaneously. The funeral director must ultimately manage their feelings or emotions to incorporate the high emotional labor potential reaction with their clients.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine emotional labor among funeral directors and the impact of their work on relationships with friends and family. This chapter includes a discussion of major findings as related to the literature on the insight into the complexity of the profession, including but not limited to the demands of the job and families in grief. Also included is a discussion on the two major sub-divisions which the researcher teased out during the process. Those sub-divisions are the technical skills and the social stage of the funeral director. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, areas for further research, and a brief summary.

This chapter contains discussion and future research possibilities to help answer the following research questions:

(R1):   What is the work of the funeral director?

(R2):   Does emotional labor occur within the profession of funeral directors?

(R2):   What is the impact, if any, on the family and friends of a funeral director in relation to emotional labor?

The theoretical framework in which the researcher pursues for this study are Hochschild's emotional labor conceptualization and Erving Goffman's dramaturgical analysis. The research will show that there are two domains of the funeral director: technical skills and the social stage. Furthermore, the study will provide evidence that technical skills have a low emotional labor potential and the social stage has a high emotional labor potential.

Methods and Procedures

The research design that was used for this project comes under the canopy of qualitative methodology. The researcher determined that in-depth interviews was the best fit for

understanding how the work of the funeral directly affects family and friends. Participants were selected through a purposeful sampling strategy. The criterion for the selection of participants was a graduation date of more than five years ago and a minimum of two years in the profession.

A semi-structured interview questionnaire was constructed and utilized for this research. Six participants were selected for this research project. Content analysis was used to identify and determine themes that emerged from the interview data.

Major Findings

Research Question One: What is the work of the funeral director?

The researcher found that the work of the funeral director is inextricably connected to the role of the funeral director in the larger community. The funeral is the social event that marks the end of life for one and the beginning of a journey for the family and friends of the deceased. The funeral director's work is connected to both aspects of this social event. The funeral director's coordination or oversight of the disposition of the body and satisfaction of the legal requirements are nestled within that the researcher called "technical" aspects of the profession. As noted in the Results chapter, this part of the work is learned college or a trade school. The technical part of the job are routine and mundane tasks that are managed in the day-to-day operations.

Conversely, the greater proportion of a funeral directors' work is on the social stage. If the disposition of the body makes up the technical aspects of the work, the social stage is the transition to and beginning of the journey for the family and friends of the deceased. The researcher coined the 'social stage' to underscore the theoretical lens of describing the work of the funeral director. The researcher found the social stage to be precarious, challenging, and rife with obstacles that may derail the journey for the family and friends of the deceased. As previously mentioned, Hothschild drew upon Goffman's theory of dramaturgical analysis.

Facilitating a theatrical metaphor, he argued that social interactions occur on a stage in which humans are actors performing for audiences; these interactions have an element of impression management. This perspective implies that a performer (the funeral director) is required to have certain attributes or make specific impressions in order to achieve a successful character.

Participants indicated that this part of the work cannot be learned from a textbook or in college. They also indicated that with improved people skills the social stage became easier to negotiate over time.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship, if any, between emotional labor and the work of the funeral directors?

The work of the funeral director was bifurcated into technical work and the social stage. The researcher has contributed to the literature and the theoretical tradition of emotional labor by identifying some work as 'low emotional labor potential' and other work as 'high emotional labor potential.' The research shows that the technical skills of the funeral director's work was of the 'low emotional labor potential' type. In contrast, the social stage was the 'high emotional labor potential' type. Technical skills include the day-to-day operations of a funeral director. For example, the filling out of paperwork (i.e. death certificates etc.), the sale of merchandise (i.e. caskets, etc.), and the legal requirements related to body disposition (i.e. preparation for burial or cremation). The performance of this type of work was unnoticed most of the time, however, long hours and work fatigue made mistakes more likely. The researcher found that mistakes or miscues elevates a low emotional labor potential activity to a high emotional labor potential activity. The selection of a wrong song or wrong flower arrangements were technical work with low emotional labor potential, can be elevated to high emotional labor potential. Both Hothschild and Goffman argue that we take on appropriate roles in differing performances to attempt to

maintain a successful interaction that is in line with expectations, i.e. to satisfy the audience. In an interaction, Goffman (1959) argues, an individual will subconsciously "guide and control the impression they form of him" (p. 127) to project a desired effect in his performance.

The normative expectation for the funeral director is one of service and assistance to grieving families. *Families in grief* is a term developed by the researcher to include, but not limited to, client or family dynamics, context of the death, and the intensity of emotional labor on the part of the funeral director. Recalling the literature review, Hothschild defines emotional labor as the management of feelings or emotions that are required to meet the expectations of cultural conventions, professional standards, or corporate prescriptions. Goffman adds that our impressions are managed through a dramaturgical process whereby social life is played out like actors performing on a stage and our actions are dictated by the roles that we are playing in particular situations (Brissett & Edgley, 1990; Goffman, 1959). In this context, the researcher found that the dramas on the social stage tend to have high emotional labor potential. The reaction of the family often determined the outcome. The researcher pointed to several examples of hostile reactions by the family toward, which taxed the professionalism of the funeral director.

Research Question Three: What is the impact, if any, on the family and friends of a funeral director in relation to emotional labor?

The impact of the work of the funeral director on his or her family can be profound. It was common for the funeral director's primary relationship to suffer. As expected, maintaining a separation between work and home is problematic for funeral directors. The long hours and 24/7 schedule took a toll on many of the families of the participants. Several of the participants family did not know how to assist their loved one and some felt that just 'giving them space' would

suffice. The coping skills of the funeral director was crucial for maintaining not just self, but the family as well.

Goffman's theory suggests that a person's identity is not a steadfast, but instead it is constantly remade as interaction with others occurs. It is seen as a self-defense mechanism. We have something that we want or need to keep to ourselves, in fear of retribution from others. Loss of respect, friendships, romantic relationships, even jobs, could all be hindered by whatever truth is being held backstage (Brissett & Edgley, 1990; Goffman, 1959). The researcher witnessed this time and time again with the participants.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher identified several limitations of the study. These are categorized into theory-related and design related issues. In terms of the former, the breadth of the project complicated the conceptual map or theory. The initial research prospectus included exploring the work of the funeral director, emotional labor, and the effects of the work on the family and friends of the funeral director. Although the researcher was exploring relationships or associations, the model implied a causal relationship. That was beyond the design of the project. It may have been more fruitful to examine just the work of the funeral director and the interaction with families in grief. Having little background on the subject, either professionally or personally, the researcher was surprised by the myriad of pitfalls or complexities that exist with "families in grief." The researcher could narrow the scope of the project to the interaction between the funeral director and families in grief. Or, explored the work of the funeral director and the impact on his/her family and friends. The design flaws stem from the breadth of the study to sequence of questions. The breadth of the study included questions related to the three research questions. As stated, a narrow approach would modify the semi-structured interview,

eliminating questions related to the breadth of the research. In addition, the questionnaire included "throw away" questions. These questions were present to help establish rapport. One or two fewer questions would have provided more time and focus to the research.

Upon reflection, the demographic questions should have been placed at the end of the questionnaire. Asking these questions first created an awkward moment and "felt" intrusive. The opening question, probing the participant's interest in funeral directing or their path to becoming a funeral director, would have been more effective in creating an informal discussion about their career. The demographic questions at the beginning of the interview set a "stuffy" or formal ambience that required effort to overcome.

Future Research

1.   The technical work and the family impact. To explore the relationship between the work of the funeral director, including long hours, relatively low salaries, and virtually no room for advancement, and the impact on family and friends. More focus on this relationship would be a promising project.

2.   As the researcher has shown, technical aspects of the work are the routine matters but fatigue, mistakes, lack of attention for details or other oversights can elevate low emotional labor potential to high emotional labor potential. More research could be conducted to understand the dimensions of mistakes or oversights and the type of client reactions.

3.   After analyzing the data from the interviews, the researcher coined the terms 'social stage' and 'families in grief'. Are there certain types of behavior or reactions of families in grief that can create categories or typologies to better understand the relationship between the funeral director and the client on the social stage?

4.   More research between the funeral director and friends concerning the reciprocal relationship and how the work impacts those relations.

5.   One of the participants mentioned that there should be a therapist on call for them to help with coping strategies to avoid burnout, especially in the context of high emotional labor. Also, 'compassion fatigue' and the possible effects it could have on the family and friends of the funeral director. Several participants stated that when they were home and they needed the empathetic or compassionate emotions for the family, it just was not present. There was no 'fuel' left in the tank for the family. How can we help better understand this dynamic?

6.   Additional research on the motivation of the funeral director in helping to assist the families of the decedent in their journey through the grieving process. What does that journey look like?   Many funeral homes are meeting customer demand with an "amazon" approach of providing cremation services online. There is no interaction between the funeral director and client. Funeral directors pursued this career to help grieving families. When the customer picks up the cremains, only a signature and identification are required. There is no interaction between the funeral director and client that can help the latter in their journey. What are the implications or what does it mean to the professional who wants to assist the grieving client?

Conclusion

This research examined the emotional labor as part of the work of funeral directors. Consistent with the body of research, all six participants were aware of the importance of presenting appropriate emotional displays to their clients.

The researcher found that the emotional labor of participants was taxed by the demands of the job and the families in grief. The latter was exacerbated by family dynamics, the context of death, and the age of the deceased. The researcher chose funeral directors as the subject of this

study because it provides an opportunity to tease out aspects of emotional labor that are not possible in other professions, largely due to the death-denying, death-avoidance culture. The funeral director uniquely stands as a symbol or representative of a service that people are not eager to buy anytime soon. In other words, the funeral director represents that part of our culture that is avoided at all costs. The profound contributions to the theoretical understanding of emotional labor is the division of the work of the funeral director into 'low emotional labor potential' work versus 'high emotional labor potential' work. In addition, the researcher has shown how routine or technical aspects of the job can move from low emotional labor potential to high emotional labor potential if mistakes or oversights are made.

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Appendices

UNIVERSITY OF **Central Oklahoma**

September 09, 2019   IRB Application #: 2019-122

Proposal Title: The Work of the Funeral Director: Emotional Labor, Family, and Friends

Type of Review: Initial Review-Expedited

Investigator(s):

Cami Cho
Brandon Burr, Ph.D.

Dear Ms. Cho and Dr. Burr:

Re: Application for IRB Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

We have received your materials for your application. The UCO IRB has determined that the above named application is APPROVED BY EXPEDITED REVIEW. The Board has provided expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110, for research involving no more that minimal risk and research Category 7.

Date of Approval: September 09, 2019

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. A stamped, approved copy of the informed consent form will be made available to you. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used, where applicable. Any modification to the procedures and/or consent form must be approved prior to incorporation into the study. At the completion of the study, please submit a closure request form to close your file.

It is the responsibility of the investigators to promptly report to the IRB any serious or unexpected adverse events or unanticipated problems that may be a risk to the subjects.

Please let us know if the IRB or Office of Research Integrity and Compliance can be of any further assistance to your research efforts. Never hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Melissa Powers, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
University of Central Oklahoma
100 N. University Dr.
Edmond, OK 73034
405-974-5497
irb@uco.edu

Office of Research Integrity and Compliance
100 North University Drive / Edmond, OK 73034 Phone (405) 974-5497 Fax (405) 974-38

IRB Approval

Completion Date 06-Aug-2019
Expiration Date 05-Aug-2022
Record ID   32688791

This is to certify that:

Brandon Burr

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research   (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course   (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of Central Oklahoma

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w7ec2271b-06fb-4ebc-978f-539cbc640c19-32688791

Dr. Burr Certificate

	Completion Date	17-Jul-2019
	Expiration Date	16-Jul-2022
	Record ID	32454896

This is to certify that:

Cami Cho

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of Central Oklahoma

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w11839640-ca80-4369-97c2-4e0106b6b7af-32454896

Cho Certificate

<table>
<tr><td>Completion Date</td><td>22-Aug-2019</td></tr>
<tr><td>Expiration Date</td><td>21-Aug-2022</td></tr>
<tr><td>Record ID</td><td>32196885</td></tr>
</table>

This is to certify that:

Gary Steward

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of Central Oklahoma

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w58b64550-7afc-45e0-9ab3-051edf9be68f-32196885

Dr. Steward Certificate

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF
COURSEWORK

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for
See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course

- **Name** John Fritch (ID:
- **Institution** University of Central Oklahoma (ID:
- **Institution** jfritch@uco.ed
- **Institution** Funeral
- **Phone** 405.974.519

- **Curriculum** Social & Behavioral Research -
- **Course Learner** Social & Behavioral
- **Stage** Stage 1 - Basic

- **Record** 2952241
- **Completion** 27No-
- **Expiration** 26No-
- **Minimum** 8
- **Reported** 8

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES	DATE	SCOR
Records-Based Research (ID: 5)	20No-	2/3 (67%)
FERPA: An Introduction (ID:	26No-	5/5 (100%)
FERPA for Researchers (ID:	26No-	5/5 (100%)
FERPA for Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) (ID:	26No-	5/5 (100%)
Belmont Report and Its Principles (ID:	26No-	3/3 (100%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID:	26No-	4/5 (80%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID:	26No-	4/5 (80%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID:	26No-	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	26No-	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	27No-	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID:	27No-	5/5 (100%)
Research with Prisoners - SBE (ID:	27No-	3/5 (60%)
Research with Children - SBE (ID:	27No-	3/5 (60%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE (ID:	27No-	5/5 (100%)
International Research - SBE (ID:	27No-	1/5 (20%)
Internet-Based Research - SBE (ID:	27No-	4/5 (80%)
Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research (ID:	27No-	4/5 (80%)
Populations in Research Requiring Additional Considerations and/or Protections (ID:	27No-	3/5 (60%)
Conflicts of Interest in Human Subjects Research (ID:	27No-	3/5 (60%)
Research and HIPAA Privacy Protections (ID:	27No-	2/5 (40%)
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Workers/Employees (ID:	27No-	4/4 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing identified above or have been a paid Independent

Verify : www.citiprogram.org/verify/?kdeb10f75-bd0f-433f-9393-52b81bb6a613-

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI
Email: support@citiprogram.or
Phone: 888-529-
Web: https://www.citiprogram.o

Dr. Fritch Certificate

University of Central

Oklahoma

Informed Consent Form

The Work of the Funeral Director: Emotional Labor. Family. and Friends

You are invited to join a research study that examines the emotional labor among funeral directors. In this research, Cami Cho, a graduate student at the University of Central Oklahoma, and Dr. Brandon Burr., a professor at the University of Central Oklahoma, are conducting research _on the work of the funeral director and emotional labor.

We cannot guarantee that you will personally experience benefits from participating in this study. However, others may benefit in the future. We anticipate that the Findings in this study will be the building blocks for future understanding of this issue.

We will take the following steps to keep the information that you share with us confidential, and to protect it from unauthorized disclosure, tampering, or damage: all interview notes will be secured in a locked cabinet inside Dr. Gary Steward, Jr.'s locked office, an Associate Vice President of the University of Central Oklahoma.

Please know that your participation in this research is voluntary and that all efforts will be made to ensure your confidentiality. You have the right **not** to participate or to withdraw at any point during the process. There are **no** penalties or negative consequences in such cases.

You may call Cami Cho at (405) 471-9242, Dr. Brandon Burr at (405) 974-5793, or email ccho1@uco.edu if you have any questions about the research.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant contact the Institutional Review Board at (405) 974-5497, irb@uco.edu, or NUC 341, Campus Box 132, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK 73034.

_____   _____   _____

Participant Printed Name   Signature of Participant   Date

Semi-Structure Interview Schedule

1. **Your Age** _____

2. **Your Gender** _____

3. **Race/Ethnicity that you identify with** _____

4. **Marital Status:**   **Single**   _____

                             Married   _____

                             Separated   _____

                             Divorced   _____

                             Widow   _____

                             Other   _____

5. **How many children/step-children, if any, in the following age categories:**

                             0-12   _____

                             13-18   _____

                             19-Older   _____

                             None   _____

4. **When did you graduate with your undergraduate degree?** _____

5. **What do you consider your hometown** _____

6. **What year did you earn your license for embalming/funeral director?** _____

7. **Are you satisfied with your decision to become a funeral director?**

.   Probe 1. What part of the job has been most satisfying?

    Probe 2. What part of the job has been most challenging? Unexpected?

8. **Describe your emotions or feelings when you work with grieving families?**

    Probe 1. Is each family unique or are there typical aspects?

    Probe 2. What aspects about the grieving family affect you the most in terms of
            your emotions?

    Probe 3. As you reflect over the course of your career, are there patterns that affect your
            emotions.

9.   How did your college course work prepare you emotionally for this career?

10.   Are some days more difficult emotionally than other days?

11.   Are there days when it is difficult for you to display the emotions that a grieving family expect?

Probe 1. How do you know what emotions the client is looking for?

Probe 2. What do you do when your inner feelings do not match the emotions that the client expects to see?

12.   What coping strategies do you use when the job becomes emotionally challenging?

Probe 1. What role does your family play?

Probe 2. How does your family affect you?

Approved
September 09, 2019