Faculty of economics, communications and IT

Simon Glyssner
Henrik Jönson

The Ancilla, the Samaritan and the Archon
Three Roles of Bureaucrats

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- Three Roles of Bureaucrats

When speaking about service encounters, one most often speaks about encounters in the private sector and about customers. This study explores the public sector and the service encounter between street-level bureaucrats and clients as opposed to the encounter between salesmen and customers. The focus lies on the conflicting demands that the bureaucrat is experiencing and how she handles the emotional labour that this conflict brings. The conflicting demands have been identified as commercial, bureaucratic and social, all of which are put into the context of the opposing demands of client and organisation.

Keywords: Street-level bureaucrats, roles, opposing demands, emotional labour.

Social interaction and the service encounter

Bell (1976) claimed that the post industrial society is in an advance towards an increasing amount of services and this notion is based on the fact that the quality of life among the general public is increasing. Working with services towards people today is seen as a normal job just as any other and is statistically one of the most common jobs in Sweden. (Statistics Sweden)

The essence of service work compared to other jobs is the social interaction between people. This social interaction is not always strictly seen as an encounter between people, but could just as well be communication had by more impersonal means such as letters or ATMs or could even be about interaction between customer and organization. The concept of customer service is based on the idea that that customers are sovereign and that the market is free (Rosenthal et al 2001, Sturdy 2001).
To put the customer and her needs first is an important part of the customer service concept; another part is based on strategies for the creation of relations and a personalization of services (Sturdy 2001). As a representative for a company or organization the employee is not in full control over her own actions. Both the organisation and the customer want the employee to be there for them and to fulfil their demands. This is what is sometimes called The Two Bosses Dilemma (Edvardsson & Gustavsson, 2003).

Abiala & Ahrne (1995) argue that as long as the human factor is involved in service work, there is no possibility for automation. As they describe it, humans are partly man and partly organization. They are never fully a part of the organization or even a fellow human being. Working with services requires a high amount of confidence in the civil servant from clients. Even though the civil servant is always a representative of the organization and its organizational regulations, the expectations from clients are often for them to act as if decisions are made on the basis of a personal relation.

One of the most obvious distinctions between different organizations in the service sector is the one between private and public sector. Abiala and Ahrne (1995) say that clients in the public sector are more depending on the service that is given than they would be in the private sector. The options may be fewer but they sometimes have a right to the service by prescription of law, something that is not as developed in private sectors.

According to Solomon et al (1985) the interaction also differs as the interaction between a client and a civil servant often is routine-like and does not give any reason for reflection or afterthought. The interaction in this kind of meeting is characterized by a mindless behaviour.

Cziepels’ et al (1985) definition of the service encounter is that it is characterized by seven properties where several imply that the meeting is influenced by the organizational structure. Some examples of properties are that the meeting is not spontaneous but is happening for a reason and has a defined focus. Furthermore it is claimed that the exchange of information is dominating the meeting, that prior knowledge about the other person is not needed and that a temporarily difference in status may occur. The interaction is also characterized by the fact that the employees are not altruistic, they are doing their job. Additionally, the roles in the interaction are well defined. The role of the client is to receive a service, while the role of the civil servant is to provide that service. All of this leads to civil servants constantly having to balance different, and often contradictory, demands. Due to the nature of the authority, these demands will differ somewhat from those that are experienced by an employee in the private sector.

The internal demands are commercial (for example budget), bureaucratic (for example laws and regulations as opposed to the individual official’s arbitrary judgement) and social (for example brotherliness and personal convictions and ideals).
The contradictory demands common for every employee in contact with customers are on one hand the demands of the employer (authority) and on the other the demands of the customers (clients). (Åberg, 2007)

When interacting with clients, the civil servant has a number of spoken and unspoken expectations on the way they are acting towards the clients, which make handling and controlling both one’s own, and the clients’, emotional reactions a part of the work. The civil servants that work at the front line meeting and interacting with clients are challenged with the often opposing tasks of fulfilling the demands given to them by the authority while they also need to fulfil and handle the demands of the clients. (Bettencourt & Gwinner, 1996)

As the clients often are in a vulnerable position, both in their own right and in their relations with the authority, they will often express strong feelings of anger or dejection which needs to be handled by the civil servant. (Abiala & Ahme, 1995) This is coupled with the fact that the civil servant’s own feelings about the client might range from sympathy to contempt, making the relation complicated from a professional standpoint. In their occupational role, the civil servant is supposed to act professional, no matter if she is exposed to insults or threats, and no matter what her own personal feelings of sympathy or antipathy are.

According to Payne (2002) this will happen because the public understanding influences social efforts and because the social workers themselves are part of the aforementioned public and thus influenced by media and political changes. Payne goes on to say that the organization of civil service and of the authorities – including the legislations, the economic funding and the various forms of management supporting said organization – influences how social work can achieve its goals.

**Aim**

The aim of this study is to explore how civil servants, in a position to interact with clients, handle the often opposing demands from both the clients and the organization they are a part of. The study will also show how the interaction between the civil servant and the client is shaped by the organizational framework in different authorities, how the civil servant handles the interaction, and what emotional consequences it brings.

**Research questions**

1. How do civil servants handle the different, often opposing, demands?

2. What are the driving forces behind the strategies used for handling opposing demands and emotional labour?
Theoretical foundation

Street-level bureaucrats

Civil servants who have direct contact with the clients of their organization are what Lipsky (1976), called street-level bureaucrats. Johansson (1992) argues that the definition of street-level bureaucrats is that they are most likely public employed civil servants who in their daily work have some sort of direct contact with citizens, whether it is by phone, by correspondence or in meetings. These bureaucrats usually have high degree of operating freedom in their day to day work. Lipsky (1976) defines street-level bureaucrats in the same way as Johansson, but with the difference that contact with clients should be only face-to-face. Johansson (1992) adds to the definition by saying that street-level bureaucrats handle their clients as single cases no matter how they choose to interact with them.

According to Johansson (1992), street-level bureaucrats are depending on their clients; first of all because the clients must take advantage of her service for her to be needed in the organization but also because the needs of the client determines the bureaucrat’s daily work. One problem that can occur in this situation is for example that clients see their own needs in a whole other perspective than the organization wants the bureaucrat to see them in. The organization wants their employees to adapt to the organization in order for them to do a professional job and not seeing their clients as humans but rather as organizational artefacts (Johansson, 1992).

This therefore means that organizations want the people demanding their services to transform into clients and remain as a client for the whole process while the organization interacts with them. In other words, the individual becomes a social construction made by the organization.

Both Hummel (1982) and Lipsky (1976) define street-level bureaucrats as civil servants in the lower ranges of organizational hierarchy. Additionally, the bureaucrats have the need for the individuals they are interacting with to be transformed into clients in order to be treated as cases instead of individuals. Lipsky furthermore adds to the definition by saying that a street-level bureaucrat’s work with clients never can be as impersonalized as the bureaucratic ideal wants it to be. The bureaucrat is dealing with real people and therefore it is impossible to completely dehumanize them. Lipsky furthermore focuses on the conflict that occurs between the bureaucrat and his executives when the latter need their employees to treat clients as cases despite their inability to do so.

According to Lipsky (1976) the work of street-level bureaucrats is too complicated and varied for them to be able to have a formal system of rules to follow and imply for every client. These bureaucrats often have to improvise in their work and use some sort of common sense when the regulations are not always the first solution that comes in mind. When the tasks of these bureaucrats are very varied and of a complicated type, it is hard to supervise and evaluate if the work is correctly done or even right or wrong.
Clients

Usually when speaking about service encounters one is speaking about customers and not clients. The main difference is that a customer exists on a free market where she may choose to turn to another competing organization. A client on the other hand exists in a market where the government has a monopoly and where she can not reasonable chooses to go without the services she needs. This makes the demands of a client different from the demands of a customer.

One outlook on clients is that they are objects in an activity defined by the theories and have little substantial influence on social work. Another (Payne, 2002) is that the clients are partly responsible for constructing the activity by being part of the process in which they become clients. The creating of clients is by itself a socially constructed process built on a general social understanding about the nature of social work. In this sense social work is a reflexive process wherein the client changes not only the characteristics of social work but also the civil servant and in extension the theories about social work. Being a client is partly an issue of perception. If others perceive a person as a client, they will treat her like a client. A persons own definition about their status influences, but does not decide if they will be perceived as clients or not. Clientship may be associated with a certain group of people, for example members of a social stratum or people living in a certain area. Both social workers and others will more easily define these people as clients than people from other groups. (Payne 2002)

Management

The service sector is said (Macdonald & Sirianni, 1996) to be asking their employees for commitment and to identify with the organization, so they will be able to perform their best. Management often has the need to control employees with the purpose of achieving a maximum amount of production. A side effect of this is that the management will get some amount of control over employees’ interactions with clients without interfering in their day to day work. The management also has the ability to introduce standardized routines and rules for employees to follow.

Many of these routines are introduced in order to have the employees interact with clients in a certain way and for clients to get a positive opinion of the handling of their case. This leads them to have confidence in the bureaucrat and the routines of the organization. A vital part of standardizations of routines is to keep them hidden from clients or else the client’s need of feeling unique in her interactions with the organization could be harmed and thus future interaction could be made harder.

Other ways for management to have control of employees is to empower their decision-making, giving the employees more flexibility in their problem-solving and interactions with clients. For this to be effective, the employee needs to be well aware of the organisations’ policies. (Gustavsson, 1997) This is made as a part of a decentralization process where the management gives away decision-making to the street level bureaucrats.
By doing this, clients will meet a bureaucrat who is able to handle their case from the beginning until the end. According to Macdonald & Sirianni (1996) this could result in a better impression about the organization from the clients’ perspective and faster inquests from the administrative perspective, as the bureaucrat can read regulations and make decisions by herself. There are different levels of empowerment for management to implement.

Total empowerment is the highest empowerment level possible to achieve as an employee. At this decision level she basically has the same level of authority as her executive and therefore can make decisions and solve problems on her own. Clients could feel the satisfaction of a respectful treatment and not being passed between different bureaucrats, none of who take responsibility.

The next highest level of empowerment is the restricted empowerment, where the management has chosen specific actions and solutions that the employees may apply in their handling. When employees are not granted total empowerment, there is always the risk of not having satisfied clients as they feel that they are not as unique as they would like to be in their interactions with the organization.

The lowest grade of empowerment is found with employees who have no empowerment. These employees need to turn to their superior executive for any decisions to be made. This could be frustrating for clients who feel that their case is not as important as they would like it to be (Macdonald & Sirianni, 1996).

It could also result in a pleasing feeling when their case belong to executives higher up in the hierarchy (Gustavsson, 1997)

**Emotional labour**

Since employees in the service sector continuously perceive even more emotions than employees in other sectors, the strain of emotional labour continuously grows. When the employee balances the conflict in demands from both clients and management, she gets more emotions to handle compared to employees in other labour sectors. (Gustavsson et al, 1997) Clients often complain at the civil servants, even if the criticism is more likely pointed towards an organization or company rather than at the employee. To deal with emotional labour requires a lot of energy from the employees (Abiala & Ahrne, 1995)

Sometimes employees are required to handle emotional labour, where management often want their staff to restrain their feelings and not show them to the clients but also to handle clients’, often diverse, feelings. Employees are often told not to show unexpected feelings or to suppress feelings that occur when dealing with clients, because the management does not want customers to get the impression of an unprofessional workplace. (Abiala, 2000)

In the discussion about emotional labour there are several angles of approach. Some researchers (Hochschild 1993, 2003, Rafaeli & Sutton 1987, Sutton & Rafaeli 1988, Rafaeli & Sutton 1990, Putnam & Mumby 1993, Waldron 1994) concentrate on the tension between feelings that the individuals’ experiences
and feelings that they express through their occupational role within a service work.

Others elaborate on the fact that some feelings are shown in a certain role, so called emotional display (Urry 1990, Ashforth & Humphrey 1993, Fineman 1993, Leidner 1993). Most who brings up the concept of emotional labour includes both the management of the employees own feelings and the effort to influence and manage other people’s feelings. Some (James 1989) defines emotional labour as only the work made to influence and manage other people’s feelings.

Åberg (2007) takes this a little bit further when she claims that the employees are expected, as a part of their job, to control their own feelings and manage the feelings of others in the effort to create a specific response within the organizational guidelines.

The tension and conflict between experienced feelings, social norms about how to feel and expressed feelings is studied in the discussion about emotional labour. Emotional labour within the role of the service employee implies that the personal meaning of feelings for the individual and the value of feelings in relations is marginalized (Putnam & Mumby 1993). Emotional labour is said (Hochschild, 2003) to create a substantial risk that the employee is affected by negative effects and an alienation from the authentic part of themselves. Leidner (1993) argues that Hochschild exaggerates the negative impact that emotional labour may have on the self.

Ashforth & Humphrey (1993) on the other hand, claims that performing emotional labour can stimulate identification with the role. Goffman (1994) expand on this further, claiming that what characterizes the roles values and one’s own values becomes interchangeable. Thus, when we look at ourselves we do not see the role characterized but we see what we expect to be our true self. Therefore we could begin to see the characterized roles values as our own which eventually could lead to that we adopt the role and its values as a part of ourselves and therefore the role is no longer acted.

**Method**

A qualitative approach has been taken to answer the research questions. The choice to use interviews was made because the aim of the study is to find links and relations and to identify influence factors which would make a quantitative approach too shallow. The purpose of the study is to get a general image of the problem area and also to get a deeper understanding of the experiences of individuals.

**Sample**

As the purpose of the study is to achieve a deeper understanding of the individuals, it is important to interview the respondents that might give the most varied and detailed answers. As that is the case, there is rather a choice of respondents than a sample (Rosengren & Arvidson, 2005).
As the first interviews were held, new respondents were chosen for their ability to verify what the respondents prior to them have said, but also to give new perspectives on the theories and research questions and to answer questions that could not be answered by the other respondents. To interview respondents that gives identical answers adds nothing to the study and with this approach one choose the respondent one think will give the most information, collect the information and then goes on interviewing the next respondent. (Rosengren & Arvidson, 2005).

This study is based on interviews with 9 respondents, all working as street level bureaucrats. They were employed at four different authorities; The Social Insurance Agency, IFA\(^1\), Gemet\(^2\) and BUP\(^3\) and their exact type of work within the authority includes, but is not limited to coordinators, psychologists, therapists, social security administrative, health insurance administrative, LLS\(^4\)-administrative and general administrative.

For many of the respondents, the first contact was made through the management on their workplace and in some ways it have been a ‘convenience sample’ (Bryman, 2002), where one uses the respondents that are available at a certain time and that volunteer to being interviewed.

**Trustworthiness**

One definition of validity is the correspondence between the theoretical and empirical material (Bryman 2002) which may be hard to rate in this kind of study even though the aim, the research questions and the theories have been there as a guide during all interviews. Many of the questions were asked based on the theoretical background and so were many of the follow up questions. The respondents got to choose the time and place to be interviewed and all choose their office or a conference room at their work place. No one else participated or listened in on the interviews.

Hayes (2000) claims that interviews may be sensitive for the will of the respondent to give what she believes to be the correct answer to the researcher. This is also said by Bryman (2002) when he speaks about social desirability, i.e. the respondent’s desire to give the researcher the answers that they believe she will want to hear or what she believes that her organization will want her to say. This problem has been thought about during the interviews and follow up questions have been asked when this problem has been obvious.

**Collection of data, implementation & data processing**

Data was collected through a number of semi-structured interviews that was recorded with the purpose of gathering details, nuances and tone of voice and to be able to transcribe the interviews for the following coding and analyze. Each interview was between one and one and a half hour long. A semi-structured interview guide was used as this gave the researchers the opportunity to explain questions and to ask follow up questions. The interview guide was developed and expanded on after each interview as new angles and theories were added.
Saturation was decided when three clear archetypes were found and the assessment was made that there would not be enough time to conduct enough interviews to find a fourth. Also, there was doubt that there was a fourth clear-cut archetype.

When the interviews had been transcribed, they were coded and themes were identified in accordance with Hayes (2000). The themes were then compared with the theories and new theories were added if needed. The interviews were seen as the empirical aspect of the study so the result will be presented with as many quotes from the respondents as is possible.

**Ethical aspects**

All interviews were started by a short presentation of the study and its aims. Subsequently the handling process of the interviews were explained and the aspects concerning the respondents' confidentiality were expanded on, for example that the interview were voluntarily, that the respondent did not have to answer every question, that no one would see or hear the interviews and that they had the right to stop the interview at any time. Permission to use quotes from the interviews were also asked. This is what is called informed consent. (Trost, 2005)

**Result and Analysis**

The essence of service work compared to other jobs is the social interaction between people. We are focusing on the service work done by street-level bureaucrats, as defined in the theoretical background (Lipsky 1976, Hummel 1982, Johansson 1992). The study want to explore how street-level bureaucrats handle the different demands that they experience in the work and how they manage emotional labour, all within the organizational framework of their respective authority. In this study, there have been identified three archetypes or ideal types that will be presented below. Not every respondent can be fitted completely into an archetype but will share most of the characteristics of one. These archetypes are roles rather than personalities and there are evidence that some of the respondents have changed role during their career depending on where they worked and what assignments they had. The role is partly created in the meeting with the client but also by the organizational framework that the interaction takes place in. Other things that seem to shape the role is the bureaucrats own ideals, the management’s view of the bureaucrat and public opinion.

When choosing the names of the archetypes symbolism rather than accuracy was sought. This is to not place characteristics on an archetype due to the reader’s interpretation of a name such as “the professional”. In short the names can be explained as follows; an Ancilla was a slave of higher standing in the old Roman Empire, almost a servant she did often do things like keeping books, handling the economy and writing letters, but she existed within a strict and rigid context where everyone knew her place.

The Samaritans were an ethnical group of people despised by the Jews and one of them were used by Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan.
The majority view indicates that this parable is told by Jesus in order to illustrate that human kindness and fellow feeling must be available to all, and that fulfilling the spirit of the law is just as important as fulfilling the letter of the law. Archon is a Greek word that can be interpreted as “ruler”, frequently used as the title of several public offices, including that of magistrate, in ancient Greece.

All of the respondents are working with some sort of social work, for example granting monetary support and helping people with mental ill-health to find work. To make the quotes in this chapter as anonymous as possible they have been changed slightly in the translation into English and the expression reject/grant have been used instead of the more specific terms the respondents used.

1. How do civil servants handle the different, often opposing, demands when interacting with clients?

The first archetype to be recognised has been named the Ancilla. The Ancilla recognizes the demands of the client and want to fulfil them to the best of their ability both from a personal feeling of sympathy but perhaps even more from a professional service attitude where they believe that the reason for them to work is to help the clients. The management mainly has a control function and manages by communicating routines and rules. When the Ancilla is faced with demands, either from the organization or from laws and regulations, which are in conflict with the demands they put on themselves or the demands from the clients, it is the former that take precedence in all cases. When the demands are in conflict in any way, laws and regulations will be followed at the expense of the other demands, something that can make the Ancilla experience feelings of inadequacy. This seems to cause a lot of stress and angst among the respondents, and the Ancilla were the ones to show the strongest emotions and to seemingly have the hardest time handling them.

The Ancilla feels that one of the more outspoken demands is coming, not from their management, but from the politicians and in some way from the general public, as is said by Payne (2002). All of them highlighted that the demands from the government were too much to handle, bordering to the impossible. They also agreed on, that the interpretation that the management did of the demands coming from higher up in the organization or from the politicians were setting the workload very high. This seems to create a high level of stress and angst.

They’re standing there; throwing red figures in our faces and tells us to be better at this and that. And when you know you work your ass of and doing extra hours and it still does not give results, /…/ you get a bit discouraged. You’re not good enough /…/ we’re never enough no matter how hard we work. Every administrative has a feeling of resignation!

The demands from the management also extends to having direct control over the bureaucrat, sometimes through micro managing their day to day work but mainly by making sure that the employee is within the numbers put up as a goal for the activity. By large, goals are communicated in numbers and the jargon is almost that of a factory with an assembly line. This corresponds with the findings of Macdonald & Sirianni (1996).
Nowadays everything is supposed to be interpreted into figures so our employer knows what I’m doing. Back in the days they thought we worked because we wanted to, but now they mistrust us. They think we need a Big Brother watching us in our offices, watching what we’re doing. But there’s still no one who can measure if my treatment is effective enough.

As for empowerment and the amount of control that the individual bureaucrat can execute in their day to day work it seems to mainly be of what Gustavsson (1997) called restricted empowerment, where they can make certain decisions as empowered in before hand by the management but some claimed to have next to none empowerment.

The demands from the clients are in many ways the same as the ones from the management. They want their cases to be handled fast, effectively and professional with as little delay as possible. They do however want to get services that the management or the laws do not always entitle them to which leads to a conflict between the managerial demands, the bureaucratic demands and the demands of the client. This does lead to a situation where the individual bureaucrat needs to juggle the three demands while doing their best to remain professional. It does also lead to the bureaucrat needing to manage the feelings of the clients as many of those use the Ancilla as a focus for anger and frustration that is really aimed towards the organization or the laws concerning their situation as is said by Abiala & Ahrne (1995).

Clients coming here see me as the authority but it really is the system they’re mad at.

The Ancilla focused more on the anger and frustration that the clients expressed towards them than their own feelings of sympathy for clients who were upset due to feelings of dejection, resignation and even despair. They seemed to have an easier time to handle the latter feelings than the anger shown by certain clients. Even though they felt a genuine sympathy for the clients and sometimes felt bad rejecting them, those feeling paled at the feelings they had to manage when yelled at or threatened.

Sometimes you are completely in despair when you’re sitting there. But even if your heart is pounding and you’re drenched in sweat you have to remain calm and be objective. You could be miserable when you’re coming back but you just talk to a colleague about it.

Everyone has come back crying sometime. But we support each other.

One respondent agreed that clients are often angry but that they are not really angry with her and that both she and the clients are aware of that the anger is focused towards the organization and the system. If this is true or if it is a defence mechanism to better be able to handle the anger of the clients can not be said. The main strategy to handle this aspect of emotional labour seems to be to talk to colleagues to get support. The support from the management is felt to be non-existent, insufficient or poorly handled.

You do not have enough support from executives because they only want to ensure you stick to the plans and do your work. Your feelings are not in the interest of the management. It’s thanks to colleagues and because it’s a pleasant work place we manage.

Another possible defence mechanism used to handle the experienced emotions is to rationalize the feelings and to enter the role of the bureaucrat totally, not allowing her to feel and using the routines, laws and regulations as an emotional shield.
This seems to be more about handling the feelings that is created by the control that the management executes than, handling the emotions of the clients.

_It has been so many rejections! It’s because of the high amount of rejections I’m tougher today than I was three or four years ago. It’s been a total reform. If you have about five or six rejection meetings a week you’ll eventually leave your feelings at home and just do your work as a bureaucrat._

The second archetype is the Samaritan. The Samaritan is not as controlled by actual laws and regulations as the Ancilla and the management has less of a control function and manages more by setting goals and communicating visions than by actual micro management. The main focus of the Samaritan is the client and her demands, something that is born in the Samaritan’s will to help the client with any means possible and when rules and regulations get in the way, they will bend, twist and sometimes even break them as long as they stay within the letter of the law.

The Samaritan is the archetype that bears the closest resemblance to her colleagues in the private sector or perhaps rather the ideal that the private sector wants to present. She is highly service minded and the focus on the client is almost total.

_My clients are always number one. So my clients’ needs are the main priority for me, not my own needs._

The Samaritan expresses a large amount of confidence in the management and it also seems like the confidence and trust goes both ways. She does however not express the same trust when it comes to the upper hierarchies of the organizations or the politicians that sets the objectives for her activity. The main reason seems to be that they lack a proper knowledge of the reality of the bureaucrat’s work and that they demand things that can not be realistically done.

_I feel like I have to deliver a gourmet dinner but with the speed of a fast food restaurant._

The amount of control that the management exercises over the Samaritan is minimal and she is most often left to her own devices. There is no micro management at all and the management seems to trust the bureaucrat to do her job in a satisfactory way.

_**Interviewer:** If you would suddenly stop documenting journals, would someone know about it?

_**Respondent:** No, probably not. Our executive is supposed to check the documentation and it has been mentioned a few times before that it would be checked but it really never happened. It could be noticed if any of my colleagues would check some of my cases and realise I have not been doing journals since March. If that happened I do hope someone tells my executive._

The management has given the Samaritan more or less total empowerment as defined by Gustavsson (1997) and she has the ability to make her own decisions without any interference. There are no decisions that need to be postponed for the management to have their say.

_In the end, I always do as I want to. Concerning my cases I always make my own decisions. Of course I consult others but in the end I always have to follow my own mind as long as it’s legal._

This leads to the Samaritan being influenced by the demands from the management but not being ruled by them, which seems to significantly reduce the stress and angst experienced
from those demands. The demands put on them from the clients on the other hand, were influencing them to a much greater extent than it did for the Ancilla, as did their personal feelings of sympathy and brotherliness.

The Samaritan is the archetype that expresses the strongest feelings of sympathy with the clients and does not have as hard time managing the feelings shown by clients as the Ancilla. The sympathy and an experience in managing other people feelings seems to make the Samaritan well suited to emotional labour even though she is the archetype interacting with the clients showing the strongest feelings.

Even though this demand is the dominant one, the stress from it seemed to be lessened by the attitude of the Samaritan, especially when coupled with the fact that the demands and control from the management is not that strong or sometimes not even conflicting at all with the demands of the clients.

One have to keep in mind that this is not about me, this is about a person who most likely can not control her behaviour fully.

The feelings of sympathy was shown over and over again when speaking to the respondents belonging to the Samaritan archetype and they seem to have a strong opinion on right and wrong, seeing their personal convictions as more important than laws and regulations even if the latter needs to be followed to some extent.

She appeals my decision because she just got rejected straight off because in theory she had money. When this ended up in county court and I “won” I suddenly realised that this is fucking unbelievable. I’m sitting here and know how the situation really is but I actually do not give a shit. It felt like I almost raped myself.

She does however admit that the emotional labour is making itself noticed but she claim to handle it well and views it as an integral part of her work situation, being something that you need to be able to handle to be able to work with this kind of clients. This seems to have more to do with clients whose actions can have an actual impact on her wellbeing than experienced feelings of fear, anger or sadness.

Sometimes I can get really pissed off when I realise how much impact my job has on my private life, but one have to be cautious /.../ I try to avoid revealing where I live and whom I spend my time with. I have a secret phone number since I got threatened so I have to admit it has had impact on my life.

The third and final archetype is the Archon. The Archon exercise a large amount of control over her decisions and the laws dictating her work are a framework that does not stipulate many details. By the same token, the management, even though their control function is extensive in theory, seldom, if never, interferes with the decisions and work of the Archon. The Archon does not see any conflict between the demands of the clients, the demands of the organization and the demands of the bureaucratic structure. Some small conflict can be hinted at between the client and the personal conviction of the Archon, but that conflict is not seen by the Archon and she claims to have no doubt about that what she does is in the best interests of all involved, be it the client, herself or the management.

In general the Archon do not feel that the demands from the management or the upper hierarchies of the organization or the demands from the politicians that makes the policy for her work conflicts with her own opinions or with the way
she want to perform her work. The management does not exercise any kind of micro management and they do not have any substantial control function.

**Interviewer:** Are you able to make rejections which are against the law and no one would ever know?

**Respondent:** Yes, I would probably be able to do that because not every case is controlled. We have an internal control function but there are only some of our cases ending up at that list. Sure, I would be able to do that!

The amount of empowerment had by the bureaucrats in the Archon archetype is next to total, just as is the case with the Samaritan. She can make her own decisions and in some cases make decisions that go against the will of the management.

I never make decisions I cannot stand for. If I’m not sharing my executives opinion about a case and I’m the one who is supposed to handle the decision-making I would probably do what I feel is right. But we mostly agree with each other.

None of the Archons admitted to be working in a situation where emotional labour was necessary and claimed to not having to manage feelings in their work, neither their own nor those of the clients. She also claimed to never feeling any guilt about deciding against a client. One even went so far as to claim that she sometimes felt that clients should not get whatever service she was providing but that she had to do so anyway as it was prescribed by law.

**Interviewer:** Do you ever feel you have to reject clients whom you in reality would like to approve?

**Respondent:** No, it never happened.

**Interviewer:** Do you ever feel you approve clients whom you feel really do not deserve to get approved?

All in all the dominant demand is the bureaucratic one as the management have little impact, as have the demands of the clients. This seems to create an atmosphere were the bureaucrat does not experience any feeling of conflicting demands and where the clients very seldom show any feelings that require the Archon to change her modus operandi or need to manage her own or the client’s emotions.

### 2. What are the driving forces behind the archetypes?

The three archetypes consist not only of a set of personal beliefs and ideals but also of a number of strategies to handle the different demands faced at their work place. In this respect, the archetypes is more about strategies based on the personal opinions of the bureaucrat combined with the organization structure of the authority than about personality traits. Just as these strategies differ between the archetypes, the reasons behind them differ. At every time there will be one demand that takes precedence over the others and behind the choice of letting that demand being the dominant one is a strategy. The strategy may be used as a way of making things go smooth and fast, as a defence mechanism to handle emotional labour or because it is more or less forced upon the bureaucrat by the management and the context of her work.

The Ancilla is mainly ruled by the bureaucratic demand and follow the law to the letter even though this causes a lot of stress as she feels that this might go against her personal conviction.
The bureaucratic demand is always the dominant one in effect as the laws and regulations are never broken or bent, but the demand that comes from their personal conviction might be just as dominant in the mind of the Ancilla even though it always has to take second place to the bureaucratic one. The Ancilla works in an environment with substantial structural rigidity and bureaucratic control which might be the reason for the bureaucratic demand to be dominant in the end, even though it goes against the Ancilla’s personal beliefs. The reason for the strategy used is most likely the managerial control and the low level of empowerment had by the Ancilla. If those factors were different it is probable that the demands of the clients would play a larger part not only in the mind of the Ancilla but also in effect.

You have to close the book in the end of the day but you still bring some cases with you home. You can not relax, especially if there has been a rejection and you really felt differently. But in the end I have these regulations I have to follow.

The Samaritan, in contrast to the Ancilla, works in an environment where structural control is light and where she is able to make her own decisions as long as they do not go against the law. Also, the laws to be followed are quite loosely written and do only provide a framework for her to work within. This makes her own conviction more important as it does not only influence her decisions but is able to actually change them. The Samaritan focuses on the clients and their demands on her and the authority, mainly because of a sense of brotherliness and feelings of sympathy. She claim that she work primary to help the client and that laws, even though they may not be broken, may be bent if that serves the needs of the client. Also the structural rigidity and bureaucratic control is small and does not conflict with the demands of the clients very often and when it does, the Samaritan often chooses to interpret them in favour of the client. This strategy is based on the personal believes of the Samaritan and made possible by the organizational and managerial contexts she exist in. Without the empowerment she has and with more micro management or harder control from a management that does not agree with her believes, she would be forced to adopt another strategy, possibly evolving into an Ancilla. Of the three Archetypes, the Samaritan is the one that seemingly have the hardest time to adapt to other strategies.

I never do anything illegal but still I’m always trying to bend, curl and twist as far as possible, perhaps sometimes /.../ when you know it has some sort of effect I continue to try to break and bend. Primary I’m here for my clients’ sake and then I try to match our activity with the demands of politicians on one hand and the demands from my head of activity. It’s not easy and I actually have no answer as to how I’m able to do it because I really do not have a strategy.

The driving demand of the Archon is without any doubt the bureaucratic one. She has a large amount of control over what decisions to make and the management has very little effective control even if an extended control function exists in theory. The Archon follows the laws, regulations and rules to the letter and does not give any thought about if this is in conflict with the demands and needs of the clients. This might sound cold but is more about the Archon not seeing any conflict, thus they have no need to weigh the different demands against each other.
It can not be proved that this is because the demands are very similar nor that the Archon fails to see the true demands and needs of the client. This strategy might be used because the context that the archons are working in is focused a great deal on numbers and does not promote individualization of clients. Even though the Archons kept saying that every client were treated like an individual, the focus still seemed to be on the correct forms being filled in and the transformation of the client into a case. This is most likely some sort of defensive mechanism used to handle emotional labor, and the Archons were the archetype that claimed to experience the least conflicts between demands. The reason for this might be because this strategy combined with the feeling that they are treating each client like an individual makes the Archon unable to see the possible conflicts. This assumes that a conflict actually exists. The study can not say how well the Archons would adapt to other organizational and managerial environments and in what way their strategies would change.

Discussion

With the findings presented in the Result and Analysis chapter, the research questions are answered and the aim of the study fulfilled. The study shows how the bureaucrats experience emotional labor when their everyday work consists of handling conflicting demands. The study also recognizes the conflicting demands between the client and the organization and the commercial, bureaucratic and of social demands as described by Åberg (2007). Through the study it is shown how the interaction between the bureaucrat and the client is created, evolved and sometimes become stressful and unsafe.

The main result of the study is the creation of three archetypes that all handle clients and administration different, mainly depending on the context they work in. The usage of these conclusions could be for the people managing bureaucrats to get an insight in how bureaucrats handle their work, their clients and their emotions and perhaps even more important, why they choose the strategy they use and why they conform into one of the archetypes. Managements are presented with bureaucrats working in different contexts and therefore get the knowledge of why they have diverse approaches from each other, depending on the organizational framework, the type of management and personal convictions.

One question that comes to mind is whether it is more effective to try to make the bureaucrats fit into an organization or making the organization fit the bureaucrats. Not all of the strategies presented were based on the organizational context and of those that were, many was forced upon the bureaucrat as a defense mechanism. Many organizations have realized that maximum efficiency is gained when the organization and the employees act in a way that support each other and the question is how one will adopt this thinking in the public sector where rules and regulations have a great impact and where cold detachment sometimes are seen as a virtue. Perhaps this study and its presentation of the three archetypes will give some ideas as to how this can be done.
As the study is of a qualitative type with only nine respondents it would be interesting to do similar studies but at different authorities and with even more respondents. Looking back at the implementation of the study, the main thing that could have been improved is the number of respondents and authorities. It would also be interesting to do other similar studies with a quantitative approach to get a broader base of information and perhaps seeing the research area from another angle. With more respondents, be it qualitative or quantitative, the three archetypes could be expanded on and it is not impossible that further archetypes could be found.

References


Rosengren, K. E. Arvidson, P. (2005), Sociologisk metodik, Malmö: Daleke Grafiska AB


Statistics Sweden http://www.scb.se


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1 A division of the Supplementary Benefits Commission who handles economic support

2 A division of the Supplementary Benefits Commission who handles people with mental ill-health

3 Children- and youth psychiatry within the city council

4 The Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments