

Discovering emotional labour

Psychology



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Discovering Emotional Labour Emotional work is the control of a person's feeling in order to display the appropriate emotions to others in different situations (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 7). In other words, a person has to put aside his or her own feelings and shows the right emotions in the right place at the right time. This concept can be applied to many aspects of our daily life and when used in terms of it being sold for a wage, Hochschild (1983) define it as emotional labour. By focusing on the service industries, this essay will discuss Hochschild's account of emotional labour and look into certain areas of concern caused by it. Although the practice of emotional work can be link all the way back to the ancient time, the term emotional labour is considered to be relatively new and is first discussed in Arlie Hochschild's (1983) book, " The Managed Heart". With the rise of the post-industrial work, there had been a significant increase of the service sector during the late 1900s (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 9). In fact, one now interacts with other individuals rather than working with a machine (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 9). Thus, this gives rise to the importance of interpersonal skills and the use of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 9). Whenever a person changes his or her emotions, tone, body language, etc. to conform to an ideal, it is considered as emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 7). It is practiced widely in many forms of modern work. A flight attendance smiling warmly while serving each and every passengers, a café barista showing enthusiasm when making coffee, and a nurse showing care and concern when helping a patient. All of the above are examples of emotional labour. With it being a major part of our behavior today, it is vital that we look more deeply to understand how emotional labour works. Hochschild discussed two types of emotional acting: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting is <https://assignbuster.com/discovering-emotional-labour/>

the act of putting on or showing an emotion without truly feeling that emotion inside oneself (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 35). This means that one has to suppress his or her negative emotions, such as sadness, anger, boredom, etc., and display positive emotions, such as happiness, care, excitement, etc. There have been concerns being brought up regarding the use of surface acting, as it can lead to serious side effects such as depression. On the other hand, deep acting is the act of putting on an emotion that one truly feels inside (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 35). This is done either by showing the emotion that we really feel or by true method acting. True method acting works by thinking of our past experiences we try to encourage the real emotion that we may not have felt otherwise (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 38). In terms of emotional labour, we are often referring to true method acting which is very much similar to surface acting, one lacks the freedom to genuinely display his or herself during work. “ Now girls, I want you to go out there and really smile. Your smile is your biggest asset. I want you to go out there and use it. Smile. Really smile. Really lay it on (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 4). ” A pilot tells the above to the trainees of Delta Airline Stewardess Training Center. This clearly shows how much the airline focuses on the value of a personal smile to reflect its company’s identity rather than its flight safety or the punctuality of its flight departures and arrivals (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 4). Another good example would be the baristas working in the world largest café chains, Starbucks Coffee being remained consistently by their managers to provide customers with the “ Starbucks Experience”. Baristas are told to put up a cheerful and enthusiastic front, connect with the customers and to develop the say “ yes” attitude. In fact, beside Starbucks, many other food and beverage businesses today have already move on to focus on their customer

<https://assignbuster.com/discovering-emotional-labour/>

service rather than focusing solely on the quality and taste of their products. There has been much discussion of emotional labour being "Taylorized". Hochschild (1983) compared the labour of a factory worker and a flight attendant. She mentioned that a factory worker is simply doing physical work while a flight attendant has to do physical and mental labour, as well as also emotional work (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 6). Quite similar to Frederick Taylor's standardization of the physical movements of industrial workers in the early 1900s, scientific management is now used to the mass production of emotional movements (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 33). For example, Disney provides prescriptions to their trainees to always make eye contact and smile, greet and welcome each and every guest, say "thank you" to each and every guest, etc. (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 32). The Disney look also extends to body appearances, such as hair length and style, make up, body fragrance, nails length and colour (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 32). Besides Disney, a huge number of companies are also transforming emotional labour on a grand scale (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 33). This is because of the economical benefit of doing so (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 33). If employees are able to give the customers a good experience, make them feel welcome and special, then the customers may repeat their visit and purchase (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 33). This greatly concept greatly encourages firms to exploit the use of emotional labour (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 33). The smile of a salesman is seen as a key feature of a "good" employee attitude and customer satisfaction (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 33). "The infectious smile is regarded as sources of competitive advantage. (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 33). "As time goes by and till today, we all expect service to be smiling (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 33). Many see emotional labour as a potentially good as no customer will want his or her mood to be

<https://assignbuster.com/discovering-emotional-labour/>

spoiled by a surly waitress or a crabby banker (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 9). Today, it is common to have the thinking that we pay for good service and expect it to be provided (Hochschild, 1983: Pg. 9). However, there are several areas of concern caused by emotional labour. Disney or Macdonald in the process of creating standards of their Dreamland Experience or the Big Mac, at the same time also produce emotion in their employees (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 34). The employees have to perform interpersonal work within them to create the ever-present smile, politeness when under pressure and suppression of annoyances and fatigue (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 35). For those that uses deep acting to perform their work started to feel that they are beginning to lose their own identity (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 35). Fineman (2003) mentions that the flight attendances were so into their work role that they began confuse of their identity, especially their sexuality. Others prefer to take on the job by surface acting, putting up the show, looking right and no more (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 35). Using surface acting can still cause one to breakdown under pressure, when their anger, irritation or rebellion breakthrough (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 35). Beside psychological issue, there are also cultural issues of concern over emotional labour. Many fast-food workers are immigrants who have little to smile about when they arrive at work (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 36). A majority of them have many problems and faces much worry inside them but they are still expected to put up the smile (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 36). Another cultural issue is that not all social-cultural background support smiling in commercial exchange. However, by standardizing even the emotional aspect, MacDonald expect all their staff in all countries and cultural background to smile at their customers (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 36). For example, in Japan native Japanese businessmen were

<https://assignbuster.com/discovering-emotional-labour/>

taught to smile to help them with international deals (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 42). However, this is a huge conflict with the traditional Japanese way, where instant smile is considered as a cultural insult (Fineman, 2003: Pg. 42). In conclusion, due to the emerging service sector work in the late 1900s and the transformation of emotional labour on grand scale through standardization and training, we all expect service to be smiling today. No doubt, it is consider as potentially good, no one will like their mood to be affect by the others. However, there are also areas of concern over the psychological and cultural issues that arise from the use of emotional labour. Therefore, it is important for us to reconsider and perhaps not overly exploit the use of emotional labour for own good. (Word Count: 1388) Bibliography

Fineman, S. (2003). *Understanding Emotion at Work*. London: Sage Publications. pg. 31-45

Hochschild, A. (1983). *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. London: University of California Press. pg. 1-55