# The emotional labour of gaining and maintaining access to the field

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## Abstract

The role of emotions in qualitative research receives increasing attention. We argue for an active rather than a reactive approach towards emotions to improve the quality of research; emotions are a vital source of information and researchers use emotions strategically. Analysing the emotion work of researchers in the process of gaining, securing and maintaining access to the Swedish judiciary, we propose that the emotion work involved is a type of emotional labour, required by the researcher in order to successfully collect data. The particular case of researching elites is highlighted. Emotional labour is analysed along three dimensions: 1. Strategic emotion work – building trust outwards and self-confidence inwards; 2. Emotional reflexivity – attentiveness to emotional signals monitoring one's position and actions in the field; and 3. Emotion work to cope with emotive dissonance – inward-directed emotion work to deal with the potentially alienating effects of strategic emotion work.

## Keywords

access, elite research, emotive dissonance, emotional labour, judiciary, qualitative methods

## Introduction

A burgeoning literature advocates emotions as important sources of information in qualitative research (Davies and Spencer, 2010; Flam and Kleres, 2015; Gilbert, 2000). In this article we argue that emotion work is required by the social researcher, especially in ethnographically inspired research, and therefore we may talk of the researcher's emotional labour. We will highlight three dimensions of the researcher's emotional

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labour: 1. Strategic emotion work to access and continuously secure access to the field; 2. Emotional reflexivity that implies attentiveness to emotional signals, monitoring the researcher's position and action in the field, and; 3. The emotion work performed to cope with the emotive dissonance between a researcher's persona and sense of an 'authentic' self.

Our point of departure is the radical perspective on emotions according to which reason and emotion are continuous (Barbalet, 2001). Emotions are neither opposed to, nor complementary, to rational behaviour, but integral to it. Thoughts, actions, and interactions are intrinsically emotional and emotions are our inherently rational guides to the world. One purpose of the research project from which the data analysed in this paper derive, is to make this point in the case of the Swedish judiciary. From a conventional perspective, which sees reason as the opposite of emotion, the Swedish courts are *the* non-emotional arena par excellence. Refuting this idea, the project highlights how the different court professions warrant different types of emotion work, and how, in spite of routinely silencing emotions, emotion work is essential to the performance of objectivity and decision-making.

In line with Gilbert (2000) we argue that emotions are not simply responses to things happening, but also constitute the proactive mapping of the social situation. As such they signal appropriate behaviour, including emotional display, in order to reach desired goals (Barbalet, 2001; Collins, 2004). In other words, the researcher may use emotions strategically when gaining access to the field. According to Hochschild (1983), emotion work strategies involve either working on the emotional expression, i.e. surface acting, or on the emotional experience, deep acting, to adjust to cultural or situational feeling rules. Later studies argue that these distinctions need modification; in reality surface and deep acting are interdependent and used intermittently (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000; Bergman Blix, 2007). However, surface and deep acting are useful as analytical concepts to uncover researchers' use of emotions to gain access to a field, and its implications for the individual researcher.

In this paper we focus on our emotion work as researchers, gaining access to and working in the field. Our aim is to show that emotion management is a necessary skill required in the building of successful rapport with the research subjects in qualitative research. Emotion management can be seen as a type of 'emotional labour' (i.e. salaried emotion work, Hochschild, 1983) of the qualitative researcher. Yet, it is rarely made explicit even in the literature that discusses the topic of how to build trust and rapport. An exception here is Blackman (2007) who discusses how analysis of emotions can uncover the 'hidden ethnography', and Hubbard et al. (2001) who argue that such an analysis will enhance the 'integrity of the data.' Dickson-Swift et al. (2009) also suggest that attention to emotions can enhance the well-being of the researcher.

The sociological focus on structural inequality and power makes the extant accounts of researchers' emotions deal with what sociologists mundanely call 'researching down'. Our focus here is instead on 'researching up', i.e. elite research (Conti and O'Neil, 2007; Mills, 1999; Ostrander, 1993). We use the binary 'researching up/down' as an analytical tool in order to tease out particular sets of emotions more or less pertinent to each type of research. Although the challenges of entering the field and establishing rapport with research participants are similar in many ways, we suggest that one of the reasons why

emotions are often highlighted in cases of researching down is that these sometimes evoke strong emotions of, for instance, guilt, shame, sympathy/pity, and 'compassion stress' (Rager, 2005). Such emotions derive from the researcher's relative power and social status in the face of the social suffering and/or powerlessness of research participants (Kemper, 1978). In the study of elites, the relative power relation between researcher and participant is reversed as compared to 'researching down'. This gives rise to other sets of emotions, for instance, feelings of low self-worth, despondency, and resentment when participants exclude, ignore, or even show contempt for the researcher (cf. Kemper, 1978). In contrast, due to the social hierarchy of emotional gifts and their effects on our self-feelings (Clark, 1997; Collins, 2004), recognition and acceptance from elites may produce strong feelings of pleasure, an insight that may also produce ambivalent feelings in the critical social researcher.

In terms of our focus in this article gaining access to elites is generally considered more difficult (Conti and O'Neil, 2007; Harvey, 2011; Hunter et al., 2008) as groups of high status and power tend to be vigilant not to expose themselves or their groups to critique that could question their positions or privileges. Gaining access continues to be negotiated throughout the fieldwork (Ergun and Erdemir, 2010), which, we argue, is especially true in the case of elite research due to the elite's cautiousness.

## Previous research

Although attention to emotions involved in doing ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative interviewing is not new (Gilbert, 2000; Kleinman and Copp, 1993; Van Maanen, 2011), emotions tend to be treated as a bi-product to be dealt with rather than a source of information. Van Maanen (2011) for instance discusses emotions in relation to the researcher's position in the field:

> Fieldworkers, it seems, learn to move among strangers while holding themselves in readiness for episodes of embarrassment, affection, misfortune, partial or vague revelation, deceit, confusion, isolation, warmth, adventure, fear, concealment, pleasure, surprise, insult, and always possible deportation. (Van Maanen, 2011: 2)

Van Maanen indicates the range of emotions the researcher may experience but does not delve into how we can pay attention to these to become better oriented and positioned in the field and in relation to participants. In contrast, Gilbert (2000) submits that emotional reflexivity is a prerequisite for high quality research. Following Burkitt's (2012) understanding of reflexivity as motivated by emotion we want to underline the importance of continuously analysing the researcher's own emotions in relation to the field. In anthropological research, in particular, 'revelatory moments' (Trigger et al., 2012) are discussed in analysing emotions such as grief (Henry, 2012; Rosaldo, 1989), euphoria (Trigger et al., 2012), or hate (Hage, 2009). Focus is on 'spontaneous' and often intense experiences, showing how emotions can sensitize the researcher to nuances and contradictions between the researcher's emotions and those of the participants' in the field (Bergman Blix, 2015; Hage, 2009; Petray, 2012).

Other accounts call attention to the emotional strain on the researcher when researching sensitive topics (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; Goodrum and Keys, 2007; Watts, 2008). Watts (2008) discusses ethnography on persons fighting cancer, arguing that researchers working alone may experience overwhelming emotions, such as fear of disease and dying, or grief over participants who pass away during fieldwork. Watts argues that this calls for some kind of support network through which researchers can get help to deal with their own feelings. Furthermore, the negotiation of boundaries between researcher and participant involves continuous emotion work to sustain 'emotional balance'; taking care to be close, but not too close, to participants, while these boundaries are situationally contingent (Pellatt, 2003; Watts, 2008). Dickson-Swift et al. (2009) interviewed qualitative researchers with a focus on emotion work, and found a range of strategies that researchers use to deal with strong emotions. A common strategy was to abide to norms of professionalism, implying a neutral emotional display (cf. Kleinman and Copp, 1993). Performing emotion work as a researcher of sensitive topics can lead to exhaustion (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009) and 'compassion stress' (Rager, 2005), entailing physical and psychological symptoms. These findings emphasize the need to understand qualitative research as emotional labour and call for a more active, rather than reactive, approach toward emotions in fieldwork. We argue that even when researching less sensitive topics, qualitative research inspired by an ethnographic approach confronts the researcher with painful emotions. In our case, studying judges and prosecutors also means dealing with sometime shocking stories of crime and abuse. The effect may be enhanced by the fact that the interviewees themselves have not been able to deal with these stories, and therefore find an opportunity to do so in the interview situation. A therapeutic role is, however, not something that we have been prepared for by our academic education (Pellatt, 2003).

## Emotional labour in negotiation of access

As emphasized by Czarniawska (2007), fieldwork, especially involving shadowing, necessitates continuous negotiation of access. When moving between several settings this constant negotiation becomes even more pertinent. In a study on nursing wards (Davis, 2000), the distinctive separation of public and closed spaces raised boundaries through which the researcher's presence became questioned, resulting in the staff 'forgetting' to tell her when interesting events occurred. Fieldwork of this kind risks ending up in exclusion from the field, and thereby demands considerable emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) on behalf of the researcher. This aspect of the researcher's emotional skills is rarely analysed or trained per se. It is simply something that we are expected to master.

As researchers try to establish rapport, they strive to be flexible, even complacent, without losing their personal integrity. Gaining and maintaining access, therefore, involves introspection and learning about one's self in types of situations that one would not deliberately seek out, outside of the research (Czarniawska, 2007; Van Maanen, 2011). This may stimulate self-development, but it may also confront one with unexpected and hitherto unknown aspects of the self (Atkinson et al., 2003; Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; Pellatt, 2003).

Furthermore, differences, and especially ideological differences, between the researcher and participants, may give rise to conflicting fieldwork emotions (e.g. Wasserfall, 1993). This is when emotional reflexivity may activate detailed analysis of how feelings of resistance to the field can hamper analytical insights. The distinction between a 'private' self and a 'professional researcher' is necessary, in order to deal with negative self-feelings. The emotion work needed to resolve the tension between desiring to remain close to the field, and feeling emotional repulsion towards it, warrants what Hage (2009) calls 'ethnographic vacillation'.

## Researching elites

According to Mills (1999) the elite are people who have power, prestige and money, based on their positions in key institutions. Sharing similar social backgrounds, they belong to overlapping circles within the upper-class stratum of society. The elite differ from ordinary people in being 'in command' of things beyond the control of ordinary people, such as the flow of money in society, or – in the case of our study – the judicial power. Furthermore, Swedish lawyers have passed many formative years of higher education and professional training before becoming judges and prosecutors. They enjoy high salaries and secure employment terms (judge is the only position in Sweden secured by the constitution).

The literature on researching elites lacks an emotion theoretical framing, but some authors highlight emotions anyway. Harvey (2011) discusses strategies for building trust when conducting elite interviews, and how researchers adjust their styles in the process of negotiating status. Participants often begin to evaluate or question the research, its rationale and the quality of the interview questions. In Harvey's case, one such 'difficult' interview made him feel 'uncomfortable' and temporarily lose confidence in the research project. Working on these emotions of, we argue, shame and humiliation, he learnt 'not to let an uncomfortable interview hamper one's confidence in a research project as well as one's performance in subsequent interviews' (2011: 437). This emotion work entailed a range of strategies. Harvey took measures to focus on positive outcomes, be better prepared to respond to criticism. Harvey also underlines the role of deference when asking 'uncomfortable' questions.

The negotiation of status between researcher and participant is a recurring theme in elite research. Conti and O'Neil pinpoint the power issue in researching 'global elites' through 'the contest over authority' and 'the feelings of despondency' when they experienced that participants 'talked down' to them (2007). They exemplify deferential strategic impression management, in order to forestall perceptions of the research as threatening. Downplaying the researcher's political identity is advocated to avoid defensive postures and build a more relaxed relationship to interviewees.

Ostrander (1993) emphasizes the importance of expressing 'appreciation' of people's willingness to participate, but warns against being deferential as elite participants typically appreciate 'directness'. Ostrander advocates moving in the field with the same ease and confidence as the research participants; showing them, in terms of interactive skills that they are dealing with an equal.

Previous literature focuses on *interviewing* elites (Conti and O'Neil, 2007; Harvey, 2011; Ostrander, 1993). Common problems mentioned are: time pressure; gate-keeping; 'tests' with the purpose to evaluate the competency of the researcher; critique of the aim of the interview questions or the rationale of the research; strategies to avoid answering through delivering a general consensual view; advancing their own agenda in the interview. The research process benefited from cases where the researcher and the participant shared similarities in terms of age, class, gender, ethnicity, and social status. Differences on these parameters warranted strategies on the researcher's side to downplay them for fear of confrontation that would hamper the research process.

We recognize the issues discussed in previous literature on researching up. Our focus here is, however, on the negotiation of access. We thus emphasize a position of insecurity and the building of rapport and reliable relationships, negotiating status and mutual respect, including deference strategies. We focus on the observation/shadowing situation, in which emotions of awkwardness are continuously managed, but which also gives opportunity to exchange personal emotional gifts to produce trust. This ambivalence may give rise to emotive dissonance, when the researcher feels that she has been turning herself inside-out to match the shadowed participant.

## Method

This article draws from an ongoing project studying emotion and emotion management by the professional actors in the Swedish District Court. The design is a multi-sited case study (Marcus, 1995) with cases chosen strategically to account for differences in the size of the court. Data is generated so far from three courts and two prosecution offices. A combination of ethnographic methods is used: observations, shadowing, formal and informal interviews. The selection of participants covers a wide spectrum of differences in age, sex, work experience, and ethnicity.

The theoretical and methodological aims of the study pull attention to the researchers' own emotions. First, the theoretical assumption that emotion is a substantial element in reason and decision-making goes for scientific research too (Barbalet, 2001). Second, the development of methodological tools for collecting data on emotions – continuously asking the question *How do we know what the participants feel?* (Anleu et al., 2015; Wettergren, 2015) – puts emotional reflexivity at the centre stage of research. Finally, this reflexivity is enhanced by, and verbalized in, the ongoing interaction between the two researchers in the project. Apart from the initial phase where we visited trials together to construct an observation template, we did not do fieldwork together; there was only *one* researcher present at each site. During the fieldwork we did, however, talk via skype/telephone every day exchanging and comparing impressions. Being two collaborating researchers, engaged in joint emotional reflexivity, alleviated some of the emotional impacts discussed in the literature review above, which will be demonstrated in the analysis. Furthermore, collaboration has proved to be useful to avoid collapsing into navel-gazing and staying focused on the participants and their reflexivity (Holmes, 2010). This argument is elaborated in a different article expanding on the benefits of research collaboration (Anleu et al., 2014).

Shadowing implies following one person through the field to learn about their perspective (Czarniawska, 2007). Approximately 10 prosecutors and 10 judges are shadowed at each site, studying the shift between front and back stage performance, including court hearings. In connection to the shadowing, we conduct semi-structured interviews. Our use of the expression 'researching up' suggests that we position ourselves structurally lower than our research participants. This difference between us and our participants may well be debated. In our case, the concept of researching up was a modus operandi, calling attention to the importance of negotiating status in the research relationship. Once we were recognized as established researchers, while the difficulties of gaining access to an elite remained, 'researching up' may be a less applicable description of the relationship.

The field notes analysed in this paper were anonymized and coded in a software program for qualitative data, NVivo. In the analysis we discerned three main phases. The first concerns the initial access and the exploration of an unknown field, coding emotions of anticipation such as excitement, nervousness, and confusion. In the second phase we established rapport and secured access, a phase divided into two sub-phases: a) Building trust and securing access, facing ambivalent emotions regarding our own 'authenticity' as part of impression management, and; b) Ruptures and the potential loss of access, causing frustration, humiliation and shame, and fear of closure. The third phase is a breakthrough, in which we coded feelings of high emotional energy such as elation, pride, and security.

## Phase one: initial access, exploring the field

Ostrander emphasizes the need to plan access carefully, especially 'to do preparatory background work with people "in the know"' (1993: 9) before entering the field. Both researchers made use of personal contacts, one prosecutor and one judge, with whom we conducted pilot interviews. Through these we got advice and names of potential participants for the initial contacts. Before seeking access to the first court and prosecution office, we visited several court proceedings to get acquainted with the courts and learn about the court procedure. None of us had any previous experience of attending trials. The first visits were therefore marked by excitement at the sudden closeness to crime and judicial authority.

Feeling familiar with the courts after a few weeks of observations, we proceeded to contact the judges and prosecutors suggested in the pilot interviews. Prosecutors and judges are independent professionals, and may decide to participate in research without the acceptance of the management, but we had been advised that informing the Chief of the court/prosecution office would be wise. Not doing so could evoke irritation. For these first two sites, we therefore contacted the management via email, offering a formal presentation of the project, while *simultaneously* proceeding to contact individual judges and prosecutors.

These first contacts were successful. Researcher one was given an appointment with a judge at the court entrance, and was then introduced to the backstage of a large, heavily guarded and secured, court:

> Judge and I shake hands. He lets me in through the locked door next to the security guards' booth. Judge is, I will discover during the day, a gentleman holding doors and coats for me, fetching me water and coffee. I feel as when I try to jive with an experienced male dancer; clumsy and unaccustomed to being led and to let myself be attended on. (Field diary, TR2)

To be allowed to the backstage of the court, felt as awe-inducing as the first visit to the courts had done. As shown in the quote, it was a physical experience of becoming accustomed to the way the judge moved in that exclusive space. It was particularly in the courts (as opposed to the prosecution offices) that we became aware of the performance of class habitus, in order to blend in:

> When they register me to give me a key card the guard asks for my title – student? I tell him I have been employed by the university for ten years and my title is researcher. The chief of court says that I am writing my PhD. When I inform him it's already done, he immediately corrects himself and says my title is Doctor. He then presents me to others as 'Doctor'. This was never an issue at the prosecution office. It already feels more formal here – titles seem to matter more. (Field diary, TR3)

The trust accorded to us by being let inside the enclosed premises of the court created feelings of nervousness to reveal unworthiness or even a hidden agenda. The lurking guilt of having a hidden agenda is, in our experience, embedded in field research (cf. Conti and O'Neil, 2007; Harvey, 2011). Researchers *do* have one as the actual outcome of research cannot be known beforehand, in spite of aims and purposes. While in the case of researching down, guilt may be associated with doing a research career on people's suffering (cf. Katz, 1994), in the case of researching up guilt is associated with the potential of delivering critique against trusting participants. Moreover, the acute self-awareness raised by being a newcomer, in a context to which access is pivotal for the success of a research project, evokes discomfort at stepping out of one's normal self-presentation and into one that is designated to please.

In terms of strategic emotion work the initial phase entailed building familiarity with the field, working on our own self-confidence. The orienting information and contacts retrieved from the pilots and from our initial court observations enabled a self-secure and trustworthy appearance. We had learnt some key terminology and court procedure before we proceeded to contact names on our lists. Strategic emotion work was guided by reflections on our own emotions when entering the field. Observing and discussing (between the two of us) our feelings during the initial court observations, and when initiating the first contacts, was a way to manage nervousness and excitement, while performing in a professional manner to pave the way to establish rapport with participants.

The strategic emotion work consisted of impression management (Goffman, 1959) such as surface acting and 'pretending to know' while we were actually still in the process of taking in information rather indiscriminately. Surface acting made us aware of things that we did to improve our appearance in the eyes of the participants, but did not collide with our 'authentic' self-image since it was deemed necessary as part of our professional quest to guarantee access (cf. Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000). The payoff of our emotion work was successful and thus strengthened our self-confidence and pride as researchers.

## Phase two: building trust and securing access

In this phase we began the task of working our way in, building trust in our role as researchers, and in the project. Lawyers are, at least in Sweden, known to regard the humanities and social sciences apart from law with suspicion. We thus expected our project to come upon difficulties of legitimacy. However, the courts in Sweden have recently begun to adopt a nationwide programme for working on the reception and treatment of lay people in court, including 'user surveys' (cf. Du Gay, 2008). This served our purposes well in the sense that some court professionals associated our work with the enhanced focus on user satisfaction.

Part of building trust in doing fieldwork is to integrate and blend in with the field, as in adapting to the dress code, and to establish sameness and common reference points with the research participants (Conti and O'Neil, 2007). We caught ourselves almost unreflectingly trying to emphasize aspects of ourselves that would function as markers of belonging, not in the world of lawyers but in their world of class habitus and social status:

> Biking home I ponder on how as researcher I can coalesce into this environment. I am used to 'dress down' but here I will need to 'dress up'. Wear a suit maybe? During the day I also caught myself busy asserting myself [my status]: telling that both my parents are physicians, that I went to [that posh private school] and – since both Judge and his colleague made comments about my name that I come from an old [merchant] family. (Field diary, TR2)

An overwhelming majority of the court professionals come from white upper-middle class backgrounds. The fact that the researchers shared this background became a resource to draw on. The work to legitimize the research was also helped by the acceptance of professionals high up in the hierarchy. We learned to work at both the management and employee level at each site. Even when the research is officially condoned there tends to be a gap of scepticism between the management and the employees in workplaces where the latter has a high degree of autonomy. For trusting relationships to emerge, getting a generally respected colleague to participate in the project, and to demonstrate trust in the researcher, was at least as important a door-opener. A previously suspicious participant instantly relaxed after such an episode:

> I shadow Prosecutor Josefin. When we sit in the prosecutor's room at court prosecutor Bror comes in and greets me cheerfully. He asks if I have heard what happened in the blackmail case and I tell him I spoke to prosecutor Anna yesterday. I comment the statement of the accused's defense lawyer and he [vividly gives me a story from the same trial]. I can tell that Josefin is surprised that Bror speaks so openly with me. (Field diary, K3)

Trust in this case is transferred; if one respected colleague trusts, then others will do the same (Barbalet, 2009). But, as indicated in the quote, trust is built not only in relation to the roles researcher – participant, but through the establishment of more personal common reference points:

> At lunch we go to [restaurant]. Prosecutor asks a lot about me and even begins to offer marriage advice; it is important to have time of your own without your children in a relationship. And he

speaks about his own travels. It is as if he is testing me. Do I seem to be reasonable? Do I give something of myself? I speak much more openly than I have done with other prosecutors. (Field diary, K3)

As the 'test' came out well the prosecutor in this quote later decided to open up in an interview (cf. Goodrum and Keys, 2007). Regular presence in the field is another important element in building trust. By simply being there, we almost became part of the house and people came in and chatted or announced that they wanted to participate.

Strategic emotion management in phase two consisted of the continued building of trust, but now on a deeper level than simple external appearance and appropriation of knowledge. We thus drew on personal assets such as class habitus, and offered emotional gifts at a personal level, while managing the feeling of discomfort at knowing that we were checked out and tested and that possible pitfalls were many (Ostrander, 1993). Emotional reflexivity was necessary, for instance in assessing how much of one's 'real self' could be revealed in personal talk with someone who was not as close as one pretended, and when and how much would be 'too much' to reveal, resulting in the participant's withdrawal instead of trust (cf. Blackman, 2007). Surface acting in phase one identified aspects of self-presentation that proved efficient in relation to the field. In phase two these start to settle through deep acting, conveying a sense of actual 'belonging' in the field, and that appreciation and recognition is tied as much to one's professional self, as to one's social skills, and private persona. In phase two, the researchers' emotional energy – i.e. emotions of self-confidence, pride, and moral righteousness (Collins, 2004) – deriving from the success of the project was sometimes intoxicating. We began to like being with our participants, sharing and enjoying their sense of power and status, and we felt energized and self-confident when leaving them.

Successful surface acting alternated with deep acting, to the extent that the researcher began to feel that parts of her 'true self' were in fact displayed and recognized, but it still required careful monitoring, while reminding oneself that every new participant would be a new 'test'. Access kept being conditional and depending on one's performance and the boundaries of self-presentation were limited to being a pleasant and comfortable person to have around. Bad moods and grumpiness did not belong to the accepted research persona. The latter was especially the case during shadowing, where we tried to be both physically and socially non-disturbing people to hang around with. In addition, the participants were different personalities, each with their own trust triggers. This resulted in a type of emotion work that we labelled 'quick adaptive deep acting', i.e. entering each new relationship with attentiveness to its specificities and shaping the researcher persona to fit. On the reflexive end, we were aware of doing this and could feel slight discomfort about it, but professional emotional energy resulted from each such successful interaction and kept emotive dissonance at bay. In this we benefitted from being two researchers and our joint and mutual reflections on our emotions and actions. However, there were situations when this strategy became embarrassing. The difficulties of keeping up different personas when studying conflicting groups, has been discussed when studying migrants and frontline workers (Wettergren, 2015) and prisoners and guards (Molding Nielsen, 2010), but can be seen as a more general predicament when shadowing several people in the same field:

> After the last trial we [Elsa, the prosecutor I am shadowing, and I] meet prosecutor Magnus outside. He tells me that the prosecution office will have a project about ethics and treatment of users that he thinks might interest me. I say that I recognize this from the university; we are increasingly pushed in the direction of becoming a service institution. He looks somewhat wounded; he thinks that it is good to [work towards] a good treatment of people, which he spoke a lot about in his interview. I feel that I should not have said that to him, in fact what I said was directed at Elsa who completely agrees with this [critical] stance. I have noticed that Elsa, like some other experienced prosecutors, have become slightly cynical, or even express dissatisfaction with the organization, which new prosecutors like Magnus do not do. When I am with Elsa I connect with that tone, but this does not fit at all with the tone I had with Magnus. (Field diary, K3)

Following Hochschild (1983), emotive dissonance is a sense of alienation from one's 'fake' emotional display that may follow on surface acting. Deep acting that involves 'the true self', in contrast, does not give rise to emotive dissonance, but there is a risk that this self takes the full blow of work-related conflicts, a risk that a separation from the self in the surface acting mode prevents. However, surface acting may blend with deep acting, similar to what Ashforth and Tomiuk label *surface authenticity* (2000), that is, role-conforming consistency between felt and expressed emotion, while the role remains separated from one's 'actual' identity. In quick adaptive deep acting the researcher assesses the new participant and adapts her expression to fit, while grounding the display as 'authentic' for the time that she stays with that participant. The researcher creates an ideal self (Tracy and Trethewey, 2005) pertinent to the field and to the specific situations and participants. In our case it was a cheerful, attentive, and listening persona, along with a competent, concentrated, fast-learning, and high-status researcher that our participants would enjoy having around and feel safe to confide in. At times, as in the above excerpt, the malleability of practising quick adaptive deep acting was thrown back at us as inauthentic, hence giving rise to emotive dissonance and a sense of self-estrangement. The long-term effects of this type of emotion work are illustrated in the following excerpt:

> I begin to understand my emerging sense of total fatigue, as well as my difficulties sleeping. I get so much data that evokes so many ideas that need to be processed (often at four o'clock in the morning) and I engage myself in their world and they deposit a good deal of weaknesses and sorrows on me. The harbouring work is demanding. It is as if my entire body is turned on for doing observations and analysis around the clock. I need to move into a lower gear and disconnect for a while before I return [to the field] again. (Field diary, K3)

In line with Hochschild's argument, the deep acting investment in the field also meant that it was hard to separate research-related disappointments and drawbacks from personal failure. This was clearly seen in the case of rupture, when the work to secure access in phase two was interrupted and we experienced ourselves thrown back to square one, suddenly and abruptly excluded from the field.

## Rupture and emotive dissonance in phase two

The magnitude of the contingency of gaining access becomes clear when there is an unexpected exclusion. Researcher one experienced this shortly after being allowed into

court two during the end of the shadowing of the first judge who had initially been very forthcoming but suddenly appeared hesitant. She was about to shift to a second judge who was a reluctant participant and did not grant her any greater access to court proceedings than he did to the general public. In retrospect, this incident comes out as a case of testing since the participant was a vice chief judge who did not take great interest in the study. As the researcher had already begun shadowing his employees, he most likely volunteered to find out more about the project.

> Today I first got the feeling that something has gone wrong in my negotiation of access. [I fear that] the first judge I shadowed was told [by the vice chief judge] not to let me in on the deliberations. […] The following days I ruminate on the feeling I have of a door that opened easily but then suddenly slammed in my face. I ruminate over the silence of the Chief of the court. I ponder on what I did wrong. Deal with importunate emotions of humiliation and offense. […] I talk to [my colleague] about my field problems. She thinks that it is important that I go to the second judge's trial even though I may not get much out of it just to 'show that I am serious'. I decide to do so and after much anxiety I also e-mail the Chief of the court once more asking him if I may get a chance to present the project at the court. This week may be crucial for recovering the trust that was lost somewhere. (Field diary, TR2)

Researcher two had a similar experience of exclusion with prosecution office three:

> At night the vice chief calls me and says that he talked to the chief and that the chief wants them to check up the formalities. He repeats several times that they trust me 100% but that they do not want to take any risks. He will talk to someone in charge of the secrecy regulation. He adds that he does not think that [the trial I was supposed to observe] is a good choice because it is too complicated, not even *they* understand everything in it. It is better if they choose a different prosecutor for me, one who is more pedagogical and able to explain, while undertaking a smaller trial like a minor theft or so. (Field diary, K3)

Both these incidents occurred after a relatively short period of access, while the researchers were still 'high' on success feelings. Given the deep acting involvement, there was a feeling that the sudden exclusion was due to 'something *I* did wrong', rather than to formal aspects having to do with the project. The second quote communicates resentment at being 'patted on the head' by the vice chief. As argued by Harvey (2011), such incidents may damage the researcher's self-confidence in the project. We find them to be shame-experiences as well; the researcher's claim to status turns out to have been too high (Kemper, 1978).

Ruptures in the research process heighten the researcher's emotional reflexivity. Suspicion verging on mundane paranoia, as seen in the first quote, signals that someone high up is not comfortable with the project. Emotions highlight future possible scenarios, for instance that someone else's power may 'kill' the project. Disappointment signals that the researcher's status was not that secure after all. Resentment is directed at those considered responsible for the rupture and anger may be mobilized to overcome the obstacle. Within the boundaries of the researcher's strategic emotional labour, however, none of these emotions may be displayed in the field, nor is it possible for the researcher, depending on others' power to give access, to avoid disliked persons holding that power.

Emotive dissonance in the 'classic' sense intended by Hochschild is the outcome; instead of showing anger and disappointment the researcher displays subservient understanding and gratitude for whatever restricted access she is given. The distance from the self that follows from the awareness of this emotive dissonance may evoke further feelings of shame and disgust at one's 'falseness'. Collegial backstage emotion work is again of great support here, both to defuse the frustration of not being able to express one's feelings, and to find ways to get back in again. In both the referred instances we harboured and defused each other's emotions, and advised each other to remain calm and keep going as if all was well and normal, while taking covert action to step in and secure access from top down.

## Phase three: breakthrough

The strategy to overcome access closure, chosen by researcher one above, proved successful; she eventually got to meet the chief and present the project to him. He sent an email to all the judges, in which he commended the project, and also declared that there was no legal problem to let the researcher in on the deliberations. This led to a breakthrough where the previously vigilant atmosphere was relaxed and judges began to take a general interest in the project. The researcher experienced this as a rush of happiness: 'My mood this day was almost euphoric. It felt like all doors were suddenly wide open!' (Field diary, TR2). While phase two is a matter of working oneself so far in that it will eventually be hard for anyone to throw you out, phase three is having reached that stage. It is one in which the researcher experiences both success feelings and feelings of rather normal habituated security. Alert emotional reflexivity is relaxed and there is again a sense of blurring the boundaries between deep and surface acting, shaping and performing a preferred self, conducive to the fieldwork. Trust is established as a collective, organizationally embedded, emotion (cf. Barbalet, 2009). One is accepted and one's presence is normalized. This does not necessarily mean that trust is shared by every individual, but the researcher's self-confidence, now backed up by the official recognition of the management, is not affected, and it is even possible to (slightly resentfully) push through with difficult participants since the project no longer fully depends on their sympathy:

> I ask a judge if I may shadow her in the afternoon. At first she says that it's no problem. Then she quickly adds that: 'I never let any outsiders in on my deliberations' and then she says that she has no exciting trials. She briefly refers the first trial and then says that the second trial will be behind closed doors. I say that I can still attend since I have a secrecy agreement with the court. She answers that the parties have no reason to want an outsider present. I say I will try my luck and I am let in. (Field diary, TR3)

Access continues to be negotiated at the individual level, especially in those cases where the individual does not sympathize with the management, but the researcher's status as officially entrusted is not endangered. Therefore she is in a much better position to overcome minor setbacks or attempts at humiliating treatment.

## Conclusions

We have discussed the emotion work of researchers in the process of gaining, securing, and maintaining access to the field, in our case to the Swedish judiciary. We propose that the emotion work involved is a type of emotional labour because it is required by the researcher in order to successfully collect data, especially in ethnographic fieldwork. Emotional labour was analysed along three dimensions: 1. Strategic emotion work; 2. Emotional reflexivity; 3. Emotion work to cope with emotive dissonance.

In phase one: *Initial access*, we discussed feelings of uncertainty and how growing familiarity with the field resulted in self-confident performance of competence and trustworthiness. In phase two: *Building trust and securing access*, we highlighted the process of adaptation, in which strategic emotion work included quick adaptive deep acting. This personal engagement in the field led to experiences of emotive dissonance that the researchers had to deal with, particularly when there was a rupture in the process of access. In phase three: *Breakthrough*, we discussed how official recognition of the project gained us organizationally embedded trust that made us more confident and less vulnerable to difficult participants.

Strategic emotion work was employed throughout the phases in different ways. In the first two phases, apart from working on our trustworthiness, we depended on the benevolence and sympathy of individual participants, and therefore tended to employ techniques of subservience and complacency. In the third phase, our position was safe enough to resist humiliating treatment and to use the resentment it evoked to push through and demand access. Strategic emotion work was also employed to get around the rupture in phase two, although our emotions had to be ventured backstage only while we kept surface acting 'business as usual'. Emotional reflexivity was employed throughout, to monitor and calculate our next steps, but it was heightened in phase one and phase two, which required learning and conscious cognitive reframing. It was essential to guide our actions in the period of interrupted access. Emotive dissonance, finally, was most pertinent in phase two, notably in the rupture. One reason why we could manage the constant self-adaptation, without growing alienation, may be that we took pride in the success it generated. It enhanced our emotional energy as professional researchers.

Both the quality of the research and the well-being of the researcher, we argue, benefit from raised awareness of researchers' emotional labour. Emotions are both sources of information and tools of interaction. Ignoring them serves only to mystify dimensions of the research process. While previous research mainly focuses on analysing spontaneous emotions, often reflecting on them in hindsight, our contention here is to widen the perspective to also reflect on strategic emotion management.

Apart from highlighting strategic emotion work in the negotiation of access, our particular contribution pertains to studying elites. We have argued that studying elites actualizes different sets of emotions in the researcher than studying down, due to the reversed power and status relations. This does not preclude that structural relations are clues to understanding emotions in the field in general, nor that much of the emotional labour described is similar when studying down. Gaining access to a field, the researcher is always insecure and potentially inferior in relation to gate-keepers. We look forward to further investigations in this area.

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