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BUREAUCRATIC REGULATION AND EMOTIONAL LABOR:

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES CASE MANAGEMENT

by

KELLEY MACON

Under the Direction of Dr. Deirdre Oakley

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Family and Independence Case Managers in the social services in Atlanta, GA, as they negotiate a highly bureaucratized benefit delivery system that undervalues the emotional costs inherent in its operation. I begin with an examination of Weber's (1946) theories of bureaucracy, as typified by three components of authority and control in the office. I proceed to Ritzer's (2004) theory of "McDonaldization," which advances Weber's explication of ideal types of bureaucracy by highlighting four institutionalized dimensions of the corporate business model**.** Then, by incorporating Hochschild's (1983) discussion of emotional labor, I include an analysis of the impact of emotional labor on workers' experiences. I use a snowball sampling strategy, interviewing ten former colleagues. By employing the use of in-depth interviews, I attempt to provide an accurate depiction of the work-lives of these case managers and of the struggles they face in relation to their work and to themselves.

INDEX WORDS: Bureaucracy, McDonaldization, Emotional labor, Casework

BUREAUCRATIC REGULATION AND EMOTIONAL LABOR: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES CASE MANAGEMENT

by

KELLEY MACON

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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2011

BUREAUCRATIC REGULATION AND EMOTIONAL LABOR:

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES CASE MANAGEMENT

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1. Introduction

The United States is currently in a major economic downturn. Tax revenues fund everything from fuel allotments for school buses to the staffing budgets for local social services offices. County, state, and federal budgets remain severely out of balance, which in turn requires drastic cuts to services. Assistance programs encompass several interrelated departments and serve a myriad of needs on a daily basis. The Georgia Department of Labor (2011) reports that the current state unemployment rate is 10.2 percent. With a swell in these figures, the rate at which people apply for government-funded benefits has increased in kind. Participation rates in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly The Food Stamp Program—are higher than they have ever been and are increasing daily. National SNAP participation continues to set record levels, with nearly 33.2 million people (one in six Americans) receiving benefits in March 2011 according to Department of Agriculture data. Over the past twelve months alone, participation has grown by 5.2 million individuals (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2009).

This qualitative study focuses on the work lives of the street-level social services caseworkers (also called case managers) which the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) employs in its Division of Family and Children [sic] Services (DFCS). These workers interact with clients and potential clients on a daily basis and specialize in processing cases for the delivery or refusal of SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), transitional food stamps (TFA), Low Income Medicaid (LIM), Pregnancy Medicaid, Newborn Medicaid, and Right from the Start Medicaid (RSM) benefits. SNAP provides monthly nutrition assistance allotments via an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card. Transitional Food Stamps do the same but are benefits for families no longer eligible for the temporary cash and employment assistance

provided to indigent families with children through TANF. Each type of Medicaid provides medical assistance to the population of low-income individuals mentioned in its name—RSF refers to needy families with children under 19 years of age.

The research and literature pertinent to analysis of the bureaucratic structure of this governmental benefit delivery system revolves around three main theoretical approaches: (1) Max Weber's (1946) discussions of organizational hierarchy, structural components of bureaucracy, and bureaucratic agents as extensions of larger bureaucratic institutions, (2) George Ritzer's (2004) theory of business routinization, the so-called "McDonaldization of society," which identifies four dimensions of the corporate business model now present within larger societal structures, and (3) Arlie R. Hochschild's (1983) theorization of "emotional labor": "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" in exchange for a wage. Likewise, I incorporate Dustin (2007) on McDonaldization, Wharton (1999) and Diefendorff and Gosserand (2003) on emotional labor, and Travers's (2007) discussion of the efficacy of quality control measures. Each theorist is used specifically as he or she relates to the roles of the front-line workers in my sample that Lipsky (1980) termed "street-level bureaucrats."

Max Weber (1946) was least interested in what he considered the lowest form of action, which he called "affectual action" and defined as action based upon individual emotions in specific situations. However, he could not have foreseen how this kind of action would come to dominate our work lives. It is now a highly codified mode of action central to the function of modern business and bureaucratic structures. Work rules now apply equally to the behavioral and emotional displays of workers, and explicitly mandate what is and is not appropriate to show and feel. Hochschild (1983) and other theorists advanced the theory of bureaucracy by addressing

this reality with discussions of "emotional labor" (Pugliesi 1999; Erickson and Ritter 2001; Leidner 1999; Jones 2001; Lively and Heise 2004; Pugh 2001; Sutton 1991; Wharton 1999).

Hochschild first addressed this issue, advancing Weber's theory into the emotional realm, by asking, "What is emotional labor" (1983:10)? "What happens when feeling rules, like rules of behavioral display, are established not through private negotiation, but through company manuals" (1983:19)? Emotional labor is central to social services case management, and casework meets each of Hochschild's criteria for the presence of emotional labor. First, workers are required by policy to interact with clients face-to-face or voice-to-voice. Second, they are required to manage both their client's feelings, expectations, and occasional emotional crises and the display of their own emotions in relation to these. Successful completion of these tasks requires the achievement of emotional states of honesty and acceptance in their clients. Third, employers exert external control over employees' internal states through training, supervision, and quality control measures. Lastly, all of this emotional labor is of course performed in exchange for a wage. Hochschild's theory is therefore of increasing importance, particularly as case managers negotiate bureaucratic regulations in a period marked by higher caseloads, greater time constraints, hiring freezes, and mandated furloughs (McCammon and Griffin 2000).

Surprisingly, at this time, neither the discipline of sociology nor the practice of social work has adequately addressed problems of the direct experience of social services caseworkers. The literature on social work is vast and includes a multitude of disciplines. However, the central focus is on clients, not workers (Bartlett, Burstein, and Hamilton 2004). While clients wait for information, to drop off required documents, or to meet with case managers, there is an invisible space where workers gather to complete any given task for those queued. This is Weber's (1946) space of "bureaucratic secrecy," in which there is a distinct lack of discourse and the tendency of

a select few—the workers providing service—to protect their positions by concealing their knowledge and intentions (Weber 1946). This secrecy, demonstrated by the difficulty of obtaining interviews and the glaring absence of data from the perspective of caseworkers, illustrates the importance of examining this work. As Pithouse writes, “social work is an inherently 'invisible' trade that cannot be 'seen' without engaging in the workers' own routines for understanding their complex occupational terrain” (1998:4). This study argues that case managers—because of their personal responsibility to clients, as reinforced by management, co-workers, and the clients themselves, and because of their invisibility—are a special population of emotional laborers within the larger bureaucratic system.

The purpose of this study, then, is to observe front-line case managers as they negotiate the bureaucratic restrictions implicit in their work environments and to ask how the “emotional labor” they perform influences their experience of their jobs. The fundamental research goal is to collect first-hand narratives. My project attempts to fill in the gap in the literature on U.S. caseworkers by engaging them in intensive confidential interviews. It attempts to uncover workers’ experiences from their own points of view, as they negotiate a highly codified system of requirements allowing little room for individual circumstances. It is the content of these interviews that will contribute to sociological knowledge by tying the negotiation of bureaucratic structures already addressed by Weber (1946), Ritzer (2004), and others to the underpaid, unrecognized emotional laborers (Hochschild 1983) in my sample.

First in section 2, the literature review, I review the broader literature from Weber, Ritzer, Hochschild, and others, and then synthesize it into a unified framework in section 3. Section 4, on the social services office environment, frames the day-to-day experiences of social workers within the synthesized theory, showing how Weber, Ritzer, Hochschild, and others are present in

and relevant to the particular focus of this study. This section serves to connect the theoretical concepts reviewed in sections 2 and 3 to the methods section. Section 5, the methods section, outlines my research plan and explains the relative benefits of a qualitative research plan as well as possible limitations of this approach. It also contains a data analysis section explaining the role of successive approximation in the thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. Section 6, the findings section presents data and interview excerpts, organized thematically according to elements of my framework. Section 7, the discussion section, provides analysis and discussion of the findings data. The paper ends with a conclusion reiterating the purpose, goals, and significance of my project and discussing possible future research and policy implications in light of the study.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Weber on Rationality, Bureaucracy, and Action

Bureaucratic societies are now both constrained and enabled by what Weber (1946) called the "iron cage" of rationality—man is divorced from joy, passion, pleasure, and empathy by his commitment to a goal-oriented, teleological "rationalism," and thereby he thrives. Of the four "ideal types" of rationality that Weber (1946) theorized—practical, theoretical, substantive, and formal—the type most pertinent to analysis of bureaucracy is formal rationality. This type, Weber (1946) argues, emerged with industrial society and is found predominantly in the "economic, legal, and scientific spheres, and the bureaucratic form of domination" (Kalberg 1980). The distinguishing characteristic of this institutional type of rationality is that the choice of the most efficient or desirable action in any given situation is based on overarching and universally applicable systems of rules, regulations, and laws, the validity of which is the same irrespective of individual people or situations (Kalberg 1980; Ritzer 2007). What matters most in formal rationality are end results, which are calculable. No decision is made without reference to policy and its predetermined understanding of the consequences of any action taken. These decisions are determined by the individual's institutional environment (Weber 1946). Important to formal rationality is that it is based on total awareness; every contingency and response has been foreseen. By this, one acts for the sole purpose of predetermined outcomes.

In contradistinction to formal rationality is "affectual" (Weber 1946) action. In this, a course of action is determined by the actor's emotions. In "affectual action," individuals are not aware of the consequences of actions—they are reckless, and oblivious to them (Weber 1946).

Most predominant in organizing social interactions in modern industrial society is formal-rational bureaucracy, and the specific type of action most associated with this is "means-

ends rational action" (Weber 1946). Accordingly, this system most corresponds with the unintended consequences of bureaucracy.

Concerning the nature of bureaucracy, Weber (1946) mentions several identifying characteristics: 1) a standard of fixed, official jurisdictional areas governed by a highly codified system of rules and regulations, 2) a visible hierarchy, organized from the top down to the lowest gradations, and 3) the presence of written documents and the staff to manage them. Policy is central to the continued role-inhabitation of organizational members, as mastery of rules, regulations, and associated technologies is compulsory (Weber 1946).

2.2 McDonaldization: Efficiency, Calculability, Predictability, and Control

Working from Weber's landmark study, Ritzer (2004), Dustin (1997), and Hartley (1995) advance his theories of bureaucratic power by identifying four separate, interrelated components: efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. According to these theorists, these four elements are at the root of the new success models for private corporations and bureaucratic systems (Ritzer 2004; Dustin 1997; Hartley 1995).

For a system to be efficient there must be one accepted method for getting from one point to the next. This is how Ritzer (2004) defines efficiency. Such a designated path or procedure allows for workers to follow pre-existing steps in any process in order to conserve resources. This is formal rationality (Weber 1946) and is further entrenched by the organizational rules and regulations with which new employees are indoctrinated. Efficiency minimizes losses by institutionalizing what is believed to be the most productive method for attaining a given corporate or bureaucratic goal. Efficiency streamlining allows employees in a McDonaldized environment to attend to the needs of as many customers as possible in the least amount of time. This component of McDonaldization is what paved the way for standardized emotional labor

interactions between workers and customers, in the form of the conversational scripts workers are now required to follow in every interaction (Ritzer 2004).

In addition to McDonald's, Ritzer uses several examples to illustrate the efficiency model's colonization of modern corporate structure. These examples include the proliferation of frozen food choices for those who have no time to cook and the twenty-minute oil change for those who must return to work before the end of standardized lunch breaks (Ritzer 2004). Organizations continually adapt their practices in order to reap greater profits, whether by requiring consumers to share in labor costs, or through the advent of the self-service model (Ritzer 2004). Consumers are constantly fulfilling their own needs, while paying for the privilege to do so. There are kiosk stands at libraries where students can check out materials, lots where consumers can cut down their own Christmas trees, and farms where patrons can pick their own produce—in each case someone else profits from the decreased labor costs. Additionally, consumers search for their own items at the grocery store, fill out census forms in lieu of being interviewed by trained workers, and fill their own gas tanks at the gas station (Ritzer 2004). In theory, efficiency promises to make our daily lives easier; in practice other circumstances often interfere.

While the notion of efficiency involves time expenditures as related to tasks performed, "calculability" is primarily concerned with quantifying workers' actions. Quantification is at the heart of all discussions of calculability. Ritzer writes:

> McDonaldization is not simply a matter of efficiency. It also involves calculability: calculating, counting, quantifying. Quantity tends to become a surrogate for quality. Numerical standards are set for both processes (production, for example) and end results (goods, for example). In terms of processes, the emphasis is on accuracy (usually high), whereas for end results the focus is on the number of products produced and served or on their size (usually large) (2004:66).

Calculability is the bureaucratic quality most implicit in the other three—it allows for greater efficiency, predictability, and control of consumers, workers, and products. Its three key results are the production of the illusion of quantity, a tendency to emphasize quantity over quality, and the reduction of products and services to numbers (Ritzer 2004). One of Ritzer's most apt examples comes from the fast food industry, so-called "supersizing." Consumers are offered ever-increasing sizes of inferior products, rather than smaller portions of higher quality. The culture's obsession with "more" has invaded many of its institutions: education, health care, television, politics, journalism (Ritzer 2004).

Of the results of calculability, the illusion of quantity is achieved by the continual presentation of (falsely) new iterations of products and services without any actual meaningful difference from the original. In this way, consumers are deceived into thinking they are getting more for their money. Ritzer (2004) illustrates this with a discussion of television. If we look closer, we see that most "new" programs are generally nothing more than slightly altered versions of previous ones. On the reduction of products and services to numbers, he says that continual quantification and end-results based analysis undervalues the consumer (Ritzer 2004).

The next dimension of McDonaldization is predictability. Ritzer addresses five interrelated subcomponents inherent in this paradigm. These are: the design and implementation of predictable settings, predictable behaviors, predictable interactions, recognizable products and services, and the minimization of danger and unpleasantness (Ritzer 2004). Accordingly, Ritzer states, "In a rationalized society, people prefer to know what to expect in most settings at most times. They neither desire nor expect surprises" (2004:86). Accordingly, there is a certain comfort or sense of safety in the sameness perpetuated within the paradigm. This is accomplished both on the client and provider ends of relationships in a McDonaldized society.

There are certain scripted behaviors and answers expected from both parties in response to any question or problem that may arise in the mass-replicated environment. The safe predictability created by these scripts serve in turn to reinforce the fourth element of McDonaldized societies: they control the behavior of both workers and consumers (Ritzer 2004).

Ideally, workers are afforded an efficient means to complete a large volume of work with as little stress as possible. Realistically, these measures end up altering these interactions into boring routines that alter working conditions, making them less enjoyable and dangerous, and more efficient (Ritzer 2004). Furthermore, Ritzer (2004) argues that bureaucracies are more predictable than other work settings.

Technology is an important tool for achieving the efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control essential to the McDonaldization of society. Ritzer's (2004) final facet of McDonaldization is control, often through "non-human technologies." He opens this discussion by stating that technology ensures consistency (Ritzer 2004). He writes:

> Technology includes not only machines and tools but also materials, skills, knowledge, rules, regulations, procedures, and techniques. Thus, technologies include not only the obvious, such as robots and computers, but also the less obvious, such as the assembly line, bureaucratic rules, and manuals prescribing accepted procedures and techniques" (Ritzer 2004:106).

As with the behavioral script technologies just mentioned, documentation increases predictability within McDonaldized work environments—stabilization increases as everything takes a written form. These and more overt workplace and institutional technologies serve to control not only employees, but also the consumers who benefit from them. Human beings are the only source of unpredictability and inefficiency in these settings (Ritzer 2004).

Increasing automation has been a continuous partner of capitalism since its advent. Consumers can retrieve money from one machine and pay for goods and services by inserting

that money into another. They can communicate with one another through machines, often using prewritten text, and without ever physically interacting with other human beings. Ritzer cites other examples of organizational control through automation: the systems used by fast-food restaurants to command the performance of various tasks; the use of voice recognition systems and interactive voice response (IVR) technology to provide surveillance and customer service (Ritzer: 2004). Ideally, these tools serve as aids; realistically the technological colonization of our lives entails unforeseeable and infinitely complex interactions, not all of them intended or desired.

Travers (2007) provides an alternate interrogation of innovations designed to alter the relationship between bureaucratic workers and the people they service by examining feedback form technologies. Travers (2007) undertook his study to advance the following thesis: that, much as there is a data gap between the different perspectives of managers and employees, there is a gap between the data acquired through feedback-form bureaucracy and the reality of situations on the ground, and furthermore, that this often causes it to miss its intended outcomes.

2.3 Emotional Labor and Bureaucracy

Hochschild's (1983) groundbreaking contribution to the sociology of emotion, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, was the first study of its kind to address important questions regarding emotion as it relates to wage labor. In her book, she details the training procedures for flight attendants and bill collection agents—both presented as extreme examples of this type of laborer—and the role of what she terms "emotional labor" in their daily experiences on the job. This market-based framework theorizes the commodifcation of emotional labor, as typified by the management of private feelings publicly, in exchange for a wage. Such emotional labor is required of employees in order to adhere to company mandates regarding

appropriate attitudes, displays, and reactions to specified situations (Hochschild 1983). What she presents is an economic theory of emotion on topics previously under-examined, particularly in relation to manager expectations of employees as codified in bureaucracy.

Hochschild enumerates several characteristics of this particular type of labor. Firstly, there must be some type of contact between people, whether, as she says, this is face-to-face or voice-to-voice. Next, the agenda of this contact must be to produce an emotional state in the client—acceptance, trust, fear, etc.—whatever emotion is required for the achievement of the corporate goal in question. Finally, employers must exercise some degree of control over workers' emotional displays through training and supervision (Hochschild 1983; Zapf and Holz 2006; and Tracy 2000).

In this perspective, emotional labor is a consequence of increased bureaucratic regulation of what was once the most private sphere of an individual life, personal feelings. This is accomplished through the enforcement of two slightly different types of emotional labor rules: "display rules" regarding what is and is not appropriate to *demonstrate* in a given situation, and "feeling rules" regarding the appropriateness of actual emotions felt by individuals, whether or not they are displayed (Hochschild 1983).

In her sample, corporate feeling and display rules are enacted by flight attendants and collection agents in similar ways, but to completely different ends. Flight attendants are trained to treat passengers as guests in their homes (Hochschild 1983). This requires constant congeniality, helpfulness, friendliness, and cheerfulness. The goal of this labor is to attain a state of emotional contentment in passengers, so that they will part having had a pleasant experience and will be more willing to pay Delta's fees the next time they travel.

At the other end of the emotional spectrum, collection agents, when contacting debtors, were required to create displays of negative emotion: aggression, rudeness, suspicion, and even cruelty (Hochschild 1983). These displays were meant to achieve emotional states in the debtors, such as fear, embarrassment, or guilt, which then were to inspire the debtor to do whatever was necessary to pay any outstanding balances. In Hochschild's sample, employers exercised power over the displays of both flight attendants and collection agents through managerial surveillance and feedback forms.

The negotiation of private emotions in the marketplace in exchange for wages is also addressed by later theorists, who have attempted to answer Hochschild's core research questions in their own studies. These questions include: "How can I feel really identified with my work-role and this company without being fused with them?"; "How can I use my capacities when I'm disconnected from those I am acting for?" and, finally, "If I am doing deep acting for an audience from whom I'm disconnected, how can I *maintain* my self-esteem without becoming cynical?" (Hochschild 2004:132–135). Leidner (1999), Jones (2001), and Lively and Heise (2004) have advanced Hochschild's answers to these questions by addressing the issues of role-strain and the social-psychological consequences of emotional labor.

Leidner (1999) continues Hochschild's (1983) assessment of workplace emotion by examining bureaucratic control in the service sector, but she differs in her discussion of subjectivity. She suggests that as service jobs become more the norm, our economy now serves to manufacture feelings where once it manufactured goods (1999). She writes:

> Hochschild's introduction of the concept of emotional labor illuminated an aspect of paid work that is central to the lived experiences of many workers, but that had been obscured by dominant theoretical approaches to studying work. Social scientific attention to workers' subjectivity had previously been limited to a relatively narrow range of concerns, such as employee motivation, class consciousness (as formulated by Marx) and professional identity (Leidner 1999:82).

A full understanding of subjectivity is important when discussing how an individual actually experiences the relation of work and self. The dearth and limited nature of previous relational studies signifies a failure to address the real issues, struggles, and concerns of entire populations from the sociological perspective.

Leidner's study focuses on workers from two separate groups. She conducts participant observation at a McDonald's and likewise at an insurance company, in order to capture a range of the kinds of emotional labor. Her work addresses the importance of the audience for which emotional labor is intended, whether this be the customer, a current client, or a prospective client. She identifies the employee and his or her audience as "co-producers of interaction" (Leidner 1999) and notes that cooperation between them is a necessary requirement for completing the goal of the interaction, whether this goal is fast food, avoiding long lines, or over-the-phone insurance sales.

How do employers maintain control over workers? Leidner (1999:86) states that:

> Like other employers, they can attempt to exert control over how the work is done in a variety of ways: by taking care in the selection of employees; through initial training and ongoing efforts at indoctrination; through the design of systems, routines, and technology that guide workers on the job; and by instituting mechanisms of monitoring or surveillance.

Lively and Heise (2004) continue Leidner's work by examining the roles that structural elements play in shaping emotional displays to organizational standards. In their work, they examine self-reported emotional experiences using the 1996 General Social Survey (GSS) data. I focus on the portions of their articles relating directly to Hochschild's principles of emotional labor. They write:

> The second theory—Arlie Hochschild's (1979, 1983) delineation of how emotions reflect status hierarchies—proposes that individuals work to bring their feelings in line with culturally shared emotion norms. Organizations use this capacity by hiring individuals to

> do emotion work in order to market emotional displays that confirm particular status relationships (Lively and Heise 2004:1,110).

The fact that companies actively seek certain individuals to perform certain types of labor is not new, but the active pursuit of certain candidates for emotional labor is a relatively new idea in the literature. Using the GSS data, the authors employed a probability sample of 1,460 respondents. These were asked a variety of questions from an "emotions module," consisting of 90 questions regarding emotions, varying emotional states, and methods of personal emotional management (Lively and Heise 2004). In the second portion of the study, the authors focused on identifying the primary emotions their sample felt in response to events, actions, and objects in their work environments. Following Ortony, Clore, and Collins (1988), they state that each verbally expressed reaction can be simplified and divided into a characteristic "emotion token," (Lively and Heise 2004:1,121) whether this is "tranquility," "joy," "pride," "self-reproach," "distress," "rage," etc. (Lively and Heise 2004:1,123). Believing that emotions must exist within certain conditions, situations, and contexts, they then attempt to scale or locate each emotion token as representative of various points along three essential axes in the work place. They write, "Three dimensions emerged from our multidimensional scaling of emotion experiences, interpretable as pleasantness versus unpleasantness, dominance versus vulnerability, and activation versus quiescence" (Lively and Heise 2004:1,127).

Essentially, Lively and Heise (2004) are reinterpreting Hochschild's (1983) notion of emotional transmutation. This is the conversion of private, negative emotions into socially acceptable emotions for public display (Hochschild's 1983). They then expand on this with a theory of "emotional contagion," discussing the transmission of positive and negative emotions among and between workers (Lively and Heise 2004).

While Lively and Heise (2004) are primarily concerned with scaling emotional experiences, Jones examines the relationship between "caring labor" and the development of class consciousness in his study of the impact and difference between the "high-intensity caring labor" and "low-intensity caring labor" (2001). He writes:

> Caring occupations can be divided into those that require more personal, intimate sorts of care giving and those that provide services of a less personal sort. Those providers of higher intensity caring are often interested, as parts of their jobs, in the individual and his or her history and development. This includes workers who provide health, educational, social, or religious services, such as doctors, teachers, and social and child-care workers. Low intensity caring occupations are those that provide retail, food, and personal services (e.g., barbers and taxi drivers) (Jones 2001:284).

People employed in caring labor are often caught between doing what is best for their particular clients and what advances the organizational goals of the agencies that employ them. Often, should a client enter into conflict with management, the care giver's very job—looking after client well-being—makes her more likely to identify with the client (Jones 2001). The modern bureaucratic organization often identifies "knowledge, skills, and abilities" necessary for job performance, but it rarely values knowledge, skills, or abilities of an emotional kind (Guy, Mastracci, and Newman 2008). Anything tied to formal rationality, broad analysis, or codified rules is better rewarded and better regarded than work requiring people to feel for each other or elicit client cooperation and acceptance.

Guy and Newman state plainly a thing I will try to make clear in this paper, that, "In an environment where understaffed public services must meet the same 'customer expectations' as business establishments, positive exchanges have become a benchmark for performance" (2004:295). Workers at the bottom face the public on a daily basis, to provide services and answer difficult questions. This requires emotional labor, keeping the customers happy. I am interested in my sample's experience of how their emotional labor is valued, in relation to pay,

status, authority, and autonomy. A lack of such rewards has been associated with increased risk of burn-out (Malach and Shaufeli 2001).

The research questions that Hochschild and others have developed are relevant to the emotional laborers in my sample, especially because in their workplace, there is an organizational *lack* of interest in them as complex individuals. By making a current application of emotional labor theory, I can examine the unintended emotional outcomes of bureaucratic regulation and provide theoretical support for a detailed examination of how these factors affect the day-to-day experiences of case managers.

In conclusion, the contributions of Weber (1946) and Ritzer (2004) to discussions of how bureaucratic regulations dictate and regulate the experiences of front-line workers are apparent. Workers exercise little authority not directly mandated by formal-rational policy, and efficiency, calculability, predictability and control, new dimensions from Ritzer's (2004) theory, have come to colonize the daily experience of their work. What Weber, Ritzer, and other bureaucracy theorists had not yet allowed for was the place that emotional labor might take within their theoretical frameworks (Hochschild 1983; George 2008; Wharton 1999; Cote and Morgan 2002).

An analysis integrating Weber's conception of bureaucracy, Ritzer's theory of McDonaldization, and Hochschild's theory of emotional labor is central to my examination. Weber and Ritzer can be put in the service of Hochschild and her successors, in order to explore emotional labor within the framework of bureaucracy. I argue that viewing DFCS casework from this synthesized theoretical perspective is crucial to understanding the struggles experienced by case managers, especially in the flagging economy. This will provide detailed answers to my research question, "What is the impact of emotional labor on front-line caseworkers in the highly bureaucratized Division of Family and Children Services work environment?" This practical

application of the theory accomplishes my fundamental project goal: to fill in the blank in the literature by collecting first-hand accounts of the emotional work-lives of caseworkers' as they negotiate the Weberian and Ritzerian bureaucratic structures in their work environments.

3. The Theoretical Framework in the Social Services Office Environment

Weber's (1946) commitment to the development of an objective understanding of the outside world is one of the qualities of his work that has caused it to endure and which makes it topical today. His emphasis on the modern office is particularly useful for my project, as it illuminates and theorizes the activities of the organization in action. Applying his understanding to the particular social services office environment, it is clear that it exemplifies his conception of the bureaucratic organization—all of the elements are present, in various aspects, in the space and the work (Weber 1946).

Once hired by a local office and introduced to the organization, the worker is enrolled in several orientation classes designed to speed the process of enculturation to the new work surroundings. Central to these orientations are written manuals filled with detailed instructions regarding the dress, demeanor, and behaviors deemed acceptable in the worker's new role. After reviewing each section and chapter, the new hire signs a legally binding contract, and arrangements are made to ensure he or she obtains a copy.

Formal training in federal food stamp policy lasts approximately twenty-seven days. This occurs in three phases. Between phases I and III, is an additional two-week on the job training (State of Georgia 2007) focusing exclusively on federal food stamp policy in real-world settings (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2008). Mastery of these bureaucratic rules and regulations is compulsory for caseload assignment.

Management is composed of team supervisors, program directors, and regional directors. Of these, only team supervisors are located among caseworkers. Workers report to these direct supervisors, which reinforces the Weberian (1946) chain of command introduced in training. The team supervisors execute management duties, using various forms of surveillance to ensure

workers remain productive. Above them, upper management inhabits invisible areas, unseen by clients, on higher floors, away from noise and disturbances. Workers of least authority occupy cubicles when no offices are available. All directives come from the top down, from management to supervisors and then to workers. Supervisors report to the county director who reports to the regional director. The regional directors report to the Commissioner, and he or she reports directly to the Governor.

Maintenance of the written record serves Weber's (1946) third indicator of a bureaucratic organization. All procedures are thoroughly documented. A computer system called the "System for the Uniform Calculation and Consolidation of Economic Support Services" (SUCCESS) records client information and generates benefits (Georgia Department of Human Services 2009). The system contains client phone numbers, birth dates, Social Security numbers, addresses, previous addresses, financial information, and records of other governmental benefits received, such as disability payments.

Recently, social work has adopted the business model and business language discussed by Ritzer (2004). "Recipients" are now called "clients." This has paved the way for an efficient, standardized interaction separating the delivery of services from its irrational components (Ritzer 2004). Government aid programs hinge on the timely delivery of services, and business model–based on-the-job training is designed to develop an efficient work force.

Ritzer (2004) argues that bureaucracies—e.g. the government in this case—are more predictable than other work settings when gauged by office environment, organizational hierarchy, and documentation practices. And it is in fact the case that where ever clients apply for benefits, they can expect the same process and performance. Regional consistency is desired in order to implement the least time consuming method for completing a given task.

With the advent of business-model-based system, came new methods of control (Ritzer 2004). Technology is necessary for performance of the smallest task in the social services office and it enables many of these methods. One such advance was the electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card. It functions like a debit card and accounts can be closed or frozen without notice or client input. The agency is always in control of the card and the attached benefits.

Furthermore, through SUCCESS, Accuracy rates are calculated by record readers who have often not managed a case in years. Management can access the information workers gather in order to predict and assess rates of speed and levels of accuracy. These data are used in quarterly reviews of staff. Every aspect of local data is converted into a value for comparison with regional, state, and national levels (Hartley 1995). Taken together, the EBT card and the SUCCESS computer system are examples of control over workers and the clients by non-human technologies (Ritzer 2004).

Other forms of control are also exercised. This begins even prior to being hired. Potential caseworkers are screened via fingerprinting, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) background checks, credit checks, reference checks, and college transcript checks, and must also pass a pre-employment math and reading comprehension test. Once hired, the new worker is matched with a more senior worker, a so-called “error control specialist,” who will show the novice how to negotiate the computer system and execute every function on a case. This control is further maintained through monthly staff meetings, periodic additional trainings, time limits for the completion of actions on cases, and through regular testing on policy, budgeting, and protocol.

Quality control measures provide an additional means for regulating the behavior of workers (DiNitto 1991; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). Ideally, workers are afforded an efficient means to complete a large volume of work with as little stress as possible. But erroneous cases

are returned, and the worker must make any corrections in addition to her regular workload. Federal fines are now given to individual county offices for failure to meet quality control standards, and these are tabulated and paid by each state. The burden of these fines, if not their payment, descends directly through the hierarchy onto the heads of error-prone caseworkers.

Insofar as there is no competing government benefits delivery system, control is heightened. For the client, there is no other government agency that offers the same 'products.' The office, then, operates something like a monopoly. There is likewise little horizontal freedom for the case manager. There is no competing workplace offering the possibility to caseworkers that their skills might be transferable. But if rules and regulations are not followed, there will be no jobs and no benefits.

As Sloan (2004:88) writes, "Interactive service workers daily encounter behavior that angers, insults, or exasperates them," but the display rules of the organization prohibit the worker from engaging in any form of retribution or retaliation. The social services agency is an excellent venue in which to study the transmission, repression, transmutation, and display of these and other emotions. Case managers meet face to face with forty to fifty clients per week to process their cases. Successful maintenance of a caseload requires producing a state of cooperation and acceptance in clients who may feel insulted and dehumanized, or who may be angered by the invasive questions of strangers. The social services office environment exemplifies Hochschild's (1983) assertion that emotional labor requires the worker to produce an emotional state in another person.

Case managers are trained to handle their clients' emotions at all stages during the assistance process. They engage in role-playing early in training. Those playing the "clients" are encouraged to be difficult so that the trainee can gain experience maintaining control of the

situation while accurately and efficiently processing the case. Every question, every situation, every change becomes the responsibility of the caseworker.

4. Methodology and Research Design

Even after several passes of the literature and consultation with several research librarians, I was unable to locate a single narrative dealing explicitly with U.S. social services caseworkers from their own perspectives. As mentioned, then, the central goal of this project is to gather first-hand narratives on the experiences of DFCS case managers performing emotional labor within Weberian-Ritzerian bureaucratic structures. To add a study of the American system to the existing literature, I also intended to explore caseworkers' personal and professional expectations of their clients, their employers, and themselves.

4.1 The Qualitative Design

A qualitative research design allowed me to enter the social landscape and to provide a truly meaningful, subjective depiction. But more importantly, it was the only design possible for the subject. This was not a problem, because the research goal was not quantitative analysis but to expand the literature to include caseworkers' own voices.

An important problem was access. Obtaining the level of access necessary to quantitatively explain the workings of the present-day Division of Family and Children's Services office was impossible. The noteworthy studies from the literature (Bartlett, et al. 2004) had either been hired by the federal government itself (Bartlett, et al. 2004) or were completed decades before the enactment of stringent privacy standards (Georgia Department of Human Services 2009). Every DFCS worker signs a confidentiality agreement as a condition of being hired. I was denied access to the actual office setting and to internal data and records regarding employees and their work, and so I was unable to observe the workers in their natural environments or to perform quantitative analysis based on observable or provided data. Only

individuals with high government clearance levels can examine the logs of individuals receiving government assistance, and these are not distributed to external researchers. In any case, it is quite unlikely that workers would have felt free enough in the office environment to have had the candor the project was designed to capture and examine (Creswell 2003; Thomas and Brubaker 2000).

Regardless of quantitative possibilities, a qualitative plan suited my research goals for its inherent usefulness in examining the experiences of specialized groups. As Rossman and Rallis (2003) write, "Qualitative studies allow the reader a glimpse of the lived experiences of a small group of study participants." Creswell also addresses the benefits of this approach: "The qualitative researcher views social phenomena holistically. This explains why qualitative research studies appear as broad, panoramic views rather than micro-analyses. The more complex, interactive, and encompassing the narrative, the better the qualitative study" (2003:162). The narratives of my data set were complex because my research design contributed ten varied perspectives to the understanding of the job, with questions designed to unearth many subjects from numerous angles. Another point of complexity was in the revelation (discussed later) of the inherent conflict built into the work between the formal-rational (Weber 1946) bureaucracy of the office and the more recently adopted elements of business model–based bureaucracy (Ritzer 2004) that require emotional labor. True complexity stems from accurate, detailed descriptions of how people, act, think, and feel within a given context, and this is what my study accomplishes.

As for being "interactive" (Creswell 2003), my study is comprised of interactive and open-ended interviews of people who themselves perform interactive interviews for a living. Respondents were not only objects of inquiry but were actively involved in the process of

shaping their narratives. As professional interviewers themselves, they were well equipped to do this. The reflexivity of the fact that the study is interviewing interviewers engages the reader, interactively, with the world of the narratives. As for being "encompassing" (Creswell 2003), I was able to engage ten respondents despite the fact that they had to breach their client confidentiality agreements, agency confidentiality agreements, and the privacy provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) in order to talk with me. This was an encompassing sample, given the employment and legal consequences and the time constraints. The study was further encompassing for the simple fact that I asked U.S. family and independence caseworkers about the emotional labor in their work. This had never been done before, so the study encompassed parts of caseworker life previously unencompassed in the literature.

Rossman and Rallis and others (Creswell 2003; Cassell and Symon 2004) explain that qualitative research is "fundamentally interpretive" (2003:12), because the primary aim and focus is not on the prediction of outcomes by controlling variables as with quantitative research, but on description, analysis, and interpretation. My study accomplishes this while driven and structured by the theoretical framework—it digests the experiences of my sample and interprets them according to a synthesis of astute and relevant theorists. Furthermore, unlike in a quantitative, hypothesis-based study, the open-ended interview design elicited answers to questions I did not even have to ask and which were not explicitly addressed in the interview protocol. I went into the interviews open to any topic of conversation—opinions about the current state of social welfare programs, the private lives of respondents, suggested improvements, etc. I did not need to know exactly what would evolve from my interviews prior to conducting them, and I feel the study is stronger for this. My questions were only an opener,

to get participants started, and I had some surprising, enlightening, and sometimes disturbing responses from my sample. This qualitative method was the only approach relevant to my research goal, and it proved fruitful in providing detailed, theoretically structured personal accounts.

Andrew Pithouse (1998), himself a certified social worker in Great Britain, makes a persuasive case in his book *Social Work: The Social Organization of an Invisible Trade*, that social work "can not be 'seen' without engaging in the workers' own routines for understanding their complex occupational terrain" (Pithouse 1998:4). Pithouse recognizes three components of this invisibility. First, workers do their jobs in a setting free from third-party observers. Next, the outcomes of the work are uncertain and ambiguous. And finally, workers in these settings do not typically retrieve and analyze these outcomes (Pithouse 1998). The casework of my own study satisfies all three criteria—the daily work of case managers occurs in private exchanges in an office or during telephone conversations, the end results are uncertain, and retrieval and analysis of those outcomes occurs, if at all, only within higher levels of the bureaucratic structure, upper management. This has strong methodological implications for the study of casework. If Pithouse (1998) is correct, not only would it have been impossible to do a quantitative study due to the bureaucratic secrecy of this invisible trade, it would have been impossible for anyone but a current or former social worker, that is, someone who had engaged in "the workers' own routines," to do a qualitative one.

John Lofland's (1994) theory of qualitative methodology, in his book *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*, would seem to support this. He states, "The reporter should have developed closeness in the social sense of intimacy and confidentiality. He should have developed relationships that provided him with reasonable access

to the activities of a set of people through their entire round of life." But for the group of my sample, this closeness, intimacy, and trust is only permitted in-group. It is in fact explicitly and legally prohibited with non-employees. I am confident that none of the respondents would have talked to a perfect stranger, and that it was only my personal history as a fellow caseworker that allowed me both access to and the ability to "see" the invisible trade (Pithouse 1998) presented in my study.

Still, occupying the role of former case manager while a current researcher was not simple. For instance, because I was no longer employed by the department, several prospective participants viewed me as an outsider and were not comfortable talking about their jobs with me. Also, as a former DFCS employee, I was aware at the outset of the responsibilities of the position, such as the completion of timely and accurate reviews and the management of client expectations. I was also aware of general feelings workers had about the job, such as their low levels of job satisfaction.

But if my employment history compromised a "pure" objectivity, I also found, as Rossman and Rallis (2003) write, that these personal values and experiences were able to inform my research choices rather than limiting them. Because I valued the work done by the sample and knew it inside and out, I was not slanted against caseworkers, as other studies have been. More importantly, I was able to ask the questions that elicited responses not currently represented in the existing literature. Rossman and Rallis (2003) go on to say that the researcher is the means through which the qualitative study is conducted, and that his or her experiences and biography are therefore relevant to the project. In this approach, the research takes place in the world—it is about relationships among people. The focus, then, is on a detailed understanding of certain types of human experience in context, achieved by exploring

complexities and emergent meaning. What is important is determined from and by the participants themselves. It is fundamentally reflexive and there is a certain amount of allowable ambiguity (Rossman and Rallis 2003; Auerbach and Silverstein 2003).

There were also some limitations of the qualitative approach for this project in general. First, although my research goal did not require it to be, qualitative research is not considered to be widely generalizable to the larger population of caseworkers (Creswell 2003). Also, there was the fact that I interviewed former colleagues. This was unavoidable as I had no other way to infiltrate the bureaucratic secrecy of this invisible trade but through prior contacts. Still, a sampling of individuals from the general caseworker population and unknown to the researcher would have avoided issues of selection bias and contributed to increased validity and generalizability (Creswell 2003). Even within these limitations, the qualitative plan was necessary and best suited for a project whose goal was to get at the personal meanings and experiences of participants**.**

4.2 The Respondents

I contacted or attempted to contact twenty-two individuals listed on an old training list, as well as another eighteen former colleagues. This training list included individuals from ten different counties within the state of Georgia and had been distributed to new workers, myself included, hired between September and October 2007. Veteran workers were represented among participants from the set of former colleagues I approached, so both perspectives were addressed. In addition to these methods, I also employed a snowball sampling strategy—asking respondents to recommend other caseworkers who might be interested in participating in order to gain a larger sample.

My goal was to gather information from ten workers on their experiences negotiating bureaucratic procedures, the impacts of their duties, and their feelings about their jobs. A sample of ten was chosen for several reasons: time-restrictions as a graduate student, resource-limitations, difficulty contacting case managers, and respondents' fear of being terminated as a result of violating the confidentiality clauses in their contracts by participating in my project. Being small, one cannot be certain that my sample of ten was representative. But it is important to note that this work was exploratory, with the goal of setting up a possible framework and body of knowledge upon which future research might be built. In any case, I was able to accomplish my research goals with a sample of ten. Once comfortable, my participants had fascinating stories, strong opinions, and highly individualized perspectives on their work, which provided me with richly detailed, relevant first-person accounts of what it is like to do this specific type of work.

Qualifying criteria for participants included employment with the Office of Financial Independence (OFI), which is part of the Division of Family and Children Services in the larger Georgia Department of Human Services. To qualify, participants had to have worked in the OFI—either as an intake worker processing new applications, or as an ongoing worker conducting benefit reviews—within the twelve months prior to the date of the interview. The recruitment plan entailed contacting forty individuals from the training list and the former county office by means of professional contact information, home addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and *Facebook* and *Myspace* messages. Interviews ranged from thirty minutes to over an hour. These were recorded using Goldwave, a computer program enabling the saving and digitization of interviews recorded over the telephone. I recorded all interviews during March 2011.

Verbal consent was sufficient for involvement, but approved consent forms were also mailed to the home addresses of all participants. In order to further protect privacy and ensure greatest comfort and candidness, signatures were not required. All participants were assured of confidentiality regarding their current job status, their participation in the study, and their recorded answers. The consent form stated in simple language that participation was voluntary and reiterated the privacy standards. This study adhered to all principles presented in the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative's (CITI) (2010) online course in the protection of human research subjects. Research commenced only upon approval by the Georgia State University Institutional Review Board. A "documentation of consent waiver" was requested as the only information tying participants to the project. At no point in the data collection was a participant's name recorded. Each participant was assigned a subject identification number by the researcher, which was logged into a spreadsheet.

I interviewed a total of ten participants, nine women and one man, about their experiences as family and independence case managers. Of those ten participants, nine were still employed by the Department of Human Resources. My participants ranged in age from 22 to 52 years of age and all possessed at least a bachelor's degree from a four-year university (a requirement for employment). Only one participant had advanced from the entry-level position of case manager to a supervisory position, where she managed seven employees. Only one of the respondents had previous experience in the social services field, prior to her latest job assignment. The role of family and independence case manager was the first post-college employment for six of the respondents. Years of employment with the agency ranged from two years to five years. (Due to the extremely high turnover rate, those who have more than three

years of experience are considered Senior employees.) For my sample, I was able to interview respondents from several metro-area counties, including Cobb, Fulton, and Gwinnett.

4.3 Interview Procedures and Questions

A dialogic interview provided the necessary opportunity to have a detailed conversation about respondents' work experiences (Rossman and Rallis 2003). All of the interviews were conducted over the telephone while the respondents were at home. Though they were given the choice of in-person interviews at their residences, all respondents chose the telephone interview. This method allowed for respondents to schedule the interview at their convenience and ensured that audio recordings were free from the extraneous noise of public spaces and from possible interruptions. A limitation of the telephone interview was that it did not allow for the transmission of non-verbal cues. However, I felt that telephone interviews were actually more effective than in-person interviews might have been in gaining good responses. Because of the illicit nature of the interviews, I had the strong impression that my respondents were more comfortable and frank with me over the phone than they would have been had I been in their homes. When I called them at home, several respondents asked me to wait while they went to a private place away from family members. One respondent requested that I phone her again in fifteen minutes after her family had left for church so that we could talk in private. Respondents sometimes lowered their voices or whispered their answers, and one respondent reported locking the door to her room.

I conducted in-depth interviews using six groups of interrelated questions in order to engage the sample in open-ended discussions. The questions were categorized as follows: caseworker background data, general description of work activities, the current economy, issues of discretion and control, personal satisfaction, and finally, job satisfaction. I started the

interviews with several questions related to the backgrounds of the individual participants, in order to gather information about age, educational background, current employment, educational status, years of experience, and previous work experience. The next set of questions engaged respondents in a discussion about a typical work-day, goals for their eligibility interviews, and the exact number of actives cases they were currently assigned. The questions covering the current economy asked respondents about recent changes in their caseloads, clients, and the role they felt the economic climate had played. The questions related to discretion and control, personal satisfaction, and job satisfaction specifically tied in to my research questions and theoretical framework.

Questions allowing me to directly address Weber's (1946) notions of formal rationality, means-end rational action, and bureaucratic structure as related to policy included, "What decisions do you personally make that impact your client's lives?"; "What impact does policy have on your ability to help the client?"; and "Is there room for individual circumstances in policy mandates?" Questions allowing me to address aspects of McDonaldization (Ritzer 2004) included, "How do you know if a case is correct?" and "Do you feel you have any autonomy?" Questions allowing me to directly address emotional labor (Hochschild 1983) included, "Do you feel you have any autonomy?"; "What is your goal for the (eligibility) interview? (What do you need to accomplish?)"; and "Do clients understand the role of policy in relation to your actions on a case?" Of particular interest were issues of bureaucratization, outcomes of the business model approach discussed by Ritzer (2004), and the accommodation of individual personality characteristics to the dictates of workplace feeling-rules (Hochschild 1983). These questions evoked the lived reality of case managers through the lens of the theory.

4.4 Data Analysis

All research questions were constructed around the thematic elements that this project was intended to address. The data set was coded by examining the responses on three separate occasions using open and selective coding principles. This open coding process occurred early in the analysis process, after data collection, when I made successive passes to break down the information into smaller more manageable themes and concepts (Grbich 2007; Boeije 2010; Weis and Fine 2000). Then, the data set was evaluated for themes, experiences, opinions, and feelings, through selective coding, which allowed me to determine important categories, and organize the data in a manner best suited to address my research questions (Boeije 2010). I did this in a series of passes, by reviewing the transcripts and letting themes and ideas emerge from the narratives. This was an inductive process and my analysis of the data set presented the themes and codes mentioned. My data analysis plan progressed from words in a transcript to more specific ideas and themes, and from there, to the answers to my research questions. Drafts were reviewed by my thesis committee who recognized problems and suggested alternate strategies.

Interpretive analysis, or the categorization of data to seek patterns and themes within the data, was the most fitting due to the nature of the research questions posed (Boeije 2010). The table in appendix one illustrates how the research questions were coded. All other information regarding the process evolved from the interview texts. In this process, I moved from categorizing experiences and narratives in the interviews toward more definitive observations regarding my research questions, with the data and theory shaping each other.

I used variously colored note cards as an organizational tool to signify separate themes from the data, as well as to compose a report of emerging themes from the narratives presented

in the findings section of my thesis. Blue signified issues of bureaucratic authority, yellow signified issues of McDonaldization, and I used green note cards for everything related to emotional labor.

This concludes my description of the qualitative research design, the respondents of my sample, the interview procedures and questions, and the methods of data analysis that I used to gather the findings. The next section addresses the findings themselves.

5. Findings

In a typical day, the family and independence caseworker may conduct twelve interviews, return fifty phone calls, respond to ten staff-member e-mails, verify numerous documents, and finally, process and update all cases accordingly. All case managers are required to attend bi-weekly team meetings and monthly unit meetings, along with any additional training deemed necessary by supervisors and directors. The role of caseworker requires the complex negotiation of federal policy and of the bureaucratic organization that enforces policy, all while in constant contact with an entitled public seeking assistance from officials funded by their own tax dollars.

My interviews intended to examine how case managers negotiated this system and to provide alternative narratives about their experiences. I reviewed the interview transcripts for recurring themes or explanations of the work-role, in order to uncover respondents' understanding of their particular place in the benefit delivery system. My research revealed that the major issues facing case managers revolved around several central, interrelated themes, which could be organized according to how they related to the theoretical framework.

First, I present findings related to the challenges of interpreting and applying formal-rational policy in the Weberian bureaucracy of the office. Second, I present findings on workers in relation to the elements of bureaucracy that Ritzer noted in expanding upon Weber. These are efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. Each of these will be found in this second division of the findings except for the notion of predictability, which is so bound up with Weber's more fundamental notion of formal rationality that it makes sense that they be grouped together in section one. Control, which Ritzer relates is often implemented through "non-human technologies" (Ritzer 2004:164) will also incorporate the technological elements of control found in the office. Also related to Ritzer (2004) and presented here are findings on caseworkers'

negotiations of the McDonaldized customer service model that has infiltrated the social services, demanding high-level customer service at almost any cost. Lastly, I present findings related to Hochschild and the performance of emotional labor, including feeling and display rules, emotional exchanges in the office, and issues of personal and job dissatisfaction.

5.1 Findings Relevant to Weber: Formal Rationality and Bureaucratic Structure

Central to the definition of formal rationality is that rules and determinations will apply equally, in all situations, without regard for individual circumstances. In light of this, my interviews explored whether or not respondents felt there was any accommodation in policy mandates for unique or unusual individual circumstances. All respondents stated that there was absolutely none, even for those who were ineligible and still desperately in need. As one respondent said, "A lot of people don't understand this is a federal program that's trickled down to the state level, and we still have policies and income levels that we have to focus on and abide by." Policy is central to every action workers perform on cases. When I asked respondents to explain the nature of their jobs, I was told that, ultimately, it consisted of determining eligibility for federal assistance programs based solely on judging the facts of a particular family's financial situation against levels preset by policy. Each respondent had stories about individuals who had proven that they had no additional money to feed their families or to provide basic medical care, but who did not qualify for a variety of reasons. This went so far as to exclude clients who had used the last of their cash to buy gas for their cars in order to attend their appointments.

According to caseworkers, too great a proportion of such people's income was required to be included in their monthly budgets, and this resulted in the closure of their cases. A current supervisor shared a story with me from her time as an entry-level caseworker. She said:

> Like, I had this woman, I don't know if I should tell you her story, but she had been through so much. She had an accident, she was collecting disability, had no way to get anywhere, had no one to help her, and she wasn't eligible for food stamps because her disability put her over the income limit for one person. So, she just cried for like an hour. She'd gone to United Way, and she couldn't get any help. She'd gone to local churches and they couldn't help her either. Of course, I couldn't do anything to help her because as soon as the system calculated her income, it automatically closed her case and sent a notice to her home address.

When I asked about the ultimate outcome of this case, she explained that she didn't really know. She had provided the standard resource sheet all counties give to rejected or discontinued clients. She also pointed out that this provides little-to-no assistance for many people who need it. She said, "I did call her back with a list of other places she could try around town, but that's when you get into volleying the customer between organizations and agencies, and it's really not fair." Policy served to guide workers and managers through the process of serving this population, but all respondents shared that there were incidents when policy simply prohibited their ability to help people whose documentation proved that they needed it.

Another respondent, who processed ongoing applications for a predominately Spanish speaking population in North Georgia, talked at length about her attempts to implement policy in a formal-rational bureaucracy unresponsive to current issues. As she indicated, federal policy on undocumented citizens has not been updated to address the particular struggles of this population:

> Policy is very unclear on undocumented people. I have a hard time, whether accepting or denying a case, because there are no rules on their situation. For example, if you're working, but you are not using your name or your social security number, I legally cannot accept the person's name, but I have to work up your case because they usually have children in the home who are citizens. So what I am supposed to do? I've been writing it up, but it's still an issue whether it's legal or not.

Most respondents could not think of any positive implication of policy mandates in relation to case management. However, the participant who advanced from a case manager to a supervisor

did relay one point regarding prospective recipients with drug-related felony convictions. Under federal law, only those individuals granted "first offender" status are eligible for federal assistance programs. Policy mandates that any persons having more than one drug-related felony conviction are ineligible, both for food stamps and Medicaid. She supported the first-offender waiver that allowed for a second chance for people who admitted they made a mistake. In general however, her response to this question echoed those of the other respondents. She felt that policy barred help to many people who were actually in need. Another respondent replied to this question, whether there is any positive aspect of policy, in the following manner:

> No, there isn't, which is not benefiting the customer. Because if you could make someone eligible for one month or determine their eligibility for one month, then we'd probably help a lot of the customers we close out, which is the whole point of our jobs.

Interestingly, no caseworker mentioned the fact that there would be no benefits at all without policy.

When I asked the respondents how well they felt their clients understood the role of policy in the decision making process, I received some very interesting answers. Workers referred to a class of recipients they called "lifers," who were well-versed in policy mandates, due to long histories receiving benefits . One worker stated:

> They know so much about policy that they feel like they can tell us how to do our jobs, but what they don't understand is that policy changes. They make changes to it all the time, some of them are good and some of them are just plain stupid, but these people won't know that unless they go through the training like we had to and attend monthly meetings.

Along these lines, I was also informed of a recurring pattern of behavior. Consistently, clients make applications and demands for alternate caseworkers, because they believe that their current worker is dishonest, disrespectful, or uninformed, and furthermore is personally capable of influencing outcomes. These clients believed that if someone else examined their case, they

might get approval or increased allotments. But the system is such that individual variance is achievable only through undetected worker mistakes or negligence or through client or caseworker fraud.

Respondents often referred to themselves as though merely intermediaries between the written policy and the computer system making the actual determination. Said one worker:

> Well, basically the system is set up where you're putting all of their personal information into the computer, whether it's child support, their wages, their pensions, their social security benefits, any contributions from friends or family members—all of that is put into the system and determined through a decision. We stop at the income. If they are over the limits, we don't go any further. We do have people that are paying really high mortgages and have a lot of excessive bills and once it stops at the income they can't go any further to get benefits. But they are still in need. But nothing is offered for them.

The primary aim of the discretion and control interview questions was to highlight the difference between the amount of caseworker control assumed in the literature versus the amount respondents personally felt that they had. All respondents indicated they had little to no personal autonomy in the role of case manager, whether in the determination of eligibility in initial applications or in the assessment of continued eligibility. As stated, each referred to policy as the sole factor determining who gets benefits and who is given phone numbers and addresses for local food pantries and charities. Workers reported that, although they did the best they could, they had to follow the rules set by policy and enforced by their supervisors. One worker explained, "We have no say in policy. We don't write it; we're just expected to follow it. It is written in stone and there is no way around it."

The exception to this is that there were three aspects of casework that respondents reported that they did personally control. The first of these was the choice of providing information regarding food banks, food pantries, and sliding scale healthcare services to ineligible individuals. The second was mentioned by a participant in response to my question,

"What decisions do you personally make that impact your clients' lives?" She answered, "Well, I guess that would be my schedule." She explained this, saying, "Usually, on a monthly basis, I stack off the days and times I will be available that month." However, this privilege was only available to intake workers. The "ongoing" workers referred to the practice of supervisors setting weekly and monthly schedules for them. The third exception to this complete lack of autonomy was stated by another intake worker. "The only thing we can control is actually completing the work that is put forth in front of us. We can complete or we don't have to complete it," she said. "Of course," she continued, "we'll lose our job, but that's a decision that you can make—that's a personal decision that you can make, you know?"

In light of the complete and impersonal control of formal-rational bureaucracy in the DFCS office and its tendency not to match up with the situation on the ground, one intake worker recommended a change in policy. She felt that applications for assistance should be divided into two types, and should be applied for on either a monthly or yearly basis. Instead of offering one type of aid, she said, "It's smarter to divide the services better. There are people who need this just for a really short time and then there's another group that could qualify for a year and be good." By altering the qualification periods, she thought there was less of likelihood that desperate individuals would be lost in the system. Clients would be able to access the specific type of help required by their situations instead of having to attempt to fit into one pre-determined category that might not be relevant to them. With suggestions such as this, street-level bureaucrats are in one of the best positions to improve the system. But the formal rationality of the bureaucracy is not adaptable and cannot accommodate their knowledge of realities on the ground.

5.2 Findings Relevant to Ritzer

5.2.1 Efficiency, Calculability, and Control

The first of Ritzer's (2004) qualities of McDonaldized environments is efficiency. Staff members were expected to efficiently determine eligibility and to do so with a minimum of complaints from customers. Maximizing worker speed in processing caseloads that were at times 30–40% larger than the year before was primary to the managerial agenda. All workers were trained using the same training materials to reduce the opportunities for errors, and all procedures were standardized from top to bottom according to policy.

As one respondent said, referencing an inefficient increase in audits caused by mail-in reviews, "They just keep expecting us to do more in less time. But, it isn't [reasonable] because now we have to send out these check-lists and wait for things to come back to us all while still following policy." I asked another worker, whose county still used in-person reviews, about efficiency in relation to performing interviews. She replied, "We all average about thirty minutes. We try not to go over go over that, but sometimes it is impossible when you are dealing with a lot of people. After forty-five, we try to cut it off." When I asked her why, she expanded on this, "We just don't have that extra time to spare," she said. "A typical day is a busy day. You start by checking your voice-mail, clearing your e-mail, your mailbox, making or setting an agenda for the day and posting it." She continued, saying, "You also have to respond to e-mails that come from the main office or downstairs in intake and you we start the day by interviewing at 8 am."

Control and calculability were intimately linked in the office of my sample. Both consisted mainly in the proliferation of non-human technologies (Ritzer 2004) exemplified by

systems like SUCCESS. With this system, supervisors were able to pull up workers' caseload statistics and single out workers for additional training. They also used the gathered information to predict and assess worker speed and accuracy, to determine which workers might benefit from additional training, to make quarterly reviews of staff, and to determine allocation of federal funds by region.

One respondent explained how the operating system worked by stating, "SUCCESS is set up so that we put all of their relevant information into the system. It then does everything. It assigns benefits, it will automatically adjust for certain expenses like shelter deductions. They make us learn how to do everything that it does in training, but once you go back to your county, you use it for everything."

Each of the nine respondents still employed with the agency mentioned their frustrations with the computer network. It was consistently down and unavailable to process cases. In one particular month, October 2010, it was down for seven days. As one worker remarked, "The main problem with SUCCESS is when it is not working. When that happens, everything stops. We can't do anything. We can't complete any cases. We can't even look at our new cases." When this happens, caseworkers take detailed notes and then use them to process cases when the system is operational again.

Recently, another non-human technology was implemented. COMPASS is an online application system meant to facilitate faster processing of initial applications, many of these from new client populations, by allowing individuals to file for benefits without having to visit the local office. COMPASS was also intended to reduce foot-traffic in county offices, since at the time, the state was processing 2,500 new applications per month. Lastly, it meant to address

hundreds of complaints from people who had had to wait months for appointments. One worker described it this way.

The broad goal of this system was to ease paperwork and increase productivity, but respondents encountered both positive and negative consequences. One worker shared her view on the new system:

> See, with COMPASS, they are basing eligibility through that on old food stamp policy, with people coming into the office and applying for food stamps, but a lot of things need to be put in place with people applying online, with contacting the person, system notifications, etc. The problem is, they haven't changed anything, so that's creating a lot of errors within our county. We can contact people via phone, mailing letters, and e-mail now, but most people don't check their e-mail too often. A lot of these people can't afford to pay their phone bills.

I asked her if the upper management knew about the problems. She said, "They don't listen to us. It's the little things, the little details that they always overlook, because they don't do the job." In fact, all of the workers reported feeling unheard by upper management when they attempted to explain what was occurring in the caseloads.

Case managers are also subjected to control by the decisions of record readers, outside personnel, who analyze both the accuracy of benefit allotments and whether or not policy and professional standards have been adhered to. I asked respondents, "How do you know if a case is correct?" All answers referenced policy guidelines, record readers, and supervisors. In one county, all cases with benefit allowances of $500.00 or greater must be read by supervisors before they can be processed and the benefits released to families.

The ultimate authority determining accuracy, standards of promptness, and treatment of clients, resides outside the worker's slim domain of control. Most often, accuracy determinations are made by supervisors or record readers without active caseloads of their own to manage. In an extreme case, one of these had not managed a caseload in more than two decades. Several of the

counties represented in my findings employed record readers who habitually returned incorrect determinations to workers requesting that they make changes. One worker explained the process when she said:

> Well, we have a QC [Quality Control] unit to over and read the cases, but if you can, get a co-worker to read over the household information and review the budget. Other workers just have people they know glance at them when they have time, but once you put the information into the computer, problems will show up. It's not anything that bad that you're doing. It's just the way it is.

However, a more senior employee with three years' experience stated, "There is only one way to do the job, there is only one way to complete the case based on the information the client gives you."

The demand for complete accuracy on several hundred cases caused workers to feel frustrated and overwhelmed by their caseloads. Another respondent stated that she could get different opinions about the same case from several different people, depending on whom she asked. She said:

> Um, it's really hard to say, because you'll get one person to read your case, and they will find it correct, and then you'll get another supervisor to read your case and she finds errors. So it is very hard to tell whether your case is correct or not when you finish it. You just do it to the best of your ability and your knowledge and make sure that you follow as much policy that you know and that you can. Now, they want us to keep the policy manual minimized on our desktops as a reference.

Another worker shared her frustration, saying, "It is very hard to make sure that every case is perfect when you're handling so many of them. When you give a person a bunch of things to do, something is bound to be wrong."

Another element of calculability and technological control lies in the fact that the entirety of the (gross) income in a client's budget must be used to determine overall eligibility and benefit allotment levels. Caseworkers must enter all income sources into SUCCESS, but if it rises above a dollar, the case always closes. This is another source of customer dissatisfaction—

and thus of caseworker stress—in the existing system. A more junior respondent indicated that the policy regarding the usage of gross versus net income was a daily source of conflict and problems in her job. She said:

> That's a good one, because they have to be eligible based on gross, but people don't bring home their gross. When we tell them that we have to use gross they talk about their net income, they talk about their bills and other expenses. Once they are over that gross income limit, even if they are getting garnishments or other deductions for child support, the system closes the case. Then they want to explain and get frustrated, because they feel like we are not hearing them.

She continued to share how frustrating it was to not be able to help the people who came to the agency.

It was a daily occurrence for each worker that the policy's reliance on gross rather than net income limits restricted workers' ability to help. One worker who processed applications through COMPASS, explained it best when he said:

> You have somebody who has a $1,000 mortgage and they're receiving unemployment. They are using the unemployment to pay the mortgage, the child support to pay the car note, but then they still other bills to pay. But those two things alone put them over the gross income limit and the system automatically closes their cases. There's no room for us to consider these additional expenses at the moment.

However, as another worker stated, "policy is policy."

Ritzer (2004) writes about the McDonaldized customer service model's infiltration of bureaucratic structure. This is clearly the case in the social services. Under President Clinton, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act altered the entire nature of social delivery systems. This heralded the arrival of new terminologies and the language reflected a change in the delivery of social services (DiNitto 1991). "Recipients" were now officially called "customers."

Clients were the most significant source of worker stress reported in all ten interviews. The new emphasis on customer service placed case managers in the difficult position of catering

to a fearful and angry populace. Customers were hesitant to share pertinent information with caseworkers, because they did not want to lose benefits. They were also frustrated with the reviews that were required for retention of benefits. The sample shared the burden of dealing with difficult people in a system that would do almost anything—including but not limited to reversing case manager decisions, faulting the workers in attempts to appease the client, and violating policy by extending documentation deadlines—in order decrease complaints to the Governor's office. As one worker said, "The system, it is never worker-centered. They don't do anything to accommodate the worker, everything is client-centered."

When customers feel that a decision is unfair, they can file for a fair hearing with a judge. This hearing evaluates the worker's actions based on policy mandates, in order to ensure that the client has been treated fairly. One caseworker explained, "They want to go in front of the judge and talk about their individual circumstances. But I don't think they understand that when you go to a hearing, they are only looking at whether policy was followed." Still, these hearings serve as the ultimate method for customers to plead their cases with a party not directly affiliated with the county, and they illustrate that the client does have power.

Several of the respondents talked at length about problems they had with the customer service model of case management. One of the more compelling statements came from the previously mentioned worker who had been promoted to management and was now responsible for a team of seven workers. She said:

> It's not a good system, because it lacks administrative support. I don't feel like they weight both sides of the picture—they just kind of err on the client's side, and they're very pro-client, which can be a bad thing because the customer is not always right.

Management was intent on minimizing complaints to the point that some workers, in frustration, reported feeling that there was no point to their jobs. One caseworker pointed out that this work

is not an exchange of goods or services for a fee. This respondent made the distinction between purchasing a product and coming to the county office to apply for food stamps and Medicaid. “I honestly don’t think the customers that we serve are there to purchase goods from us,” she said. “They’re coming to us for help feeding their families and providing medical care for their children.”

5.3 Findings Relevant to Hochschild (1983)

As emotional laborers in a formal-rational bureaucracy, workers reported that a large portion of the average workday was spent explaining the fact that there was nothing they could personally do to change any decision made by the system. Emotions run high, and a significant, perhaps the most significant, part of the job consists in diffusing high-emotion situations. But workers’ feelings of ineffectuality were reinforced when clients vented frustration regarding their personal difficulties on workers. Respondents shared several stories about the so-called “drama” of the office. When asked to explain, one respondent said, “Well, there are so many confrontations, every single day. Sometimes, the clients get really mean.”

To this, another worker added, “Well, you’re constantly with people who are having a hard time; you’re having your own problems at home. Then, they’re whooping and hollering.” She went on to say, “They don’t understand that they’re not eligible. They don’t understand why they didn’t get the increase this month. You get a lot of arguing, confrontations, and drama all the time. That’s not something that’s really healthy to deal with on a daily basis.” Still another worker remarked:

> We encounter a lot of drama. We’ve had people crying and sounding desperate on the phone because this is the last straw, and they just really don’t know what to do or where to turn, and they have been instructed by certain charities around town to come to DFCS, and if DFCS can’t help them, where are they supposed to go?

Desperation is one side of things, aggression can be another. Respondents relayed accusations of "greed" and "dishonesty" from customers who lashed out when benefits were decreased or suspended. Addressing this, another worker stated, "[The client] assumed like I had a cash drawer under my desk and was just being greedy and spiteful because she felt like I found her unworthy of sharing this money that could help her feed her family."

All respondents reported similar experiences of being held personally accountable by clients for the continued approval of their benefits:

> I think they have some perception that we control pretty much everything that's going on. I think they honestly believe that we are out to get them. Some of them have this attitude that we are their worst enemy and we have something against them if they're not eligible, or again, that we are just making it all up as we go along. Of course, that is not case.

One noteworthy revelation from the interviews described the impact of client dishonesty. Client dishonesty negatively impacted workers' views of themselves as customer service professionals making positive contributions to society. It negatively impacted their ability to continue employment with their agencies. And it negatively impacted their personal mental health. Both initial and ongoing caseworkers interviewed an average of 12 clients per day, five days per week. My sole male respondent stated:

> A lot of the times they're not easy to work with, because they're not forthcoming with information. You have to drag it out of them, or find out by way of the linkage that we have between the Department of Labor and the new hire alerts that come up—that's the way we find out most work numbers. That is how we find out about new employment, because they're not going to tell you they're working, who's living in the home, or if they have the father of the children in the home. They're not going to tell you that they're married. They will tell you that they're divorced, separated, or something like that.

He finished by sharing with me that it was draining to sit there and have people lie to your face day-in and day-out all because they see you as the enemy. He continued this thought, saying, "They just lie to you. Some of them will lie to you about anything and everything."

The lack of honesty from clients also leads to delays in processing cases and to errors in cases, because clients provide misleading information about their financial and residential situations. Several of the respondents told me that, due to the recession, they had had to increase referrals of suspected fraud for investigation. Such cases are investigated, and if the clients are found providing false information in the applications, submitting forged documents for verification, or enlisting friends or family members to provide false information, those individuals may have to pay back benefits given to them by the government and/or to face criminal charges.

The formal-rational (Weber 1946) bureaucracy of the office, creates the chasm between the aid my sample wished to provide and the things they could actually offer the people in front of them. This further alienated them from the sole positive aspect of their jobs, the act of providing assistance. Clients often misinterpreted the case manager's role and the fact that the case manager was equally powerless before the formal rationality of the bureaucracy. I asked one worker how this made her feel. She said:

> It makes me feel bad. I can't help, but I know I'm there to do a job. I can't just do as I please. I have a family to support, too. So, they just go off. They get to crying and throwing things at you. They demand to speak to your supervisor and want to know, 'Why are you here?' We're kind of front-and-center to all of this, but they don't care.

Even while being mistreated by clients, respondents still felt sorry for them. They understood the true source of their discontent, but it did not make being the target unpleasant behavior any easier. "We all understand, but it's not fair." When clients violently act out, management does call office security or the police. One metro office transitioned to mail-in reviews. Clients mail in all of their documentation and workers telephone them with any questions or requests for additional verification. Understandably, those workers viewed this as the only current job perk. One worker shared, "It's a much calmer working environment now.

There aren't people waiting everywhere, and you're not stuck with complete strangers in a cubicle."

5.3.2 Job Satisfaction

All of the respondents reported low levels of personal and job satisfaction, which they attributed to several interrelated factors. All participants encountered, in the course of doing their jobs, what they felt were significant barriers to contentment in their current positions. One respondent from the training list of new employees resigned from the agency to attend culinary school because she was not happy. When I asked her if she could tell me more about her decision to change careers, she stated, "It's a really hard job and it can be super stressful to deal with some of the clients. They just don't pay you enough money to put up with the kind of nonsense we dealt with everyday."

I started this portion of the interviews by asking respondents whether or not they felt they were well-paid. All ten respondents reported that they did not consider themselves to be properly compensated for the associated stressors of their jobs.

In Georgia, as of 2011, entry level workers start off at around $23,400, plus benefits. My sample reported salary ranges slightly higher than the entry level figures, but none higher than $29,000 per year. The two highest earning workers qualified for increased salaries, the first based on certified Spanish language skills and the second on a promotion to the next level of management. One senior worker, with 1,467 active cases, responded to my request to share her salary by saying, "I'm ashamed to tell you how much I earn. It is a shameful $26,000 a year after three years with the agency." Due to the recession, no staff members have received any cost-of-living increases since 2009. I was told by all respondents that it would be several more years before they could expect any raises. One worker shared how demoralizing she found it to input

checks substantially larger than her own into food stamp budgets for her clients. She also addressed clients' perceptions that case managers were well-compensated. In response to my question as to whether she felt the average person on the street understood her job, she said:

> No. A lot of people, who have applied for the first time, assume that state employees are paid good salaries. They would sit there and tell me 'oh you're getting paid big bucks to do your job.' I'd reply 'Ma'am you don't understand. You make more money than I do.

One manager reported how it made her feel to process temporary employees' checks with hourly wages around $20.00 per hour. She said:

> I felt like shit for the rest of the day. How else was I supposed to feel? I am lucky to take home around fourteen hundred dollars a month working forty or fifty hour weeks, and I went to college. I am in graduate school for Christ's sake. It's kind of discouraging.

I learned that larger caseloads often necessitated increased work hours in environments that could not afford to pay for overtime hours. One worker stated:

> I think we are heavily underpaid. I am a single female and I barely cover my bills and this is just living regularly, having a regular mortgage, having regular bills. I have an electric bill and a cable bill as the only two major bills in my house and I can barely live and make it off that. I don't have a car payment, I don't live above my means, and I am barely making it. It's stressful not being able to pay your bills when you go to work every day.

After listening to her for several minutes I asked her why she did this kind of work and she replied "Well, I enjoy this field because I love being able to assist families and assists people with their basic needs." She went on to say, "It is a very humbling experience as a worker to see the hardships that people go through and to be able to assist them, but it is just not fair."

When I asked whether they considered their salaries fair, several respondents burst into laughter. Respondents reported $30,000 to be a fair market salary for their jobs. Two respondents reported having friends who did exactly the same work in neighboring states with starting salaries of around $30,000 for case management work and $36,000 for administrators.

The lack of incentives coupled with the current hiring freeze substantially increased caseloads and associated tasks and duties, while decreasing overall morale. One respondent shared her feelings about her county office. She said:

> It's nasty. People step on used condom wrappers when they walk to the back door to come to work. At one point, there was a homeless man living in the bushes there, too. I think the county needs to clean up their offices. They need to hire a company that will take pride in their work to clean the office. The stairs, all the stairs in the building, they are always filthy. They never get swept or mopped or anything. They may clean them three or four times a year, and that is only if I complain about it. The grounds are unkempt, you know, like the parking lot is always covered in glass. It's like they don't care just because this is a 'welfare office'—they don't care how it looks. But, I know other counties, their offices are very nice.

Despite the various challenges of the job, all workers reported their experience to be positive, because they were able to provide assistance to people in need. The current supervisor estimated that at least 80% of case managers liked doing their jobs, because they felt they were helping people. These seemingly contradictory positive assessments may reflect a form of at-home emotional labor, the desire to be positive about and accept the job, just in order to be able to continue to do it. Regardless, as a group, their answers regarding why they do this kind of work echoed the values, sentiments, and priorities of the respondent who questioned the fairness of the system. They viewed themselves as customer service professionals who were contributing something positive to society, but they all also understood the associated costs of their contributions to their personal lives.

The most senior, non-management member of my sample stated, "We're seeing more clients than we can handle. I know personally, it's stressful; it's a heavy stress job, and we can't control the stress-factor at all because of the amount of applications that we are processing." She added, "We have to take care of ourselves, as well as our families, and try to take care of other people, all for no money per year." Another worker shared with me that she was having

problems with anxiety and considering seeing someone because she felt anxious all of the time about her bills and her future. Yet another worker was struggling with mood swings, boredom, and feeling uncomfortable at work overall, because of the associated job stress.

Additionally, respondents detailed the physical and emotional toll of the work, not only in their professional lives but also in their personal lives. Three workers from my sample, who were completing advanced degrees in education and counseling, shared how their day jobs made it difficult to attend to their roles as students. At the end of the day, they lacked the energy and motivation to do anything else. One of these women shared her experience, saying, “I come home drained at the end of the day. The only thing I can do is watch television for a couple of hours, before going to bed and doing it all again the next day.” She went on to say, “I don’t know how the people who have kids do this. At the end of the day, they have to go home and do more work.” For these three, the ultimate goal was to complete degrees, in order to improve their eligibility for positions with less stressful work environments, higher salaries, and better benefits.

All of the participants still employed with their agencies stated that they were actively seeking alternative employment. They cited unacceptable salaries, stress, anxiety, overall lack of fulfillment, and general discontent with policy and clients as the primary sources of their professional dissatisfaction.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine how Weberian bureaucratic regulation and Ritzer's concept of McDonaldization shaped the experience of being a case manager. I also wanted to expose the unaddressed emotional labor (Hochschild 1983) required of workers and to understand its impact on their work experience. First, by using the narratives gathered from respondents' interviews, I discuss evidence corroborating the active existence in the social services office, of Weber's original models of formal rationality, means-ends rational action, and bureaucratic structure and control. Likewise, I discuss the evidence for the existence of all four elements of McDonaldization within the current benefit delivery system and some related impacts of this. Next, I deal with elements of emotional labor, particularly, the inducing of emotional states in clients, the interrelation of job satisfaction and emotional labor, and the essential double bind that the case manager is caught in when employed to provide aid to the public.

6.1 An Exemplar of Weberian Bureaucracy

Weber's (1946) conception of bureaucratic authority was borne out in the practices and structure of all county agencies represented in my sample. As to the Weberian requirement of the use of documentation, every case had a system record as well as physical files containing forms, signed government documents, copies of birth certificates, social security cards, and driver's licenses. Regarding his requirement that there be a codified system of rules and regulations, staff was initially trained on policy, when hired. Monthly meetings served to reiterate this policy and to address any changes to it. Lastly, my findings evidenced Weber's requirement that there be an observable top-down hierarchy (Weber 1946). All respondents reported that authority rested first

with local supervisors, then with the directors, and finally with those really in charge—the Regional Director, Head of Field Operations, Chief of Staff, and the Division Director—who worked downtown with access to the Governor.

Casework embodies Merton's (1940) conception of bureaucratic processes. He writes, "The generality of the rules requires the constant use of categorization, whereby individual problems and cases are classified on the basis of designated criteria and are treated accordingly" (Merton 1940:561). This is exactly what Weber saw at work when he conceived of formal rationality, and it is formal rationality that persists today, governing every minute detail of the DFCS office environment. Caseworkers apply the rules of policy to individual problems and sort the dilemmas of complex individuals into cases. If 'x' is present, then 'y' is the only accepted course of action prescribed by policy and training. This kind of processing, in turn, embodies Weber's (1946) notion of means-end rational action. If, increasingly, the delivery of social services is mandated according to procedures having little to do with the humanism implicit in the provision of social services, it may be because the blind forces of formal rationality and means-end rational action are so at home in the social services bureaucracy. As Guy, Newman, and Mastracci write, "The nature of bureaucracy itself shapes, if not predicts, the character of the work performed." (2008:46).

In the face of these forces, clients still want the most benefits with the least amount of bureaucratic red tape and associated delays. But scholars (DiNitto 1991; Handler and Hasenfield 2007; McCammon and Griffin 2000), wishing to diagnose the failings of the system and provide solutions for reform, blame those in the system with the very least authority, discretion, or control for nearly every problem. Scholars (DiNitto 1991; Handler and Hasenfield 2007; McCammon and Griffin 2000) are exactly like clients in this. They misunderstand the immense

scope of the formal rationality at work in the bureaucracy and therefore attribute inflated levels of control to those at the bottom of the hierarchy. But the welfare workers doing this work get paid just enough to not qualify for very the services they offer, and economically speaking, have at least as much in common with their clients as they do with scholars. Scholars and clients alike might find workers more accommodating and caring if the amount of worker control were to *increase* rather than decrease. It is my impression from the findings that the majority of case managers who continue to do this job do so because they really want to help.

6.2 Elements of McDonaldization: Efficiency, Calculability, Predictability, and Control

A central quality of McDonald's is that a consumer should be able to walk into any restaurant, in any part of the world, and expect the same menu selections, quality of service, and overall experience. I expected to find substantial support for my initial idea that a McDonaldized environment significantly impacts how case managers do their jobs, and I did. Respondents consistently relayed how adherence to Ritzer's (2004) characteristics—efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control—were daily barriers to the successful management of their case loads. This bureaucratic self-interference is what Ritzer called the "irrationality of rationality," writing that "rational systems inevitably spawn irrationalities that limit, eventually compromise, and perhaps even undermine their rationality." (2004:143) My respondents' reports echoed this. Management and policy makers, they claimed, continually mandated new policies—regarding appointment length and standards of promptness for case completion for instance—in order to maximize each of these Ritzerian (2004) elements, but in reality they were often counterproductive.

6.2.1 Efficiency

One example of irrationally rational (Ritzer 2004) efficiency reported in my sample related to the automated online benefit application system, COMPASS. Ideally, it would have made intake work more efficient by automating it. In practice, it reportedly generated a greater incidence of fraudulent applications and caused more work than it saved.

Another example was the previously mentioned practice, in some counties, of all benefit allotments over $500.00 requiring supervisor review before workers could complete them. This system was implemented in order to counter inefficiencies wrought by over-allocation of benefits, but according to my sample, additional contacts with the public were required as clients grew concerned about the status of their particular cases, and so the result was a net inefficiency, with both managers and caseworkers wasting time on the irrational rationality of this procedure.

As Ritzer writes, even a perfectly efficient bureaucracy "can be a dehumanizing place in which to work and by which to be served" (2004:26). But one that is also irrationally rational becomes, as Ritzer says, "patholog[ical]" (2004:26). COMPASS and the five-hundred dollar review are perfect examples of this.

6.2.2 Calculability

Calculability was essential to casework, and there was evidence that such quantification came at the detriment of client and caseworker morale. Record readers were employed to review cases for errors and return those cases found incorrect to the original worker for correction. If a client received too many benefits, mangers could deduct any overages from the ongoing amount for repayment. This vigilant quantification of allotment errors instilled a hypersensitivity to the de-humanizing experience of receiving benefits via bureaucracy and made clear the exaltation of facts and figures over the very people whose needs were being met. This heavy emphasis on the

quantitative nature of the work, on numbers of people served and dollar amounts, devalued the caseworkers as well, by turning them into cash extensions of an operating system meant to account for every single penny.

6.2.3 Predictability

Predictable and system-wide application and enforcement of policy items (Ritzer 2004) ensured that the process for applying and receiving benefits was the same in every county. One unintended consequence of this predictability, is that the system lacks sensitivity to any larger changes, particularly demographic changes in the respondent population. Contrary to the commonplace conception of clients as single, African-American women with children, my research hinted at a change in the perception and public persona of individuals receiving federal assistance. My sample felt, and government figures seem to support (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2009), that one outcome of the current financial state is a new class of well educated, former professionals who are turning to government assistance because they have exhausted all other resources. The system is too predictable and cumbersome to respond well.

It also appears that this new set of clients is just as unlikely to accept the Weberian formal-rational social services office, particularly because it disallows their special circumstances. One respondent shared her thoughts about this new client-type when she said, “They are as nice as pie to your face, but they will go over your head in a minute.” A system that makes no accommodation for variance within its client base transforms the system’s predictability, intended to make the system fair, into an “iron cage” (Weber 1946) where clients feel trapped and may act out accordingly.

6.2.3 Control and technology

The findings display the importance of control to the current benefit delivery system, particularly as it occurs through non-human technologies (Ritzer 2004). In this vein, one worker went so far as to say, “There is nothing social about social work.” She felt her title was a misnomer because the technological aspects of her job distanced her from those she was trying to help. SUCCESS allowed for the production of reports detailing each individual worker’s performance. The control was detailed down to the minute and the penny, and everything had to be accounted for. All information gathered by SUCCESS is instantly combined and analyzed to determine employee rewards and punishments. The system knows everything and managers act accordingly. This element of detailed surveillance appears to have created a psychological atmosphere of watchful resentment in my sample.

Furthermore, as mentioned, the system is often down, according to reports, even for seven days out of the month. Erratic forms of control might be more stressful than stable ones. Since SUCCESS is to be used for every single case action, even a more consistent form of non-human technological control (Ritzer 2004) might improve case worker morale and the ability to perform emotional labor.

6.3 Elements of Emotional Labor

The addition of Hochschild (1983) to the framework allowed for a discussion of emotional labor, and I expected to find evidence of it in my research. In fact, this trade exemplified the management of private emotions in public places in exchange for a wage. All respondents reported that, during the interview process, case managers were responsible for managing their emotions in relation to those of their clients. Case managers from my sample

shared details about their work that fulfilled all three criteria in Hochschild's (1983) theory of emotional labor.

As for her first criterion, face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with the public (Hochschild 1983), workers reported spending the majority of their time engaged in in-person and telephone interviews. Regarding Hochschild's (1983) second criterion, that the goal of interactions be the production of an emotional state in the client, respondents reported that what they were attempting, in the course of their interviews, was to achieve states of trust, honesty, acceptance, and calm in clients. In fact, this is one of the main ways that workers get the information they need for processing cases and arriving at eligibility decisions. The ability to empathize with clients served as a valuable tool for gaining their trust. Clients then felt comfortable providing the information necessary to process their cases. As for Hochschild's (1983) third criterion, that management exercise control over workers' emotional displays through training and supervision, respondents reported that to follow policy and managerial imperatives, it was required that they display mandated emotions and not display others. Workers reported that this controlled display was also vital to preserving the fragile worker-client relationship in processing cases.

6.3.1 Inducing emotional states in the client

As mentioned, inducing emotions in the client audience is essential to the definition and performance of emotional labor. In the DFCS's Office of Financial Independence, the caseworker is attempting to induce or maintain one or more such emotion with every client contact. Among these are honesty, trust, calm, and acceptance.

6.3.2 Inducing honesty and trust

From my findings, I hope it is apparent that dealing with desperate people in difficult financial predicaments requires patience, tact, and personal fortitude. It is absolutely vital to the job as a case manager. Caseworkers must provide assistance to dozens of people per shift. The very moment they are working with one person, five others may be waiting for scheduled appointments. In order to keep any personal momentum, my sample reported the importance of gaining clients' trust—which effected how honest they were about household composition, income, and employment—in the least amount of time possible. When caseworkers must drag the pertinent details from their clients, it takes away from the next client's scheduled time. Once behind, it is impossible to catch up without accruing overtime hours that the state is unable to pay due to budget shortfalls.

The regimented, McDonaldized system most values speed and efficiency, which is ultimately counterintuitive to the true nature and purpose of the work. The labor of helping people in need requires emotional proximity and emotional exchange, if not emotional intimacy, and this is true whether or not this work is exchanged for a wage. While workers aim at engendering honesty and trust within the confines of this particular interaction, the formal-rational (Weber 1946) bureaucracy elicits competing emotions from clients, who feel over-examined and dehumanized by the anonymous structure. As mentioned before, case managers must ask these total strangers highly personal questions to complete the process. Thus, some clients, because of their discomfort with their own vulnerability, become defensive and mistrustful, not of the formal-rational (Weber 1946) benefit delivery system itself, but of its human representative. If they *do* wish to react against the inhumanity of the system as a whole, the system is nowhere and everywhere, and so its representatives are the only objects for their

feelings. As mentioned, caseworkers consistently reported incidents of hostility and even outright assault.

So, from the first moment, caseworkers engaged in displays demonstrating their trustworthiness to clients, in attempts to create a shared space of honesty. New workers were reminded to smile at clients on greeting them, because as the supervisor in my sample reported, "You may be the only person to smile at them and show them any kindness for the next month." Much like Hochschild's (1983) flight attendants, caseworkers labored at being perceived as approachable, engaged, and helpful at all times. They did this not only because these emotions were explicitly mandated (Georgia Department of Human Services 2007), but because fear and dishonesty were counterproductive to the goal of processing correct cases.

As indicated in the findings, client dishonesty is detrimental to timely case completions, to workers' viewing themselves as helpers of people in need, and sometimes, to workers' mental health. If a client is continually untruthful, my sample did report one negative reinforcement tactic for getting at the truth. If a case manager doubts the veracity of a claim, he or she can always transfer the file to the Fraud Prevention Investigational unit, and sometimes the mention of this possibility was reported to be enough to induce honesty, if not trust. There can be serious penalties for dishonesty. Clients caught actively violating the system will have their benefits adjusted or terminated and may even face criminal charges for fraud.

One senior worker began each of her interviews by sharing her expectations of clients and letting them know what they could expect from her. This was an interesting use of formal rationality in the service of emotional labor. This worker used the predictability (Ritzer 2004) of the formal-rational (Weber 1946) bureaucracy of which she was a part, in order to set up clear expectations and guidelines and a clear line of communication with the client. This is one case in

which formal rationality was humanized, to the purpose of honest communication. Whether or not this was done for a wage, the caseworker reported some success with this method for achieving honesty and trust.

6.3.3 Inducing acceptance and calm

Whether or not honesty and trust have been achieved, the necessity of refusing, reducing, or ending client benefits occurs more than once daily. When this happens, case managers must be able to do induce acceptance and calm in their clients. The client may feel any number of emotions competing with the caseworker's goal, such as frustration, anger, sadness, confusion, etc. Not only has navigating this bureaucratic process been tedious, time consuming, and dehumanizing, the client has now been declined any results.

Much as with honesty and trust, caseworkers wish to achieve acceptance and calm, both because they are mandated to do so and because, without client cooperation, it can be very difficult to close out a case, even one terminating or reducing benefits. As Weber (1946) writes, people using "affectual action" (Weber 1946) act only according to immediate emotion, not in accordance with the iron cage of the formal rationality they may be subject to. They become unwilling and/or unable to meet the formal-rational (Weber 1946) expectations of the interaction—to talk about the relevant data at hand and to be active, helpful participants in the process. But as Merton writes, "The [bureaucratic] structure is one which approaches the complete elimination of personalized relationships and nonrational considerations (hostility, anxiety, affectual involvements, etc)" (1940:561). That is, when a client is acting affectually (Weber 1946) and outside the prescribed actions and processes, this is in direct conflict with the fundamental nature of the formal-rational bureaucracy of the system.

This has negative implications for the institutionalized predictability of the benefit system and review process. When a client is angry or upset, the case manager is unable to obtain the required information to process the review and ensure or terminate benefits. In such cases then, it becomes the job of an approved form of affectual action, that is, emotional labor, to step in, and do the emotion work required to induce acceptance and calm.

Caseworkers from my sample shared several different strategies for instilling acceptance and calm in clients, depending on the temperament and attitude of a particular client. If a client was angry or hostile, caseworkers attempted to diffuse the negative emotions by being empathetic, sharing stories about personal struggles, and offering advice.

Of course, when positive strategies were ineffective in achieving acceptance and calm, caseworkers pulled from a different set of relational skills. This required being firm and engaging clients in frank discussions about the possible outcomes of not getting the required information and documentation and what this would mean for next month's benefit allotment. If firmness failed to induce acceptance, caseworkers were not above threatening to close cases or engage law enforcement, especially when clients became verbally or physically abusive.

When interactions escalated into threats or acts of violence, security was always on-hand and supervisors had no qualms about calling law enforcement. My sample reports that clients have been arrested at local offices. So these negative reinforcement methods toward achieving acceptance in the client can have real consequences.

This is evidence of emotional labor not made transparent in the job description when prospective employees interview with DFCS. The most intense emotional labor requirements of the job are in fact hidden within the application requirement of "customer service experience"

and under the necessity for “inter-personal skills.” Because of this, these demands are not overt or properly compensated.

And so, while every contingency is covered in the air-tight formal rationality (Weber 1946) of the policy and training, the real-world frequency of aggressive incidents is not disclosed. Caseworkers therefore find themselves learning more by personal experience and from each other how to induce honesty and acceptance in the clients. Sometimes these strategies work, and other times the client is left to gain acceptance and calm in jail.

6.3.4 Job dissatisfaction and emotional labor

At the outset of my study, I expected to find varying degrees of low overall job satisfaction due to the difficult nature of the work. I expected to find that the combination of decreased social status, high stress levels, and pressure to provide stellar customer service during a period of economic stagnation would negatively impact workers and lead to motivational difficulties for my sample. My expectations were verified.

All participants reported low levels of personal and job satisfaction, and remarkably, at the time of the interview, all answered “Yes” to the question of whether they were actively seeking alterative employment. Two had returned to school for advanced degrees to aid in their professional transitions. More importantly, three of the workers I interviewed reported suffering from symptoms of depression and anxiety. However, they all associated their jobs with the ability to help people without other resources solve basic human needs, like food and medical care. The workers seemed to occupy the dual burden of being caught in a position in which they could provide themselves with these things, but at a high cost to their own lives. Of all of the respondents from my training list and former coworkers, more than 20% had moved on within a year from the interviews.

Arlie Hochschild writes that “when we succeed in lending our feelings to the organizational engineers of worker-customer relations—we may pay a cost in how we hear our feelings and a cost in what, for better or worse, they tell us about ourselves.” Workers in my sample reported that, in adapting to the circumstances of the work and the larger bureaucratic structure, changes appeared in them. Several of the workers stated in the findings that their work had negatively impacted their personal world-views, which impacted their professional lives. Feelings of resentment, cynicism, and not being able to care anymore were all discussed among this sub-sample. One worker shared that not only did she hate her job, but she had also started hating the people she was charged with helping. Respondents reported that it was difficult coming to work each day knowing that you are not being paid what you are worth or feeling appreciated. This experience further contributed to the resentment and cynicism relayed to me about the work.

Much of worker role-strain (Pugh 2001)—manifested by physical and mental exhaustion and feelings of being overwhelmed—was the byproduct of the intense emotional labor required for caseworker/customer interactions. As mentioned, case managers consistently reported negative interactions with consumers. Policy mandates that workers are always to welcome feedback, but what happens when this feedback is detrimental to case managers and to their senses of self as workers and individuals?

The over whelming nature of the emotional labor requirements of the job was one of the primary reasons cited as to why so many of my sample were seeking other jobs. One respondent shared how draining it was to sit there and have people lie to his face day in and day out. Another worker in the sample mentioned the difficulty of emotionally engaging other people’s problems while having her “own problems at home.” Both respondents were referring to the

intensity of emotional labor in the majority of their interactions with clients and how this negatively impacted their feelings about their jobs. There was also an instance in which a worker emotionally labored to repress her personal feelings in order to effectively manage the expectations of her job. She said, "I think that food stamps and Medicaid is just another form of slavery." Yet, she continued at her job and this made her very dissatisfied with it. When I asked why she continued to work at DFCS, she responded, "You know it's hard to quit right now because of the economy. You're kind of afraid to quit, so I stay. I want to quit every day."

The DFCS family and independence caseworkers of my study reported high stress levels and low morale and job satisfaction. Of course, they did not attribute these to emotional labor alone. Other causes reported were raise freezes, having smaller checks than some of their clients, having to perform unpaid overtime, difficultly paying their own bills, a dirty and unkempt office environment, hiring freezes, and greatly increased workloads. Having negative feelings regarding one's labor does not, in itself, constitute emotional labor (Hochschild 1983). But it seems likely that the presence of pre-existing or chronic negative emotions would make it harder to repress and transmute (Hochschild 1983) new ones. Hochschild writes:

> "When feelings are successfully commercialized, the worker does not feel phony or alien; she feels somehow satisfied in how personal her service actually was. … But when commercialization of feeling as a general process collapses into its separate elements, display becomes hollow and emotional labor is withdrawn. The task becomes one of disguising the failed transmutation (Hochschild 1983:136).

It could be for another study to determine quantitatively, but the following hypothesis is worth consideration: when the emotional laborer is depressed or dissatisfied by factors other than her actual emotional labor—low wages for instance—she finds it more difficult to "successfully commercialize" her feelings, and the "general process collapses" (Hochschild 1983:136). It would seem much easier to do emotional labor when a person is otherwise satisfied with the job

and has no additional negative feelings to repress other than those specifically mandated in job policy.

The findings indicate that working within a system that continually devalues workers' input, voices, and experiences, gradually manifests in cynicism, low rates of job satisfaction, and exhaustion with the status quo. The hidden costs of emotional labor intrinsic to casework reduce the inner resources such as patience and understanding that make it possible to do the jobs. Also, the lowering of overall job satisfaction by factors unrelated to emotional labor may make it more difficult to perform emotional labor.

6.3.5 The double bind of emotional labor

The mission statement of the Department of Family and Children Services (2007) proposes that workers treat customers as they would treat their own family members. This is strikingly similar to the imperative flight attendants received in Hochschild's (1983) study—that they treat flyers like guests in their homes. The new system adopted (Georgia Department of Human Services 2005) by the Department of Human Services is explicitly based, as Ritzer so notably theorized, upon an American business model emphasizing customer service over almost everything. It should be clear then that such a system requires much greater emotional labor than the previous dispensary model. Whether the customer service model fits the reality of what the bureaucracy is actually doing is not questioned, except by the occasional sharp-witted caseworker. It is simply imposed, and caseworkers are expected to "satisfy" the "customer." Everything is client-centered. With the right documentation, clients have recourse to dragging caseworkers to a hearing with a judge, and this is feared. Management will often side with the client in the extreme to prevent a complaint from reaching the capitol building.

In this environment, as mentioned, caseworkers are regularly left to the emotional labor of dealing with accusations, insults, outright verbal abuse, and not uncommonly, even physical assault. Still, caseworkers are to do whatever is required to leave the client as "satisfied" as possible (Ritzer 2004), even in the act of rejecting his claim or being insulted by him. This emotional imperative is in direct conflict with the Weberian formal-rationality that dominates and governs the bureaucratic environment of the DFCS office. There is no room for individual circumstance. Blind and powerful formal rationality predetermines every outcome. Clients may understand policy well, but there is almost always a fundamental *mis*understanding of the inevitability of the formal rationality at work. The so-called "lifer," more aware than most regarding policy, is often prepared to argue point-by-point, and such cases require an even more attentive form of emotional labor. Nonetheless, what such a client does not understand is the huge scope of the anonymous federal bureaucracy involved in decisions.

When I combined Weber's (1946) and Ritzer's (2004) theories as part of the framework for examining this phenomenon, it was evident that a larger portion of the job than was previously believed was outside the control of the very workers responsible for it. I had expected to find corroboration for this theory from the beginning, but I was surprised at the extent of the evidence. As mentioned, the scholarship, like the clientele it means to defend, assumes a certain amount of authority and control among "street-level bureaucrats" (Lipsky 1980). In most of the literature surveyed, the caseworker is assumed to occupy a position of at least some power, since even those few clients well-versed in policy must rely on the caseworker to ensure they are receiving every entitled benefit. The fact of the matter is that, at least with family and independence caseworkers, this is not so. If a worker feels that a client may benefit from a specific program, child care assistance for instance, he or she is only able to refer those meeting

pre-determined criteria. This may seem, at times, counter-intuitive and counter to the DHS goal of complete and total self-sufficiency. But each individual respondent nevertheless reported that policy, not his or her individual wishes or desires, determined exactly what could and could not be done. The only aspects of the job that caseworkers felt they could control were their schedules and the ability to provide alternative resource lists.

There is a recurring pattern among clients, that they request alternate caseworkers when their requests have not been met. This illustrates how client misunderstanding of the scope of Weberian formal-rational bureaucracy and the non-existent power of the caseworker makes emotional labor more difficult. But it is additionally interesting because it shows how. By misunderstanding the nature of the bureaucracy, and thinking that a different caseworker will be able to make a different decision, there is the constant (often explicit) accusation of personal culpability, when in fact it is the formal rationality of federal policy that is culpable. This accusation, spoken or not, is a palpable, daily presence in the office.

In the literature, workers are often portrayed as heartless automata acting without regard to the specifics of their client's situations (DiNitto 1991; Handler and Hasenfield 2007; McCammon and Griffin 2000). But it is the U.S. and state governments that are in every cubicle, and the individual caseworker is only the anonymous and powerless servant of the state. In fact, in the age of Ritzer's (2004) non-human technologies, there is almost no need for the caseworker at all in the bureaucracy except as an emotional laborer for seeing through lies and achieving trust, honesty, acceptance, and calm.

The client always perceives at least a small amount of discretion and control in the caseworker. It is a natural assumption. But in the formal-rational bureaucracy (Weber 1946), discretion is removed from individual persons and into the system as a whole. This is why

Weberian (1946) formal-rational bureaucracy makes emotional labor more difficult. If there were even a bit of accommodation to individual circumstance in the bureaucracy, it would be more possible for the caseworker to achieve the desired emotional states in the recipient. This is both because the caseworker could more easily address unaccounted for forms of emotional and financial desperation and because the client would not feel as though he was confronting a bureaucracy to which he was merely an anonymous set of calculations.

What the literature fails to recognize is that the bureaucrat is made, by her very position in the bureaucracy, to be heartless and caring, rejecting and consoling, at the same time. The problem is simple and essential. The system contains two directly contradictory imperatives: (1) blindly execute the anonymous will of formal-rational (Weber 1946) policy, and (2) please the customer according to the Ritzerian (2004) business model. It is like a car with two engines pulling in opposite directions, and it goes nowhere. It is impossible for the blind, formal-rational bureaucracy of the DFCS office to be both (a) possessed of perfect efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control (Weber 1946; Ritzer 2004) and (b) to perfectly perform the emotional labor required in its new McDonaldized customer service model. The customer service model simply doesn't fit the reality of the DHS's reason-for-being. And this is because of the simple fact that there is never enough free aid.

This is the double bind of the family and independence caseworker. As Leidner (1999) writes of "interactive service workers," who interact with clients while expected to satisfy the mandates of policy, "In this setting, the power dynamic of the workplace shifts from a tug-of-war between workers and management to a three-way contest for control between workers, management, and service recipients" (1999). The irony is that it is the bureaucrat, portrayed in the literature as powerful, automatic, and uncaring, who is in fact emotionally laboring to induce

human feelings of trust, honesty, acceptance, and calm in the client. As such, he or she is the only person fighting against the bureaucratic dehumanization of the client.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to gather first-hand narratives from social service case managers to examine the overall effect of bureaucratic structure and emotional labor on their professional experiences. Workers in any sector must actively negotiate the rules and regulations of their jobs, but social costs are higher for case managers, who suffer greater rates of burn-out, higher turnover rates, and report high levels of job-related stress doing this specific type of work (Dustin 2007). However, none of these issues were addressed in the existing literature on U.S. workers. I learned that casework is further complicated by conflicting emotions about the job, attitudes towards clients, and managerial expectations. By engaging the actual workers in conversations about the jobs, I intended to provide a detailed, up to date narrative.

7.6 Study Limitations and Future Research

My sample was relatively small; I interviewed ten participants. My study was not representative of all case managers in the state of Georgia, nor was it entirely impartial. My employment history made it impossible for me to be completely objective, but complete objectivity was not required for the gathering of first hand narratives of worker's experiences, my primary research goal. Future research, with a larger sample of participants from more metro counties, would provide additional measures of generalizability, reliability and validity. Hopefully, more academics will be induced to study the intricacies of this profession. New research might also consider research objectives that I was unable to address, such as case manager coping strategies, policy implementation in other states, organizational hierarchies, associated assistance programs, and usage statistics.

7.7 Policy Implications

While my research was not broadly representative, my sample made several critiques of the benefit system and suggestions designed to improve, not only their own work lives, but also the lives of their clients. These included increased levels of worker and team leader autonomy and control, more equitable compensation packages, and policy adjustments designed to aid in the development of strong families.

7.7.1 Increased autonomy and control

Workers repeatedly noted how the current system favored everyone but those in the trenches doing the work. It may be beneficial to allow workers and their immediate supervisors, those most familiar with the true nature of casework, to have greater discretion than currently mandated. If workers could make or even argue for exception decisions on behalf of their clients, it might add to a sense of agency and decrease rates of burnout, customer complaints, and resulting turnover. Workers would feel more connected to the well-being of their clients, which would increase their effectiveness, accuracy, and approachability. Direct supervisors might be allowed a discrete number of policy exceptions per quarter for extreme cases, in order to empower workers to make decisions for clients with exceptional circumstances and pending their approval.

7.7.2 Increased salaries and benefits, and more employees

The responsibilities and duties associated with this type of work are extraordinary. Individuals who do this work regularly make decisions that directly impact people's lives. It is possible that the value of this service is not adequately compensated by the current entry level salary, which requires a four-year degree and previous customer experience. One financially

feasible suggestion would be to introduce a rewards system for excellent customer service, which recognized workers' contributions to the well being of others with personal days and yearly bonuses. Either way, no one doing this work should be ashamed to share his or her salary.

Due to current budgetary shortfalls, local counties are unable to hire badly needed new staff. Perhaps it is not feasible to expect excellent customer service at every turn from workers overwhelmed by dozens more clients than they can reasonably be expected to handle.

7.7.3 Policy amendments

From my research, I learned that policy is the determining factor in how populations are served. But workers and populations are facing new challenges not currently considered in policy. For instance, workers may be able to process a higher number of cases by allowing families to qualify for benefits on a monthly basis. By reinforcing the temporary nature of assistance, this might lead to decreased numbers of applicants and recipients in the future.

Also, if Georgia implemented a time limit on benefit payouts, this would not only ease the burden on offices, it would decrease the number of lifetime recipients who rely on government assistance as their primary source of support and enhance self-sufficiency, which is the definitive goal of aid.

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9. Appendix 1: Table 1

Thematic Coding for Research Questions

Concepts and Categories	Survey Questions
Background Data	Are you currently employed by DHS? What did you do for work before becoming a case manager? What is your educational background? Are your currently pursuing any other degrees from a college or university? If so, what do you hope to do with that degree? Are you comfortable telling me your age?
General Description of Daily Activities	How would you describe a typical day? What is your goal for the interview? How many active cases are currently assigned to your load number?
Current Economy	Have you seen an increase in your caseload in the previous three months? If so, why? Who are your clients?
Discretion and Control	What decisions do you personally make that impact your clients' lives? What impact does policy have on your ability to help the client? Is there room for individual circumstances in policy mandates? Do clients understand the role of policy?

	Do supervisors understand what your job entails? Is he or she supportive? How do you know if a case is correct? What happens if a case is determined to be incorrect? Do you feel you have any autonomy?
Personal Satisfaction	Do you consider yourself to be well paid? Are you comfortable telling me how much you earn? Why do you do this work? Do you consider your job to be a positive or negative experience? Are you seeking alternative employment?
Job Satisfaction	What would a client give for your job description? What would you change about the current system? Would you recommend your job to a friend seeking employment?

10. Appendix 2: Interview Materials

Participant Initials:

Date and Time of Interview:

Interviewer: Kelley Macon

Hello. You are invited to participate in a research study. This study looks at how caseworkers work with state and federal rules during a recession. You are invited to take part because of your role as a case manager in Georgia. This study is open to both current and former case managers who ended their employment within the last calendar year, which is necessary for possessing current knowledge of policy and procedures. This study does not have any more risk than you would have in a normal day of life. Participation in this study may not benefit you personally. Participation in this research project is voluntary. Your records are confidential. Only Deirdre Oakley and Kelley Macon will have access to the data you provide. Are you willing to participate and be audio recorded?

Interview Protocol for "Bureaucratic Regulation and Emotional Labor"

Biographical Information:

- Are you currently employed by the Department of Human Services? If yes, for how long? (If not employed, relate past experiences with focus on why they left the agency)
- What did you do for work before becoming a case manager? (previous employment)
- What is your educational background? (Degrees, major courses of study)

- Are you currently pursuing any other degrees from a college or university? If so, in what subject and what do you hope to do with that degree? (future career goals)
- Are you comfortable telling me your age?

Job Related Information:

- What is your job title?
- How would you describe a typical day? (How do you start your day?)
- What is your goal for the (eligibility) interview? (What do you need to accomplish?)
- How many active cases are currently assigned to your load number? (approximation)
- Have you seen an increase or decrease in your caseload in the previous three months? (Fewer or more cases?) If so, why? (personal opinion)
- Who are your clients? (Are they like you?) (Do they live in your neighborhood or go to your church?) (Are they typically older or younger?) (Are they Caucasian, African-American?
- What decisions do you personally make that impact your client's lives?
- What impact does policy have on your ability to help the client?
- Do you think there is room for individual circumstances in policy mandates? (client)
- Do clients understand how the role of policy? (In relation to your actions on a case)
- Does your supervisor understand what your job entails? Is he or she supportive?
- How do you know if a case is correct?
- What happens if a case is determined to be incorrect? (Procedurally, Accountability)

Personal Feelings about Work:

- Do you feel you have any autonomy? (Do you make decisions about your own work?)
- Do you consider yourself to be well paid? Are you comfortable telling me how much you earn? What would you consider fair?
- Why do you do this work? (Why this type of job, field of work?)
- Do you consider your job to be a positive or negative experience in your life? (Feelings and impact.)
- What would a client give for your job description? (If we asked someone waiting in the lobby, how would they describe your duties?)
- What would you change about the current system? (Can be anything, everything, or nothing.)
- Are you seeking alternative employment? (Currently)
- Would you recommend your job to a friend seeking employment? (Why or why not?)
- Is there anything you want to discuss that I have not addressed?

Researcher Notes: