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Work at leisure and leisure at work: A study of the emotional labour of tour reps

Yvonne Guerrier and Amel Adib

ABSTRACT

This article explores the work of one particular type of leisure worker: the overseas tour rep. Drawing on theoretical debates, it analyses qualitative observation and interview data collected from tour reps working in Mallorca, Spain for a British budget tour operator. We explore the paradoxes of delivering emotional labour in a job where the boundaries between work and leisure are blurred, and which is both explicitly about delivering fun and also about the 'dirty work' of managing holidaymakers' complaints and excesses. We argue that reps actively seek spaces where they are able to buy into a lifestyle that they see as reflecting their authentic selves. This enables them to accept the negative part of their work and they become disciplined workers.

KEYWORDS

emotional labour ■ leisure and tourism work ■ resistance ■ service work ■ work and leisure

The dichotomy between work and leisure is a product of industrial capitalism. In an industrialized society, there are specialized spaces and times in which we work and other spaces and times put by for leisure. Leisure is associated with constructs such as freedom, release, fun and choice; work with constructs such as compulsion, routine and restriction. Of course, the relationship between leisure and work is never purely one of opposition: the

two have always been entangled. Leisure theory has demonstrated how people need to work at leisure (Laurier, 1999). Similarly, the study of work shows how people can find many ways to incorporate fun and leisure activities into their working time, for example, by incorporating long lunch breaks into their working time or by using the work phone for private calls (du Gay, 1996).

This article focuses on those people who work in the leisure industry; many of these in front-line customer service roles. These front-line workers work with people at leisure, engaged in the business of having fun. But does that mean that some of the fun rubs off, that they become fun jobs? Certainly, employees have to look as if they are having fun. Bryman (1999: 43) argues that the front-line worker in the leisure industry has to work in a way which:

... convey(s) a sense that the employee is not engaged in work, so that the consumer is not reminded of the world of work and can get on with the happy task of buying, eating, gambling and so on.

Hochschild (1983) argues that when employees are required to manage their emotions in return for a wage, they become alienated from their authentic selves. They are pressurized by managers to feel happy rather than just look happy, as this seems more authentic to customers (Bulan et al., 1997). The employee then experiences 'a personal struggle between pressures from, often powerful, others to display certain emotions and his/her feelings of being "inauthentic"; not honestly displaying or knowing what is "really felt" ' (Sturdy & Fineman, 2001: 142). Within this analysis, the smiling faces of the leisure workers mask the psychologically damaging nature of their work.

Leisure activities increasingly take place within controlled, sanitized and 'inauthentic' environments: for example, the shopping mall, the themed restaurant, the theme park, the resort hotel (Bryman, 1999; Ritzer & Stillman, 2001). Customer service staff in such environments are part of the theming. They are required to deliver not just 'emotional' labour but also what Nickson et al. (2001) term 'aesthetic' labour. They must look appropriate (in terms of, not just, dress but age and physical attractiveness) so that they blend into the branding and present the 'correct' company image.

Such a negative analysis of customer service work in the leisure sector may be a useful starting point but is somewhat overstated (Fineman, 1993; Korczynski, 2002). First, Hochschild's analysis ignores the subjective experience of the employees themselves, who often say they enjoy 'performing' to customers (Fineman, 1993; Korczynski, 2002; Wouters, 1989). Second, any debate about 'inauthentic' behaviour assumes that there is a 'true' self that the person is being inauthentic from. The implication is that at leisure, we

can become truly ourselves where we cannot, to the extent that we are paid for our emotional labour, at work. An alternative analysis is that the self is much more fragmented and illusory than this implies and that any notion of an 'authentic self' is (merely) a part of late modern, Western, social discourses (Fineman, 2000). Within contemporary society, people are encouraged to 'know themselves', 'be themselves' and 'be true to themselves' especially through their leisure activities and they seem preoccupied 'both with the authenticity of their own identity and with the recognition of this authenticity by others' (Gabriel & Lang, 1995: 93). To the extent that, drawing on Bauman (2000), work has become construed as just another type of 'leisure' activity, we seek a coherent ('authentic') identity across both our non-work and work lives. Feeling that we are required to behave inauthentically at work hurts, but with all the 'working on ourselves' we do, we may also be better at managing both work demands and our own feelings (Fineman, 2000).

Finally, Hochschild's analysis understates the ways in which customer service employees can find spaces and times to resist the commodification of their emotions and to gain pleasures from working 'authentically' with their 'customers'. Korczynski (2002) uses the concept of the social embeddedness of economic interactions, drawn from Granovetter (1985), to argue that the pleasures of customer service work come from those interactions that are seen as person-to-person rather than employee-customer. Several studies of work in the leisure sector illustrate situations in bars, clubs and informal restaurants, where staff hardly seem to distinguish between their work and their leisure; their customers are their friends, their workplace the place where they would 'hang out' for leisure anyway and their work demands no more than that they are fun-loving and sociable selves (Adler & Adler, 1999; Crang, 1994). To the extent that, as Nickson et al. (2001) argue in their discussion of aesthetic labour, companies increasingly try to match the profile of their customer service staff to their customer profile in terms of age, appearance and interests, the possibility for such socially embedded exchanges would seem to increase.

However, large organizations within the leisure sector are customer-oriented bureaucracies in which customer service workers are required to work under the dual and contradictory pressures of delivering exemplary customer service and also processing customers as efficiently and quickly as possible (Korczynski, 2001, 2002; Korczynski et al., 2000). For managers, the solution to these contradictory pressures often seems to be to standardize and to control, through imposing 'feeling rules' in sophisticated training programmes, to the 'scripting' of encounters and the close monitoring and supervision of behaviour (Hochschild, 1983; Korczynski, 2001; Leidner,

1993; Sturdy & Fineman, 2001). Tightly circumscribing employees' behaviour arguably makes it harder for them to engage in the type of socially embedded exchanges that provide the pleasures of customer service work and thus increases the harmful effects of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983; Korczynski, 2002; Sosteric, 1996).

There have been many studies of the emotional labour of front-line service staff within the leisure industry but none of overseas tour reps. Reps' work is popularly regarded as glamorous, the stuff of TV drama–documentaries. It takes place in what is clearly a leisure space (a mass-market holiday resort) and it provides opportunities to participate in leisure activities, partying, drinking, hanging around resort hotels, as an integral part of the work itself. However, the boundaries between work and leisure are blurred, whilst leisure activities are incorporated into work, work, as we will show, spills over into leisure time. The work tasks of the tour rep may be varied, but the rep will have failed if he or she does not seem to be having fun and helping the holidaymaker have fun. Studies of emotional labour in the leisure sector have largely focused on jobs with clearly designated tasks, relatively transitory interactions with guests and a clear divide between work and leisure (such as the work on airline cabin crew by Hochschild, 1983, Murphy, 1997 and Tyler & Taylor, 2001). Perhaps the nearest comparison to the tour reps is Tracy's (2000) study of staff on a cruise liner. This study gives an insight into a different type of customer service worker, one who is still part of the 'emotional proletariat' (MacDonald & Sirianni, 1996) but perhaps one of the elite within this category.

This article aims to explore the paradoxes of delivering emotional labour in a work setting that is so explicitly about delivering fun. Do employees manage to carve out spaces and times for themselves where work genuinely seems to be like leisure? Does the relative lack of supervision and monitoring of their behaviour help them to resist the commodification of their emotions and the most harmful effects of delivering emotional labour?

Methods

This article is based on qualitative data and analysis on the nature of the work of tour reps. Access was agreed with a small British budget tour operator offering package holidays for families and couples, with a small share of the youth market. Data were collected during a seven-day trip to two main family resorts in Mallorca in October 2000. The main data collection method used was semi-structured one-to-one interviews with 15 tour reps. These were conducted by one researcher, and lasted between one and

three hours. Interviews were carried out at the rep's convenience, mostly after a shift or 'welcome meeting'. Most were held in the researcher's hotel room or in a quiet area in a hotel lobby. The interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed. All the reps who participated did so voluntarily; the researcher had previously invited them by letter and they were later informed by their supervisors of the researcher's visit. Managers were not involved in arranging interviews or meetings with reps. Anonymity was maintained using pseudonyms and the information has been kept confidential. In addition to the interviews, formal and informal discussions were undertaken with three managers, non-participant observation of the reps' work was undertaken at the desk in hotel lobbies and the researcher accompanied reps on some excursions and airport duties.

This was a relatively short period of immersion with a relatively small number of reps, which places some potential limitations on the study. As the research took place at the end of the season many reps had already gone home and it may be that those who remained were those who were most committed to this work. Managers spoke of a high turnover rate with a number of reps leaving their jobs early (but did not provide figures). Nevertheless, almost all the reps who were working for this company in these resorts at that time were interviewed. The research therefore represents a case study of this particular set of reps. Reps working in other locations, in other segments of the holiday market, or those who did not finish the season may experience and construct their work in different ways.

We took a grounded theory approach to the analysis of the data, rather than applying a coding system to the data that might enable the testing of a specific theory. We examined the narratives collected from reps during the interviews, alongside observation and informal discussions, to pull out significant issues. A dialogue developed in the process of analysis in which themes were identified in relation to relevant literature in order to draw out sociological meanings.

The work of overseas tour reps

Here we provide an overview of the role of this group of overseas reps. We then look specifically at the relationships the reps attempt to build with the holidaymakers, asking whether reps feel they are able to enact their authentic emotions with the holidaymakers. The third of our data analysis sections focuses on the 'dirty work' that reps must undertake when guests need to be contained or controlled rather than entertained. This part of the reps' work places most strain on their relationship with the guests. In the final data

section, we examine the place of party nights in the reps' work and argue that they can be seen as one of the ways in which the reps try to influence their relationship with the guests and build pleasurable activities into their work.

Overseas tour reps represent the tour operator for the holidaymakers whilst they are on holiday at the resort. In this case, the tour reps were young, white, British and predominantly female working with British holidaymakers on budget family all-inclusive holidays in Mallorca. The reps lived in Mallorca for the season.

The reps' role is highly varied, involving different types of interaction with the tourists. Part of the time, tour reps carry out tasks that are similar to those of customer service staff, such as airport check-in staff or hotel receptionists. They organize and administer airport transfers. They sell products (trips). They spend much of their day behind a customer service desk in the hotel offering advice and dealing with problems or complaints.

However, the reps also have a role as a 'broker' mediating between the foreign country and the holidaymakers (Cheong & Miller, 2000). Although this is not a 'themed' experience as such, holidaymakers on this type of package receive, and want, a highly mediated experience of Mallorca. They stay in hotels that are enclave resorts and which, within the all-inclusive product, provide food, drink and entertainment for no extra cost. One of the reps' roles is to provide information, for example, in the 'welcome meeting' about where to eat and drink. Holidaymakers are encouraged to move outside in organized groups or 'mobile enclaves' under the 'inspecting gaze' of the tour reps by participating in guided excursions (Adib & Guerrier, 2001; Cheong & Miller, 2000; Edensor, 2000).

Part of the reps' work involves the enactment of leisure. For example, they may have lunch in the hotel restaurant. One function of this is to be seen by the holidaymakers and to signal their appreciation of the hotel food. Tour reps may engage in party nights with guests. Here the work/leisure relationship is even more ambiguous. In order to enhance the enjoyment of the guests, the reps need to at least appear to be enjoying themselves, drinking and participating in games. This is an extreme example of Bryman's (1999) comment about the worker working in such a way as not to remind the customer of the world of work.

The ambiguity of the work/leisure relationship in this role stems, in part, from the ambiguity of the space and time in which they work. Although the reps do have a back office space, most of their work takes place in the consumption space of the holidaymakers. Except when they are behind the customer service desk, there is no spatial marker that designates them as employees and the others as guests. Their uniform is the main marker that

signifies that they are at work. Reps also work long and irregular hours; airport transfers, for example, often happen at night or early in the morning. That they may spend what leisure time they have consuming in the same places they have recommended to their guests increases the ambiguity of the work/leisure relationship. As with the cruise directors studied by Tracy (2000) who were only really 'off-stage' when they were in their cabins or the cruise staff office, the reps were 'front-stage' even when hanging out, out of uniform, in the resort. Stuart, one of the few male reps, explains:

- Stuart: Sometimes when you're out in the resort, they come up and say 'd'you want a drink?' and you say 'fair enough' . . .
- Interviewer: . . . But you don't resent the fact that you are on your time off and presumably you are not in uniform?
- Stuart: No, not at all, it's, it's part of the job really. You're in the resort you are still, you're still like the face of the company so, no, if they come up to me, I'm fine talking to them.

Tour reps are the representatives of tour operators in the resort. In the absence of hardware in the physical environment conveying the corporate image (the tour operator does not own or run the hotel or resort), it is the reps who must embody 'the desired iconography of the company' (Nickson et al., 2001: 27) – literally be the 'face of the company' in Stuart's words. Certainly the reps seemed to see themselves as 'aesthetic labourers' and felt that physical attractiveness was one requirement for the job. Joey, another rep, explains:

I suppose in a sense I'm not saying that they employ attractive people, cos none of us are Claudia Schiffer, but I mean there are some very pretty reps, there are some very good-looking reps. I have never yet seen a butt-ugly rep.

Given the importance of this role to the tour operator, it is interesting that the reps were given considerable autonomy. Reps were responsible for scripting their own commentary on the coach from the airport and were only given general guidelines as to what to include in the 'welcome meeting'. Supervision at the resort was limited, with only very occasional visits from their immediate manager. There appeared to be no managerial surveillance of the interactions between customers and workers. Training was provided: a week in the UK and another week in the resort of which the majority was a product

orientation. A significant number of reps joined mid-season and missed out on the training provided.

In most cases the reps did not consider repping as a career but rather as seasonal temporary employment and a way of living abroad. Repping was seen as a way of extending the pleasures of being on holiday into work. Anna's description of what attracted her to the work is typical:

Well basically every year when I came on holiday, I never wanted to go home and I've always thought 'Oh, I'd love to do that job'.

The reps received free accommodation and were able to eat for free in the hotels. They were paid a monthly gross basic salary of around £450 and also earned commission from the sale of excursions (5% of everything they sold). These sales were made mainly during welcome meetings, but reps were also encouraged to chase up customers, by approaching them at the pool-side or knocking on their doors to get a sale. The reps chose to share the commission among the team unless they worked alone (most did not). Targets for the sale of excursions were set by management on a weekly basis according to the number of arrivals and the time of year and adjusted to each rep or group of reps according to their past sales record. The degree of pressure put on reps who did not meet targets was unclear, and no specific punishment, other than a 'telling off' by their managers, was mentioned. Some reps were praised as good sellers, whereas those who consistently failed to reach their targets were given additional training by managers and encouraged to observe and learn from the better sellers. In high season a few of the reps managed to live on their commission, but most spent all their commission and basic salary on 'going out'.

Working with the holidaymakers

One of the cruise staff members in Tracy's (2000) study commented 'our job is our personality.' This is a comment that the tour reps in this study would also have recognized. The following quote from Sheila illustrates the emphasis placed within the reps' narratives on being 'a fun person':

Sheila: . . . You have got to be good fun, you know you have got to look happy as a rep, cos I've seen miserable reps and no they are not going to be very impressed are they? . . .

Interviewer: Do you find it tiring to have to be happy all the time?

Sheila: No, no I'm quite a happy person I think, and I'm as

interested in people as they are in me really. I try not to talk about myself too much with them cos you know they don't want to hear me talk about myself, I ask them a lot about them, where they come from, how long they are here for, you know, what do they do back home? and um, they love it, they think 'great yeah!'

Sheila is keen to emphasize that her work persona is no more than an extension of her 'authentic' personality: she is 'quite a happy person'. The reps were recruited through a process that emphasized 'personality'. A senior manager in conversation with the researcher listed the preferred characteristics of reps as 'enthusiastic, good sense of humour, good personality, lively, positive, committed and good communication skills'. The selection process included asking the prospective reps to complete an autobiography and do a one-minute performance (one rep recalled dancing to 'Living la vida loca').

However, Sheila's comments indicate that, to some extent, she is manufacturing a 'personality' for the benefit of the holidaymakers (du Gay, 2001; Sturdy, 2001), for example, by trying not to talk too much about herself. As has been noted in other studies (Hochschild, 1983; Tracy, 2000) holidaymakers both provide important messages about how reps should behave ('they will not be very impressed by miserable reps') and are also a source of satisfaction when reps have succeeded in making them happy. James explains:

I get a buzz out of the fact that people rely on me and I've got that responsibility so that when we go out, . . . when you take people to an excursion or a night time entertainment thing, . . . people rely on the fact that they want to have a good time and you're there to make them have a good time. I like that.

Although the reps themselves emphasize the part of their work that is about 'fun' and entertaining the guests, the reality of their work is that much of their day is spent dealing with customer complaints and problems. Whilst pleasant interactions may be constructed as socially embedded relationships (that is, the holidaymakers like me as a person), one way of coping with the painful interactions is to attempt to reconstruct them as merely economic exchanges, as a part of the work. For example, Joey describes how she has learned to deal with abusive customers by the end of the season:

You're more in control of your emotions now. It still hurts just as much, it still feels like a personal attack. You develop a kind of immunity. You

learn to put it into perspective. When you first do it, it's like every single complaint, you take it personal, because it's you. But then, after a while you realize that it's not necessarily you that they're swearing at, it's that badge. . . . Sometimes they do swear at you and it's you they're getting at, in which case we're allowed to say, basically, 'You can't talk to me like that'. Whatever. You put them in their place in the nicest possible way without confrontation, without aggravation.

Other reps confirmed that they felt empowered to 'answer back' to holiday-makers who had stepped out of line and had become more confident in doing this as the season progressed. Nevertheless, it is interesting that Joey describes this as being 'allowed to' answer back recognizing that this is a concession within a customer-focused service culture.

Another rep, Jane, speaks of the way in which she attempts to encourage the holidaymakers to reconstruct their relationship as a socially embedded one rather than a purely economic one when dealing with their complaints:

You can't let them . . . I mean people have pointed at me and I've had to say to them, 'Look, you know, I'm not . . ., I'm a person, I'm a human being, I'm not someone you can, you know, do what you like to, you know, we do have feelings as well'.

The 'tactic' of becoming 'friends' with guests is also helpful when their behaviour needs to be constrained or controlled. James explained his tactics for dealing with groups of young holidaymakers, especially young men:

If you are working with young people, they don't complain about the room and stuff like that, but you've got the hotel complaining about them . . ., Like when you work with young people, you never sit at the desk. You just go round all the time – pool, sometimes in the pool, in their rooms. You're more like their friends . . . I always get to know my guests very well, as friends, and then when you're telling them off, you just have to shout at them, tell them off. They do actually listen to you, which is surprising.

However, James is clear in his narrative that he regards this 'befriending' as part of his 'act'. He speaks elsewhere of pretending to get drunk on bar-crawls so that he is still able to look after guests who are drunk, of acting offended when guests have betrayed his friendship and broken up the hotel, of having to get on with a group of lads that he thinks 'is a group of dickheads.'

The dirty work of dealing with holidaymakers

The range of situations that reps can be called upon to deal with is extreme. During one season with this tour operator, reps had dealt with a drowning, the death of a guest suffering from cancer, informing a group of guests of a fatal car accident of family members in the UK, a fatal moped accident of a guest and meningitis scares. In addition, reps commonly dealt with alcohol-induced situations involving domestic violence, aggressive or anti-social behaviour and guests passing out. The researcher, whilst collecting data in one resort, observed two incidents in seven days in which reps had to counsel the victim of a partner's violent outburst. Alan recounted one of the most extreme examples that reps had been required to deal with:

. . . when the maid went into the room, the two kids – one was in a cot, one was running loose and the parents were comatose on the bed, right. There was blood and vomit and excrement all over . . . The reps had to get children's reps to come in and get the kids because they thought these people were dead. . . . They got medical attention virtually straight away and it transpired that they were relapsed alcoholics. So they'd obviously got drunk and beaten each other up. Whatever. It was just awful. So the kids were taken away by the children's representatives and they were cleaned up and clothed and all that sort of stuff and obviously the parents were taken to hospital and the grandparents were called and social services were involved and everything. My friends (reps), they had to go in and clean the room up, because the hotel wouldn't clean the room up.

This incident happened in a 'back region' (Goffman, 1959) slightly away from the main areas of performance where other guests might see the drama being played out. The reps became responsible for the 'dirty work' (Hughes, 1962) of cleaning up and sorting out the mess. (It is interesting that the hotel abrogated its responsibility for cleaning the room.) Within the tour reps' role, 'dirty work' is a hidden part of a job; reps' work is not generally construed and stigmatized as a 'dirty job' (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Nevertheless, there is an unspoken assumption, from the holidaymakers as well, that the reps will take care of the guests whatever the circumstances. Even the partying and fun activities which were the obvious part of the reps' role were frequently followed by the 'dirty work' of clearing up which would be left to the rep. Kate, who worked mainly in the youth resort of Magaluff, explained:

Generally on a bar crawl you find there at least two people who are going to pass out. Just totally, totally pissed out their head. . . . So dealing with them is quite hard sometimes because it depends on what sort of person it is. You'll find sometimes that you get some of their friends to help them, but they're just like, just leave them. Get the rep to help them. Well, thanks a lot, do you know what I mean?

These are not situations that are dealt with in the reps' training. Peggy, who had previously worked as a prison officer, provided a very different account of the average day for a rep from the partying and having fun image:

As a prison officer you went in and you didn't know whether you were going to be faced with a violent situation or with a death or with mental problems. You get all of that on holiday as well. . . . Almost every single day, you're a counsellor. People cry. People get hysterical. People get angry so, yeah, I've done a lot of anger management training and how to calm people down, how to negotiate with people and that helps a lot in this job.

The reps' role then involves two contradictory but closely intertwined facets. On the one hand, the public face of the reps' role is to help holidaymakers with the serious duty to have fun. On the other hand, because having fun within this context means excess and transgression, there are inevitably consequences; from the emotional pressure for holidays to be perfect, from the heightened emotions associated with too much alcohol, from the changes in relationships arising from the holiday environment. The hidden facet of role of the 'rep' is about containing, controlling and clearing up after all this fun. This second facet is an inevitable consequence of the first: as the reps encourage the guests to let their hair down and have fun so they are helping to create the problems that they will have to clear up. Encouraging the guests to think of them as friends both helps the reps enjoy the pleasures of leisure at work and also makes it easier for them to limit the damage from and clear up after the excess of pleasure, by making the guests easier to control. These processes can be seen at work in the following example about party nights.

Party nights

Initiated by one rep in particular, Stuart, Sunday party nights involved an invitation to all guests to spend an evening with a group of reps drinking and playing games in a pub in one of the resorts. The reps were not paid for

this event, either by their employer or by the pub owner. It was arranged without any managerial involvement. All the reps in this and the surrounding resorts joined in the party nights, taking turns every other week to participate. Their main duties involved inviting guests, escorting them to the pub, supervising and entertaining any children there, participating in games including drinking games, often being appointed team leader of the men's or the women's teams. They wore their casual uniforms, i.e. shorts and t-shirts rather than the suits, on party nights. None of the reps resented this time out of their leisure time, and all said that they really enjoyed the experience.

Stuart describes a party night as follows:

I join in all the games and go 'come on come on!' and like we have to do things like the positions games which is like different sexual positions and we joined in that one last week and we won and we went absolutely mental! and all the guests were going mental with us, it was really, really good. We really enjoyed doing it. I think it's brilliant. I well enjoy doing party night.

Managers were never present at any party night but had merely given the green light for the parties to go ahead. This raises the question about whether party nights represent work or play for reps. Jane discusses this as follows:

Jane: . . . we all enjoy it, you've got to enjoy these things or else it wouldn't work, you've got to be enthusiastic cos you've got to get the guests enthusiastic as well you know. That's a good start and then you tend to go and chat to the guests and you relax with people cos you're not working, you are working, but you are out of the hotel and they tend to be quite relaxed with you as well.

Interviewer: You are in your uniforms?

Jane: Yeah cos we are still, we are still working so . . .

Interviewer: You are still working but you are not being paid?

Jane: Um, well we don't get paid for extra work you know it's not, it's just part of our job really, we don't get paid for set hours and set things, it's just the whole lot really.

The reps have chosen to give up their free leisure time and seem to prefer to engage in this ambiguous mix of leisure consumption and work. At party nights, the reps are able to 'host' a party not just participate in a party as they would if they went out to the same bars and clubs as purely consumers. Hosts are traditionally assigned status and honour by guests

(Selwyn, 2000) and it may be that the reps valued being the centre of attention. However, as Selwyn also argues, the crucial traditional point of 'hosting' is 'of forming or consolidating relationships with strangers' (2000: 34) and party nights seem to be used to improve and cement relationships with the guests. Georgie explains:

I find the guests are a lot nicer after we've done party nights, whichever rep that has gone they are nicer to everyone cos they find out then that the reps are human and they are not just robots in a uniform.

The pleasures of the leisure activities initiated at party nights are not devoid of economic aspects of the work relationship, however. The social interaction between reps and guests is seen by the reps to be of economic benefit to the company. Although the reps enjoy the party nights, they still describe them in managerial terms as the following comments by Stuart, the rep who initiated the activity, shows:

- Stuart: You're doing PR-ing, you're sort of working you're joining in with the guests, showing that you can have a good laugh.
- Interviewer: What do you mean PR-ing?
- Stuart: Well sort of chatting to 'em, when you have a chat with 'em and they sort of have a laugh . . . You are sort of showing Ocean Holidays in a good light, going out and joining in with the guests, showing that maybe say, we are not boring reps we don't sit there and do nothing, we are quite lively and if you go on an Ocean Holidays holiday again you will probably find that your reps are just as lively, something like that really. That's the way I look at it. If you've got a rep that's lively jumping around joining in the games and you've got a rep that's sitting in a chair looking bored then you are going to think 'oh which one?' so. Because we are joining in, we are PR-ing the company really.

This representation of the reps as 'real' people who are 'authentically' lively and fun-loving can be seen to fulfil a number of functions. For the rep, it confirms their own image of themselves as lively and fun-loving people (both in and out of work). It also helps socially to embed their relationship with the holidaymaker making the holidaymakers less likely to exploit their privileged identity as sovereign customers but rather engage with the rep

friend-to-friend (thus making them easier to manage). Finally, as good aesthetic labourers, if the reps are seen as lively, fun-loving people this will enhance the company's brand as a provider of lively, fun-loving holidays. For the employer, this is an ideal scenario. However, it should not be forgotten that party nights are an incursion into the all too limited free-time of the reps. The following comment by Georgie explores this:

In a way it's a night out that you are not paying anything for. I mean at the start of the season if someone had said it to me I probably would have said 'oh my god, do I really have to?' cos of all the hours you are working and everything, but towards the middle of the season you just think 'well forget it, it's part of the job anyway'. You do know that at the back of your head and you don't mind doing it.

By the end of the season Georgie has become resigned to working for free in her free time and without direct management intervention to encourage this. Party nights, Georgie insists, are 'one of the good points of the job'.

Conclusions

Joey: I love the job. I hate it sometimes. I really hate it with a passion. But when I get asked by guests, do I enjoy my job . . . the answer is 99% of the time I do.

Interviewer: What makes it enjoyable despite all the things?

Joey: The lifestyle.

There is no doubt that the work of tour reps involves emotional labour. The range of emotions that reps need to display is immense. They need to be happy and lively at party nights, a sympathetic ear to guests with problems, an angry parent figure with guests who misbehave. They need to manage their anger and distress in response to abusive guests and manage their disgust when they have to deal with the 'dirty' work of clearing up after guests. The general picture from both the interviews and the observations in this case is that the tour reps were disciplined workers; they generally behaved towards guests in ways which were in the best interests of their employing organization. However, the tour operator used few of the tactics often associated with the imposition and control of emotional display rules: there was little direct supervision and monitoring, little attempt to script encounters and cursory training. Tour reps are relatively poorly paid, are not generally interested in long-term careers with the company and have to put

up, as we have shown, with a considerable amount of abuse and stress at work. Their compliance and consent at work, in these circumstances, is somewhat puzzling.

One explanation for the reps' compliance lies precisely in this lack of direct control. The autonomy and discretion that the reps have does seem to allow them to avoid some of the negative consequences of emotional labour as described by Hochschild (1983) and others (Aiken & Sloane, 1997; Wharton, 1993). They feel empowered to answer back to abusive guests (at least to a limited extent). They can find ways of increasing those parts of the work that they like (for example, by introducing party nights). They have the time and space to develop 'friendships' with guests which make it easier to manage them. They can make use of their fellow reps to develop tactics and strategies for managing difficult situations. All the reps emphasized how close the relationships between the team were and how much they relied on each other for support. As well as supporting each other, it is likely that the reps are also mutually controlling each other. Barker (1993), writing about concertive control in self-managing groups, shows how control systems created by a group of workers, and based on their values and identification with their work, operate in a more subtle but also more pervasive way than control by a supervisor telling a group of workers what to do.

However, this is not a total explanation. We need to return to the issue of authenticity in the enactment of emotions. Ashforth and Tomiuk (2000) suggest that it is not so much emotional labour that affects customer service staff but emotional dissonance (i.e. behaving 'inauthentically') and further speculate that one can distinguish between surface authenticity and deep authenticity. Deep authenticity, they argue, 'occurs when one's emotional expression or display is consistent with the display rules of a specific identity that one has internalized (or wants to internalize) as a reflection of self' (Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000: 195). When Stuart, one of reps, says about party nights 'I think it's brilliant. I well enjoy doing party night' or when Sheila says 'I'm quite a happy person' or when James says 'I get a buzz out of the fact that people rely on me,' there seems no doubt to us that they are claiming that they can 'be themselves' at work. This does not mean that they do not, in particular situations, act in a way which is dissonant with their feelings, covering up anger or distress when faced with an abusive guest or 'pretend' friendship to manage a difficult guest better, if this better helps them to control the situation. As Leidner (1993) and Korczynski (2002) argue, all customer service staff try to control customers and all customer service staff 'impression manage'. But these tactics may be described as the 'surface inauthenticities' necessary to act appropriately in a role one believes in. Thus, because most of the time the reps are able to buy into a lifestyle which they

see as reflecting their authentic selves, they are willing to find ways of managing those parts of the job that they hate because managing these is part of the lifestyle. It is part of being a rep.

The analysis here is quite close to Sosteric's (1996) analysis of staff in a Canadian nightclub who also had considerable freedom in the way in which they interacted with frequently difficult customers, but broadly identified with organizational objectives, despite difficult working conditions. Sosteric argues this is because they were able to bring their own personalities and idiosyncrasies to work; to be themselves at work. O'Doherty and Willmott (2000) criticize Sosteric for implying that the staff in his study brought a free and authentic self to the workplace that they were able to express in this work setting and for overlooking the extent to which 'employees were already disciplined at work by their own sense of identity prior to being employed at the club' (p. 120). Relating this point to the tour reps, we take a phenomenological perspective: we do not believe that there is a true authentic self 'in there' but do argue that people can feel as if they are acting more or less authentically. If the tour reps believe, as we argue, that they can broadly identify with the role of the rep, that it fits with their view of themselves and that they can, broadly, be themselves within it, then where do these beliefs come from? Taking O'Doherty and Willmott (2000) on board, we believe that it is necessary to look beyond the immediate employer. Experience as a leisure consumer helps shape and discipline the leisure worker. Tour reps become tour reps because they have learned to be good holidaymakers, this is why they were selected for the role in the first place. Through working at leisure, learning to be 'fun-loving, good time people', they are able to take on work which provides the opportunity to continue these leisure activities as an integral part of the work. Indeed, the leisure worker has the added advantage over the leisure consumer of being paid to have fun. Work, argues Bauman (2000) is now evaluated using the same criteria that we use to judge our leisure activities; it has become effectively another type of 'leisure' activity. Bauman argues elsewhere:

. . . the trick is no longer to limit work time to the bare minimum, so vacating more time for leisure, but on the contrary to efface altogether the line dividing vocation from avocation, job from hobby, work from recreation.

(1998: 34)

The tour reps, we argue, see their role in this way and the positive features of the role outweigh the negatives.

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