

# Emotional Responses In Archival Work

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Presented by:

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# Acknowledgements

The land upon which we work at the University of Toronto has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

# Acknowledgements

- 15 archivists who kept diaries for four months and shared their thoughts and feelings
- Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Funding)
- Research Team: Jessica Ho, Henria Aton, Christa Sato

# Relevant Literature

- Emotional trauma in archivists arising from the engagement with records that immortalize human suffering (Nathan et al. [2015](#); Regehr et al. [2023](#); Sexton [2019](#); Sloan et al. [2019](#))
- Interacting with and supporting traumatized individuals – donors and community researchers - is also emotionally challenging (Douglas & Alisauskas [2021](#); Regehr [2022](#))
- Organizational environments can mitigate response to workplace trauma exposure including: workload, organizational climate, support and supervision (Bell et al. [2003](#); Carpenter et al. [2013](#); Davis-Sacks et al. [1985](#); McFadden et al. [2015](#); Sloan et al. [2019](#))
- When an organization is perceived to value the contribution of workers and support their well-being, workers are better able to cope with the emotional demands of the job and have better work-home life balance (Alfandari et al. [2022](#); Elpers and Westhuis [2008](#))

# Methodology

## Method

- 15 archivists kept diaries for 4 months (2 identified as male, 12 as female, and one as non-binary; 2 diary-keepers identified as a person of colour)
- On-boarding session, monthly check-ins, guidelines and form, an honorarium
- Guidelines – complete a diary entry every day you have a meaningful emotional response after working with records, supporting researchers, or working with donors

## Diary Content

- For each event – describe with whom or what you were interacting when event occurred; feelings and reactions experienced; and, if shared, reaction received
- Indicate if experienced happiness, enthusiasm, optimism, anxiety, anger, irritation, depressed, bored, tired, relaxed, content, satisfied and to rate the intensity as not at all (0); a little (1); some (2); or a lot (3)
- If the response lingered describe emotions every day, experienced the feelings

# Data and Coding

## Coded themes emerged from the data

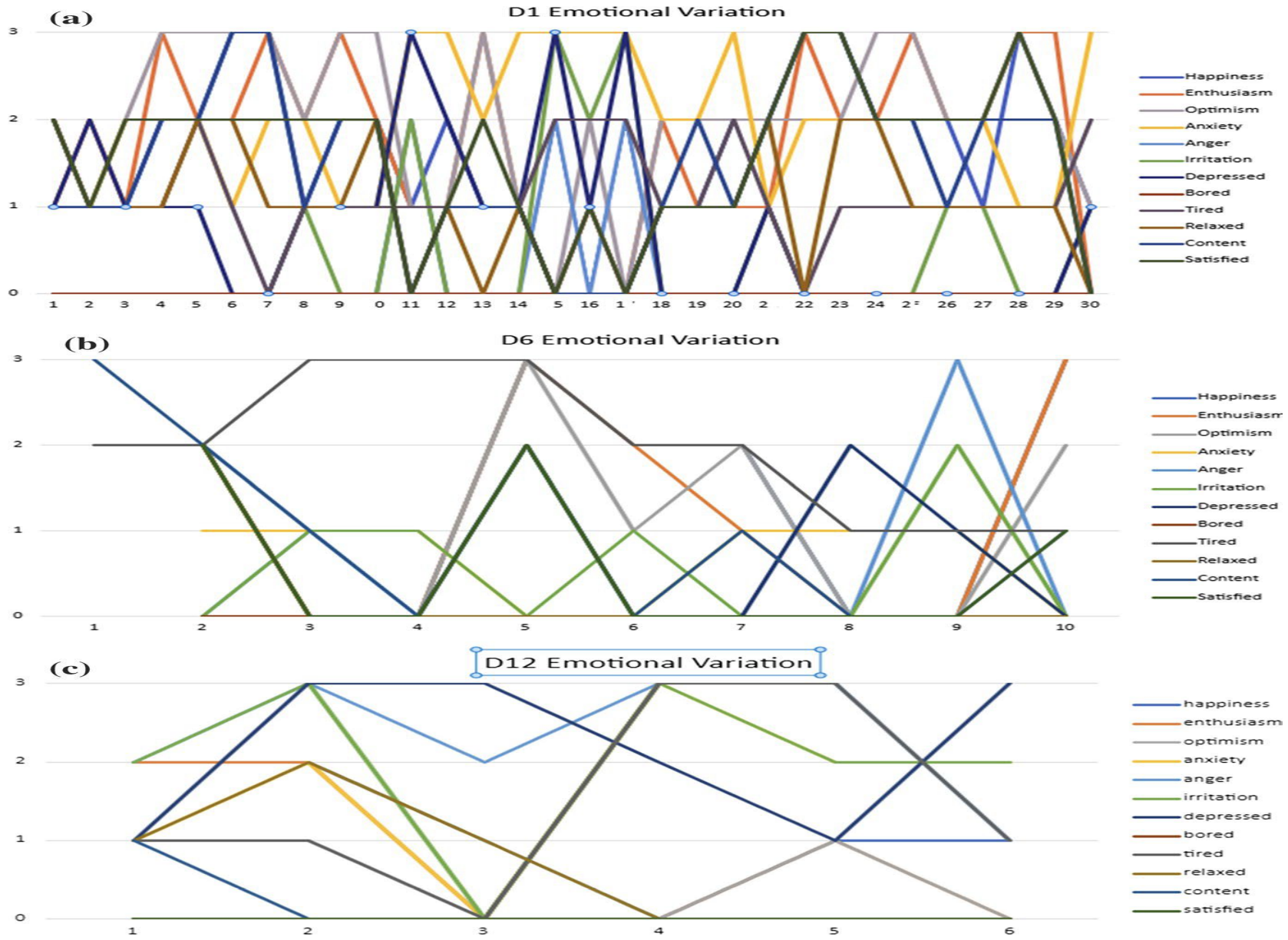
- 304 entries of which 159 related to an emotional event
- Number of entries per archivists – 5 entries to 67 entries, with an average of 20 entries per diary
- Words per diary, 395 to 6571 words per diary with an average of 3421 words per diary



# Findings

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# Emotions

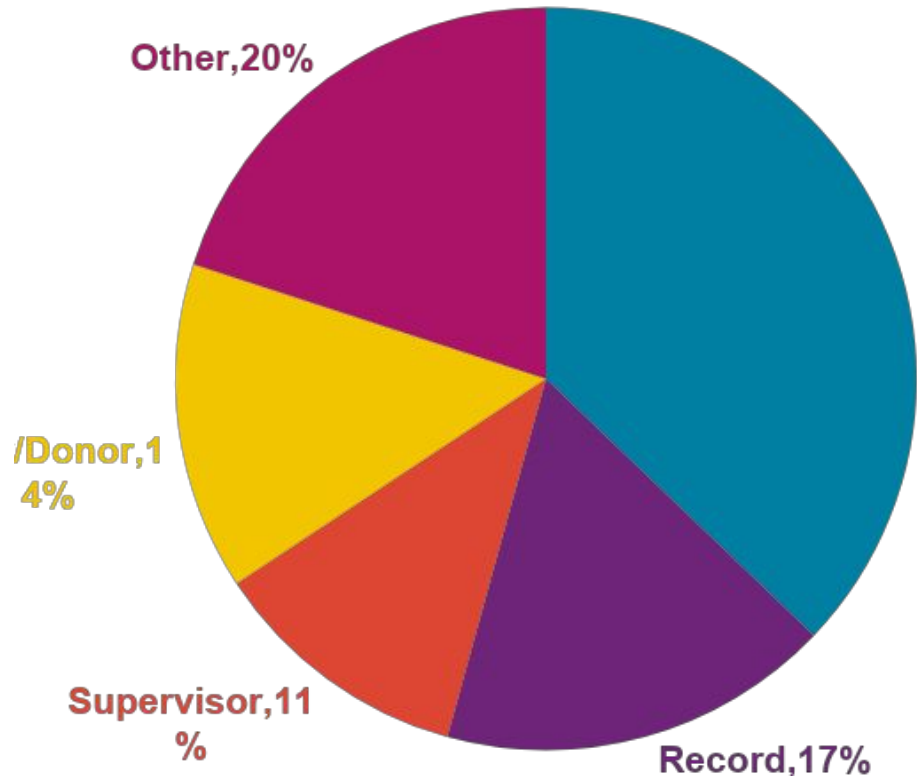




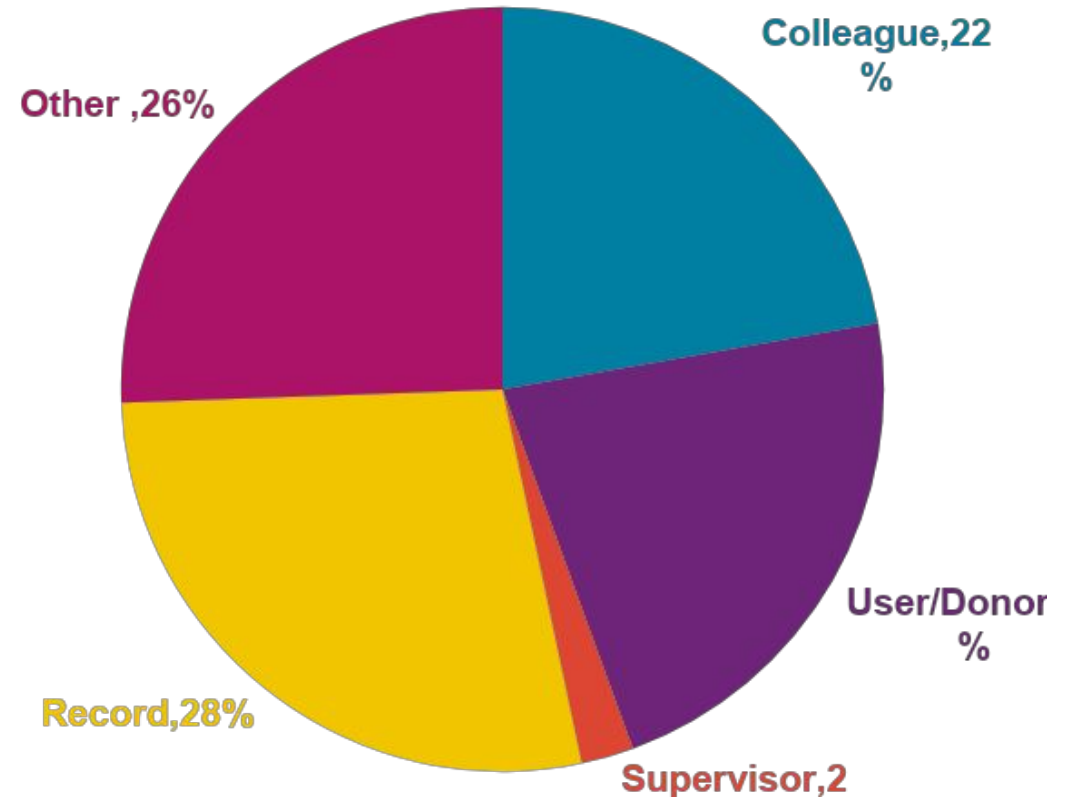
# Interaction Associated With Emotions

## Anger and Happiness

Interactions Associated with "Some" or "A Lot" of Anger or Irritation



Interactions Associated with "Some" or "A Lot" of Happiness or Enthusiasm



# Factors Influencing Emotional Response In Archival work

Regehr et al, 2023; adapted from Ashkanasy, 2003



# Conclusions

- Beyond trauma:
  - Highlights concerns about workplace dynamics that can impact people dealing with trauma
- Micro-events:
  - Importance of small interactions
- Relations with others:
  - Many negative emotions related to interacting with colleagues, supervisors and workplace policies
- Motivating factors:
  - For many archivists, archival work bring joy and happiness

# Resources

## Report on this research

Open access - Regehr, C., Duff, W., Ho, J. et al. Emotional responses in archival work. *Arch Science* (2023).

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10502-023-09419-5>

## Project's website

Emotional Responses to Archival Records

<https://www.redaerar.ischool.utoronto.ca>

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# Thank you!