

“Going Above and Beyond:” The Emotional Labor of Adventure Guides

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This paper offers an ethnographic account of the emotional labor of adventure guides at Wanderlust, an outdoor adventure trip provider. Three of the guide responsibilities involved emotion work: ensuring safety, generating fun, and encouraging a sense of community. This created a demanding and prescriptive set of emotional expectations for guides, which they attempted to manage using a variety of strategies. While guides came to see their organizational role as a persona that they enacted on trail, they resisted the notion that they were acting. Overall, the examination of emotional labor of guides makes apparent the extent to which outdoor adventure resembles fantasy. However, the fantastical characteristics tend to be overshadowed by the discourse of authenticity that surrounds outdoor adventure.

KEYWORDS: *Adventure, emotion, emotional labor, adventure guides, authenticity.*

Introduction

“And that’s a canned Wanderlust trip. There’s very little of your emotion in it.”

—Scott, adventure guide

Emotions accompany us on our journey through experience, acting as expressions of and lenses through which we understand what we encounter. In contemporary Western culture, we tend to think of emotions as expressions of our private, inner selves. However, often our emotional responses are guided by broader social norms that accompany our various situational roles. These include our role as worker; indeed, many jobs carry with them a set of sanctioned emotional expectations. Work-related emotional expectations are particularly relevant in leisure, where workers are often called upon to facilitate a particular state of mind in those who desire a leisure experience. This paper investigates the role of emotion in one domain of leisure that has a particularly complex relationship with emotion: outdoor adventure. Specifically, the article offers an ethnographic account of the emotional expectations placed on adventure guides. In doing so, the paper aims to describe the emotional experience of adventure guiding, as well as contribute to a broader understanding of the socially constructed nature of adventure.

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Emotional Labor

Hochschild's (1983) seminal work on emotion drew attention to the extent to which emotions were socially embedded and constructed. According to Hochschild, a symbolic interactionist, social life is guided by feeling rules, which are normative role expectations surrounding how to feel in different contexts. Feeling rules, such as feeling sad at a funeral or happy on one's wedding day, work to regulate emotions and thus serve as a tool for social control (Montemurro, 2001). They also are used to differentiate between normal and deviant behavior. Indeed, as Thoits (1990) argued, emotional deviance—the inability to of individuals to display the appropriate emotions for the situation—is interpreted as evidence of mental illness.

Feeling rules pervade our private lives and are embedded in the roles people occupy at home and with family and friends. However, they are also found in the public domain, in our role as worker. Although the “discourse of rationality” (Sachs & Blackmore, 1998) encourages a view of the worker as a rational being, Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) contended that “emotions are an integral and inseparable part of everyday organizational life. From moments of frustration or joy, grief or fear, to an enduring sense of dissatisfaction or commitment, the experience of work is saturated with feeling” (p. 97). As with other aspects of social life, work roles are also associated with feeling rules; often these rules are formalized in training manuals or company slogans (Hochschild, 1983). Hochschild described emotional labor as “labor that requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (p. 7). Emotional labor results when workers must follow organizationally sanctioned emotions in interactions with clients or customers (Johnson, 2001). Thus, many workers are expected to engage in not only physical and/or intellectual labor, but emotional labor as well.

Although feeling rules tell us what to feel in what situations, they do not determine our emotional responses in a mechanistic way. Indeed, individuals often experience a lack of fit between their emotional response and the cultural scripts that guide them—they feel sad on their birthday or happy at a funeral, for example (Smith-Lovin, 1995). At such moments, making sense of these aberrant emotions in order to maintain some semblance of normalcy can be an individual and collective process.

For example, when the airline workers Hochschild (1983) studied experienced a misfit of emotion, they actively worked to realign their felt emotions with those prescribed by the job. Hochschild found that workers engaged in one of the following two processes: surface acting or deep acting. Surface acting, akin to Goffman's (1959) notion of impression management, involved making an effort to maintain an outward appearance of the expected emotion while keeping the “real” emotions hidden. With deep acting, individuals made an active effort to change the felt emotions into those prescribed by the job. Hochschild (1979) described,

Goffman's approach might simply be extended and deepened by showing that people not only try to conform outwardly, but do so inwardly as well. “When

they issue uniforms, they issue skins" (Goffman, 1974) could be extended: "and two inches of flesh." (p. 556)

However, engaging in such processes, particularly for the sake of one's job, are not without its costs. Emotional labor is, in effect, the commodification of feeling, whereby workers are called upon to act "not as their personal self, but as a representative of the organization" (Montemurro, 2001, p. 292). Emotions that were once private and guided by personal discretion become public and dictated by employers and monitored by supervisors (Hochschild, 1983). And, as Hochschild described in her study of flight attendants, when the smile workers display is not an indication of how they really feel, workers suffer from feelings of estrangement and alienation from self, which translates into a loss of satisfaction on the job, cynicism and withdrawal, and feelings of moral failure.

Since Hochschild's introduction, research on emotional labor has ballooned into an extensive body of literature within the sociology of work. What this research has made clear is that every job with an interactive or service component has emotional labor demands and implications. Generally, emotional labor tends to take one of two broad forms (Hochschild, 1979). Some jobs demand that workers suppress emotions, or hide an undesired feeling that was initially present. For example, funeral directors (Turner & Edgley, 1990), mental health professionals (Scheidt, Fayram, & Littlefield, 1998), addiction treatment counselors (Johnson, 2001), and police officers (Martin, 1999) are expected to maintain an aura of seriousness and solemnity, even when clients are expressing extreme emotions of grief, fear, or sadness. Other jobs require workers to generate and evoke emotions, or display emotions that were initially absent. Evocative emotion work is abundant for workers such as flight attendants (Hochschild, 1983), exotic dancers (Montemurro, 2001; Wood, 2000), and restaurant servers (Paules, 1991), all of who must display good cheer even when they are otherwise frustrated, bored, or angry. Further, great importance is attached to effective emotion management. As both Hochschild (1983) and Sachs and Blackmore (1998) found in their interviews with workers, the idea of being a "professional" was code for being able to appropriately control one's emotions.

Although research on emotional labor is extensive, the particular emotional demands of leisure-related jobs have been underaddressed. For a field where workers are often called upon to facilitate a particular state of mind in others, emotional labor in a leisure setting should be specifically examined. This study examines the emotional labor of adventure guides—those individuals who are employed to take groups of clients or customers into adventure settings and activities such as white water rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and sky diving.

Emotion and Adventure

Emotion is a fundamental aspect of the adventure experience. Arnould and Price (1993) contended that adventure is a form of *extraordinary experience*, which Abrahams (1986) described as the "Big Times of our lives" (p.

63) that are explicitly planned for and exist in a set-aside time and space. Such extraordinary experiences, Arnould and Price (1993) suggested, are heavily laden with emotion. Further, Holyfield (1997) noted that for many participants, the emotional experience is a main attraction of adventure. She suggested that people enter the adventure environment to "have their emotions stirred," seeking to feel emotions ranging from fear to excitement, "in a world that has either become increasingly rational or blasé" (p. 258). The emotional experience of adventure also has social implications. As Fine and Holyfield (1996) noted, the sharing of intense emotions is a key contributing factor of group cohesion.

The emotional nature of adventure has implications for adventure guides. As experiential service workers (Arnould & Price, 1993), guides play an important role in socializing participants into the world of adventure, including the emotional experience that accompanies the action. As such, adventure guides play an active role in the *generation* of emotions among participants (Holyfield, 1999). Arnould and Price (1993) suggested that adventure guides act as expressive role models offering participants *feeling cues* to orient them in their experience. Because feeling cues are both verbal and nonverbal—along with words, they also involve gestures, smile, and eye contact (Wood, 2000)—such socialization demands that guides give a full-body performance in their effort to cue participants to the appropriate emotional tone. As Holyfield (1999) described, "a 'good' guide engages in the appropriate emotional labor and never lets the customer know that the job can be mundane or routine. . . indeed, guides must *embody* the excitement they are selling" (p. 10). What Holyfield also hinted at in this quote is how the embodiment of emotions can be particularly challenging for guides, who, as adventure workers, are likely engaging in a routine experience.

This challenge is exacerbated by the common logistical conditions that adventure guides work within. Compared to other service encounters (i.e., retail, restaurant) that last mere minutes, the length of the service encounter between guide and participant is best measured in terms of days (Price & Arnould, 1995). Price and Arnould suggest that such an extended encounter fosters the emergence of boundary-open transactions, whereby the service encounter has a feeling of friendship. "In this way, it transcends commercial transaction boundaries. By contrast, boundary closed transactions impose boundaries. . . such that the service provider may be expected to perform in a certain pre-scripted way. . . but not necessarily to exhibit friendship" (p. 3). Additionally, the adventure setting is one in which the provider and customer are also spatially intimate. Indeed, supervisory responsibilities and the constraints of outdoor travel demand that adventure guides keep in close proximity to their clients at all times. These logistical conditions mean that adventure guides have little access to a formalized backstage area, where guides can "relax, drop his front, forego speaking his lines, and step out of character" (Goffman, 1959, p. 112). As a consequence, adventure guides must perform their role for extended periods of time. Price and Arnould (1995) suggested that combination of the extended, affectively-charged, and inti-

mate nature of adventure travel and the resulting boundary-open exchange amplified the emotional labor and fatigue of adventure workers.

Further, *how* emotions are managed in the adventure setting has significant symbolic meaning in contemporary Western culture. Goffman (1967) described adventure as a form of fateful action—action that is both problematic and consequential. As such, adventure offers its participants opportunities to display character, because according to Goffman, “qualities of character emerge only during fateful events” (p. 218). However, strong character is only revealed if the adventure participant is able to manage him or herself in the situation:

It is during moments of action that the individual has the risk and opportunity of displaying to himself and sometimes to others his style of conduct when the chips are down. Character is gambled; a single good showing can be taken as representative, and a bad showing cannot be easily excused or reattempted. To display or express character, weak or strong, is to generate character. The self, in brief, can be voluntarily subjected to re-creation. (p. 237)

In other words, adventure provides the setting for a contest of character, where the ability to maintain control over a risky situation is interpreted as a sign that the risk-taker has the “right stuff” (Lyng, 1990). Central to displaying the appropriate style of conduct is maintaining control over one’s emotions. As Holyfield and Fine (1997) described, “to engage in the building of character via adventure is to take an emotional journey *inward*, to *feel* sensations, and to learn how to express the appropriate emotions” (p. 359).

As a consequence, being able to control one’s emotions in adventure has become a valued trait in our culture (Holyfield, 1997). This is reflected in the personal outcomes of successful emotion management in adventure. For example, Kiewa (2001) described how the ability to successfully control the feelings of gut-wrenching fear fostered feelings of exhilaration in rock climbers: “Climbers experienced immense personal satisfaction from the knowledge that they are good at performing under stress” (p. 373). Jonas (1997), in her study of white water rafting guides, similarly noted that displays of strong character were experienced as “internally gratifying, allowing one to feel better about oneself” (p. 249). Jonas also found that displays of strong character translated into a gain of status among one’s fellow adventurers, whereby such successful risk-takers received great deference from others. As she described, “the person with the ‘right stuff’ achieves an elevated position as one of the ‘anointed ones’” (p. 249). A similar elevation in the status of successful adventurers was also noted in studies of sky divers (Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993) and deep-sea scuba divers (Hunt, 1995).

The value of controlling one’s emotions in adventure is also reflected in the social applications of adventure, whereby adventure is employed as a social tool. Holyfield and Fine (1997) in fact suggested that this cultural value has become institutionalized in the form of adventure programming. Adventure programming, they contended, is implicitly founded on the belief that successful emotion management during risky situations builds character:

"the unspoken goal of these programs is to create good citizens by developing "positive" moral values that are believed to be universally desirable" (p. 345). They suggested that these programs operated by generating negative emotions (i.e., stirring up feelings of fear, anxiety, frustration), and then transforming these emotional responses into opportunities for growth (i.e., success at facing uncertainty, going beyond one's comfort zone). Often this is accomplished by tapping into vaguely familiar cultural scripts related to teamwork, personal growth, challenges overcome, and perseverance (Arnould & Price, 1993). The fact that adventure programming is now commonly used in ameliorative contexts (i.e., juvenile rehabilitation, therapy) similarly reflects the idea that control over one's emotions during risky situations is believed to build better citizens.

As lead actors in a scene with such symbolic meaning, guides are measured against the cultural ideal of adventurous character. Guides are implicitly expected to display strong character; for adventure guides, fear and anxiety are forbidden emotions. Instead, "the norm is that they must embody culturally valued traits, such as bravery, ruggedness, and calm, during *all* situations on the river" (Holyfield, 1999, p. 20). Although Jonas (1997) noted that guides enjoyed the status and deference they earned through these performances, such performances still have emotional labor costs, and emotions must be managed or else adventure guides risk losing respect.

Certainly, the fact *that* adventure guides engage in significant emotional labor has been acknowledged in past research. Indeed, Arnould and Price (1993) described the river guide as an emotional "impresario," enacting a role that demands sustained emotional labor. However, less attention has been given to *how* adventure guides interpret and negotiate the emotional expectations of their jobs. How do adventure guides make sense of the emotional labor expected of them? How do they manage these demanding expectations? What issues do they struggle with, and how are they resolved? This study investigates the emotional labor of adventure guides, with the emphasis being placed on understanding the guide's experience as an emotional "impresario."

Methods

This study followed the traditions of ethnographic research. Broadly speaking, ethnographic research is an approach to inquiry that is best described as naturalistic and interpretive. Ethnographies are naturalistic because they study social life in its natural setting, and record behaviors and events as they happen, in context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Ethnographies are interpretive because they follow inductive strategies that work toward generating understandings, rather than deductive strategies that work toward testing theories (Cresswell, 1998). Ethnographers work toward making sense of the behaviors, events, and symbols of culture, and what results from ethnographic research is an emergent construction that describes and analyses a culture and is used to build theories of social life (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The site for this study was an outdoor adventure travel organization called "Wanderlust." Within the spectrum of outdoor adventure providers, Wanderlust was a well-known and well established operator. Although the classic five-day canoe trip to the Boundary Waters Wilderness Canoe Area was the symbolic and programmatic core, Wanderlust offered canoe and kayak trips ranging from three to 21 days to over 20 locations in 2000. Popular trip destinations were the San Juan Islands, the Missouri and Green River, the lakes and rivers of Maine, and kayak trips on Lake Superior. The year 2000 also marked Wanderlust's expansion into the international travel scene, and the organization now offered trips in Costa Rica and Australia.

Wanderlust operated trips year round, and its peak season was the summer. Coinciding with the arrival of summer was the arrival of between 40 and 50 seasonal trip guides. Much as Holyfield (1999) described in her study of white water rafting, trip leading at Wanderlust was also a "youthful enterprise" (p. 6). Most guides were in their twenties, often on a summer break from university. Tanned and fit from days on the trail, guides were easily recognizable both by the healthy glow they exuded, and their conformity to the standard adventure guide uniform of water sandals and fleece jackets.

Field entry was facilitated by my previous experience with the organization as an employee. The summer before this study, I worked at Wanderlust as an assistant guide. In this role, I participated in one week-long staff training and led two wilderness trips. According to the Wanderlust Program Director, Wanderlust received dozens of requests for research studies each year, and most research studies were promptly rejected. However, I was treated as a Wanderlust "insider" who was sympathetic to and knowledgeable of the Wanderlust culture. This gave my study the advantage of being given consideration, as well as facilitated my interactions with Wanderlust staff and trip leaders, most of whom I had met the summer previously. Although establishing insider status is an essential step in ethnographic research, I was cognizant that my connection to the organization may have fostered a desire to tell a certain story about the organization that may not have reflected the organizational reality. Gathering a representative sample of events and supporting my claims with data helped to reduce this possibility.

The data reported in this paper were collected as part of a broader study of the culture of outdoor adventure travel (Sharpe, 2002). Multiple forms of data were collected for this study, including field observations, in-depth interviews, participant surveys, and organizational documents. In the summer of 2000 I attended eight Wanderlust trips—four trips as a participant and four as an assistant adventure guide—for a total of 39 days in the field. The focus of the participant observations was on capturing the actions and interactions of the guides with their participants. Data were collected in the form of jottings throughout the day, which were expanded into field notes three times daily (at lunch, before dinner, late evening). Participating in trips in two different roles was extremely advantageous because it facilitated different insights into the role of the adventure guide related to the emotional labor

demands of their job. On the days off trail, I lived at the staff house with other seasonal guides, which allowed me access into the Wanderlust guide culture as well as supplied numerous opportunities for informal interaction. I also conducted twelve semi-structured and in-depth interviews with Wanderlust guides, seven of whom I had observed on a trip. The remaining guides were selected with a bias toward including those who had the most experience leading Wanderlust trips. The emotional labor of Wanderlust guides emerged as a theme in the early stages of fieldwork, and it informed later observations and guide interviews.

Findings

The findings are organized into three main sections. The first section describes the responsibilities of Wanderlust guides that had emotional implications, namely to ensure safety, generate fun, and encourage a sense of community. The second section discusses the techniques the guides used to help them manage the emotional demands of their job. The third section describes the interpretations of the guides surrounding the emotional demands of their job, particularly as they related to understandings of self.

Going Above and Beyond: Guide Responsibilities and Emotional Expectations

At Wanderlust, guides were understood as the central factor that determined the success or failure of the trip. As it stated in the Staff Manual (1999), "Good leadership is far more important than weather, food, or equipment. It can literally make or break an experience" (p. 14). As such, expectations on guides were high, and Wanderlust worked hard to hire and train staff that was able to meet the numerous responsibilities of their job. Basically, what Wanderlust wanted were guides who were dedicated to making each trip the trip of a lifetime. The organizational expectation of guides to go "above and beyond" to accomplish this goal was described in a Wanderlust brochure:

The most tangible part of Wanderlust, our staff, are also highly trained professionals who are very knowledgeable and dedicated to meeting your needs. We are fortunate to have such a fine crew of people who consistently go above and beyond the call of duty simply because they love doing what they do—sharing the wilderness with people like you. (Brochure, 1999, p. 2)

Part of the guide responsibilities in delivering a Wanderlust trip involved the intellectual and physical work of pre-trip planning, managing the equipment, delivering basic instruction, and facilitating the trip logistics. However, three of the guide responsibilities also involved emotional work. These were: ensuring safety, generating fun, and encouraging a sense of community.

Ensuring safety. An overarching responsibility, if not the "number one priority" (Angie, guide) of guides, was ensuring trip safety. Indeed, the ability of the trip to develop into the experience Wanderlust expected depended on participants feeling confident that their guide was competent enough to

keep them safe from unnecessary harm. Much of the confidence generated in participants stemmed from their interpretation of the emotional demeanor of their guides. Because “safety” is not something that is clearly apparent, particularly for novices who have little experience in evaluating safe versus dangerous practices, the idea of the trip as safe was often best reflected in the ability of the trip leader to seem as though they had the trip under control. Generally, this control was translated into guides maintaining control over their emotions, particularly at times when fear or anxiety were likely to arise.

The association between emotional demeanor and the participant’s interpretation of the guide as a safe and competent leader became apparent on a trip in which the group encountered a vicious storm:

The lightning was coming more frequently, and Scott (guide) told us that with the next bolt we would get off the water and set up camp regardless of whether we were at the campsite or not. The next bolt came and Marianne, who had been showing the most anxiety over the lightning, said “That’s it, we’re getting off.” She started to paddle over to shore and hopped out as quickly as she could. . . Marianne’s nervousness seemed to be contagious because Bill, another participant, jumped out of his canoe seat even before he reached the shore, nearly tipping his canoe. Michael [participant] said to Bill, “Calm down, it’s ok.” At this point Scott came over and in a calm and steady voice he told the group that we would first get everyone out of the boats, then work on getting the tents up while the guides got the boats out of the water. . . Once the tents were up Scott gathered everyone together and explained how to prepare ourselves for a lightning strike. He told us to take our life jackets into the tents with us, to kneel on them, and keep our feet together. He then sent people to their tents. . . I was in a tent with Michael and Eric [participant]. They began talking about how Scott reacted, and Eric said he was very impressed with Scott’s ability to remain calm during such a violent storm. (Field notes, Trip #2)

Even in follow-up participant surveys, participants recalled Scott’s emotional demeanor during the storm: “I was impressed by the focus, kind and gentle direction, and calm that Scott displayed during the heart of the storm” (Eric, participant). Similarly, Bill [participant] commented, “The storm on Saturday night was very violent. Leader was extremely good. . . was decisive but did not overly alarm anyone. Don’t know how anyone could have handled the situation better.” For participants and guides, controlling fear appears to be an integral part of what it means to be a “professional” or a “leader” (Sachs & Blackmore, 1998), and a way that trip leaders show they have “what it takes” to safely lead an adventure trip (Jonas, 1999).

Thus, for guides, maintaining a level of control over emotions such as fear or anxiety was seen as an important part of the job. Similar to Holyfield’s (1999) description of white water rafting guides, Wanderlust guides worked to hide signs of fear and anxiousness, even in times when attuning to such an emotion could help to keep a group safe. Guide Ben described:

An emotion I don’t want to manifest out there is fear. I understand fear to be a very valuable ally in making decisions. . . but it can lead to chaos and loss of

control. . . I don't want people to lose confidence in my ability when I'm scared. So you have to develop a certain amount of control of your fear and your emotions to be out there.

The importance of controlling fear to ensuring participant confidence led some guides to suppress a wider range of emotions that could be interpreted as a sign of being weak-willed. For example, Guide Becky described how she hid her "sensitive side" when she was on trail, because of how she believed it differed from what participants expected in an adventure guide: "When you're a wilderness trip leader, everyone's like yeah, you're pretty tough. Like I don't wear makeup and stuff like that. But I'm super sensitive. So I don't think that people see that side of me."

Generating fun. Within the spectrum of adventure experience programming, the goal of Wanderlust was to deliver a recreational experience where the main focus was on facilitating enjoyment, rather than education, development, or therapy (Ringer & Gillis, 1995). This focus on fun was described in the Staff Manual (1999): "Wanderlust experiences should be enjoyable recreational experiences. . . Staff should never forget that fun and adventure are the primary reasons people join in on a Wanderlust trip. Participants will remember how much fun they had (or didn't have) for years" (p. 2). Thus, another responsibility of the guides was to make trips enjoyable for their participants—in other words, to "generate fun."

Not all of the work of generating fun was accomplished through emotional labor. Many guides employed props or other tools that helped convey a sense of fun and lightheartedness around the trip. For example, Guide Steve described how he incorporated props into his trips, to help convey a festive spirit:

Last year I had Mr. Chicken and I took a Styrofoam chicken with real feathers on all of my trips. And I'm going to borrow some pink flamingos for the Missouri trip this year. And I wear Hawaiian shirts on the trail, and it's just some kind of fun stuff to make it less serious, because our trips aren't really all that serious. It lightens the mood for yourself and for people, more festive I guess.

However, methods that did require emotional labor, such as expressive role modeling, were seen as the most effective ways to generate fun on Wanderlust trips. Indeed, the Wanderlust staff manual (1999) told guides that, "it is their responsibility to set the tone for the trip. Participants will look to the leader for direction on how to act. . . the best way for staff to establish a positive atmosphere is to model the types of behaviors they would like to see" (p. 42). As such, guides often told jokes, smiled and laughed, played around, and generally worked to maintain a fun-loving attitude during the trip. As Guide Emma stated, "I try to laugh a lot and smile a lot, because usually it is contagious. People do catch on." Similarly, Guide Rick described his trip leading strategy in these terms:

I try to keep that energy level up above the participants, and always try to keep a smile on my face. And always crack jokes or make people stop if they're getting too serious, and lighten it. [Serious in what way?] Not so much serious in terms

of pensive or serious as in thinking of ethics, which is always good, but serious in the fact of just being. . .too. . .just being a downer.

Thus, the responsibility of generating fun required trip leaders to be energetic, upbeat, outgoing, and "on" for extended periods of time. For some trip leaders, this was manageable, particularly for those where these behaviors coincided with their general preference for how to act. This was the case for Guide Becky, who said, "I think I'm naturally on, so it's not necessarily a conscious thing." For other trip leaders who were self-described introverts, being so energetic and outgoing took more of an effort. For example, Guides Ben and Rick both described the need to be extroverted and energetic as the hardest part of the job:

And because I'm an introvert, the thing that exhausts me the most, and I know this for a fact. . .is breaking out of that introvertedness on trail. It's a conscious effort to do it. I envy those extroverts out on the trail because it's so easy to make that connection. (Ben, guide)

[What are you tired of by the end of the summer?] It's just an energy drain, keeping the energy level above the group. For me, doing a trip is almost like putting on a show, and keeping that attitude is tough. . .It's like I step on a stage and a different persona comes over me. Most of the people who have seen me on trail consider me a huge extrovert, when I'm actually a borderline introvert. It takes an extra effort for me to be that person. (Rick, guide)

Encouraging a sense of community. Along with generating fun, Wanderlust also placed a high priority on facilitating a sense of community among participants. An important part of the Wanderlust experience was the development of connections and group cohesion, as reflected in the organizational slogan of "Share the Adventure!" As with generating fun, Wanderlust looked to its guides to actively encourage a high degree of interaction and openness among participants, so that group members would come to "accept each other as 'equals'" regardless of their personal differences (Staff Manual, 1999, p. 1). Again, this was best accomplished by expressive role modeling, whereby guides offered participants feeling cues on how to interact. In their role as social facilitators, guides were encouraged to open up, tell their stories, and interact with participants as friends. This was described in the staff manual (1999): "Staff should show that s/he is willing to listen, to feel, and to be supportive. Staff should be honest and open about their own feelings, desires, and goals and make a point of sharing them with the group" (p. 42). For guides, this meant that socializing and getting to know participants was part of their job responsibilities, as much as the logistical tasks of the job. Guide Julianne explained:

[What should the guides do during down time?] Socialize. Sometimes hang out with the group and chitchat with the group. . . and that as a job gets overlooked sometimes, and it's seen as "You're not working." I'm making dinner and I'm reorganizing the trailer and you're off talking to a participant. And I like to squelch that perception and say, "Look, that's a job, and someone has to do that." If you notice that the guides are all working

on something hands-on and no one's working with the group, then something's wrong. Someone needs to stop doing something and go hang out with the group.

Occasionally, guides were expected to take on additional socializing responsibilities with participants who were having difficulty connecting with the other participants on the trip, such as a participant who was socially awkward, particularly introverted, or as Guide Ben described, "made themselves not easy to get along with." Here, guides took on the role of "buddy" to the participant. As a buddy, guides actively engaged the more isolated participant in activities or conversation, and otherwise filled the gap left by the other participants of the group. Guide Julianne described how guides stepped in to assume the buddy role with participants who were being "left out in some way" in order to ensure that the participant still felt had a good time:

And you kind of struggle on a trip, of well, Bob's not integrating, what should we do to integrate him, and usually that person is being left out in some way, and we try to figure out how to make Bob have a good time. . . Definitely identify people that aren't included and it's your job to be their buddies, and find ways to include them.

As a buddy, guides took on the role of a participant's companion and friend, and often accompanied the participant in their activities in and around camp. For example, Guide Rick, who took on a buddy role with one participant, offered to be the participant's swimming partner and participate in activities with him:

I was more of his buddy. That was the role I played with him. He and I bonded well. And getting him to do stuff as I would do it. You know, "Come on, let's go down and go for a swim." "No, I don't want to." "Yeah, come on, I'm going!" "Yeah, ok, maybe I will." And it turns out that he completely enjoyed the whole process.

Thus, whereas Price and Arnould (1995) suggested that the conditions of the adventure trip led to the emergence of boundary-open relationships, Wanderlust took this one step further: the organization actively encouraged their guides to form boundary-open relationships with their participants. For some guides, it was this role expectation that was the hardest part of the job. As Guide Emma described, sustaining such boundary-open relationships over an extended period of time took a tremendous amount of emotion work, particularly in cases where the guide found little intrinsic enjoyment in socializing with the participant:

[The hardest part of the job] is when it's not working and there is somebody that is a bit difficult and maybe deep down inside you don't like them either, and still trying to make the integration work. Because it's still what your job is. . . and trying to keep it going, when in the back of your head you're going, "Two more days, one more day, a few more hours." You have to fight with it sometimes. I think that's definitely the hardest, just bucking up when it's not going smoothly.

Overall, the job of guide at Wanderlust was linked to a set of emotional expectations that were very demanding—for some, the most demanding part of the job—and highly prescriptive. Guides were expected to suppress emotions such as fear and anxiety, as well as express the emotions of happiness and enjoyment, care and concern. Because guides were required to express and suppress a wide range of emotions through the course of a trip (versus a job where workers are expected to maintain a consistent emotional demeanor), they benefited from having a degree of emotional acuity in terms of knowing when and where to express different emotions—akin to what Cahill (1999) called “emotional capital” or Goleman (1996) termed “emotional intelligence.” This was particularly important because there was the potential for the different emotional expectations of the job to conflict, particularly the need to keep emotions in control to ensure safety conflicted with the need to be exuberant and lighthearted to generate fun. Some trip leaders recognized this, and talked about how they liked to establish themselves as serious about safety before they loosened up and turned their focus toward fun. Guide Kellie said, “At the start. . . usually I’m not “I’m going to be your friend,” I’m more quiet and the in-charge person. I like to gain people’s respect and trust before I start goofing off.”

Indeed, guides who gave an “inappropriate” emotional performance faced real consequences. For example, Rhea found that her overly exuberant style undermined her authority as leader, to the extent that she had difficulty progressing through the ranks of the organization:

I got pretty heavily reprimanded for it by John and Terry [guides] as well. They were like, you appear. . . you have too much fun. I’m like, I’m working, I’m doing things. You may hear me laughing ten islands away, but I’m getting things done the way I know how to do it, and people are enjoying it. What is our aim out here?...John and Terry were like, “Well, we’re stressed out and we’re thinking these important things that we have to think about as head guides, and you’re distracting us and you shouldn’t be doing that, you should be thinking these things as well.” It’s like, you don’t know what’s in my mind. I can still be thinking these things. . . I was pretty much told at one point that one of the reasons I haven’t moved up to a head guide role or advanced quicker is because of this.

Managing Emotional Labor Demands

Because emotional expectations at Wanderlust were so demanding, guides developed strategies to help them manage the emotional labor of their job. These strategies were both “external” and “internal.” External strategies involved structuring the setting or the job in a way that created opportunities for guides to physically remove themselves from the shared space with the participants. As noted earlier by Price and Arnould (1995), one reason that the adventure setting was emotionally demanding on its workers was that it required them to remain in close proximity to customers for extended periods of time. As Guide Rick said, “sometimes the biff [bath-

room] is your only down time.” However, guides developed strategies that helped them carve out backstage areas that allowed them to temporarily drop their role. Common strategies included employing logistical excuses to get away from the group, such as needing to find a clearing to “check the weather radio,” organize the equipment, or hold a staff meeting. Guide Ben employed these strategies extensively on the trip we led together:

Throughout the day Ben has spent a fair bit of time by himself—at the van, in the campground, at the park. I see that he can get away with it because he can seem like he’s “taking care of business”—checking with park people, checking equipment, retying knots, etc. (Field notes, Trip #6)

Finding ways to carve out a backstage was important to guides. For some, it simply meant that they were able to drop the “persona” and temporarily be themselves, and thus offered an opportunity to revisit and reaffirm the self. This was the case for Guide Rick:

Other times [to get down time] are when the participants are in bed and you’re going over the next day’s plans in your after-day meeting. I don’t know if you notice it on trips we’ve done, but it’s just like, “(sigh) Hi, how are ya,” and you just shed everything right there, and you’re back down to yourself again.

For other guides, such backstage breaks were valuable because they reduced the amount of time trip leaders needed to be “on” and in their role. This was important for those guides who were becoming emotionally exhausted over time. Here, the backstage helped guides avoid or delay burnout (Corde, Dougherty, & Blum, 1997). This was the case for Guide Ben, who later confessed to me when we were checking the weather radio, that he simply needed these breaks in order to be able to continue his work:

[After dinner] the mosquitoes came out in full force, which sent most people running for cover. Once the group was in the tents Ben and I went off together to check the weather forecast, have a smoke, and talk about the day. Ben told me he was really tired and not really into the trip, having been on trips constantly since April [it was now August]. Ben seems to be struggling between maintaining his own level of energy/sanity and presenting himself to the group as an involved group member/leader. He sneaks away and returns to participate. As he said, “If I don’t get away, I’m going to lose it on these people, and that’s not what they’re here for.” (Field notes, Trip #6)

A second set of strategies were “internal” strategies. Here, guides engaged in deep acting, whereby they attempted to manage the emotional demands by changing their feelings “from the inside out” (Hochschild, 1979). With deep acting, guides engaged in an active process of emotional manipulation, so that they became able to genuinely display the emotion demanded by the job. Guide Scott described this process of emotional manipulation in the context of maintaining a friendly and caring demeanor with participants:

I think sincerity isn’t something that you are or you’re not. I think it’s an action, being sincere. It’s like running. You could run from here to the car if you wanted to, and you can be sincere if you want to. And I think sometimes people feel that sincerity is something that happens, it’s not something that they make

happen. Like sometimes you can think, I can't sincerely like this person, because they're irritating and they're mean. But you can still sincerely like them, you just don't want to. But you can. And the same is true with friendship and sincerity. You actively work on them. And as a trail leader, you need to actively work on being sincere and genuine and friendly to the participants. And the act of doing that will endear them to you, and endear you to them.

Another form of deep acting involved guides working to convince themselves of the value of following the emotional expectations of the job, or otherwise "buy in" to the emotion rules. Guide Rhea offered an example of "buying in:"

You have to remember that hey, this is life. I could be dead in a week. What would I regret if I were dead in a week? Well, I should engross myself in this now. (Rhea, guide)

Trip leaders engaged in deep acting for two main reasons. One reason was that deep acting typically translated into a more convincing performance, which thus increased their effectiveness at delivering a successful trip. Deep acting helps to convey a sense of authenticity around the emotion; Arnould and Price (1993) suggested that provider emotions must be perceived as authentic to elicit "the desired affective response" (p. 26). A second reason was that within the culture of guiding at Wanderlust, surface acting was seen as an affront to the trip leading process. Compared to work settings—restaurants, clothing stores, or hair salons, for example—where it may be acceptable for workers to fake their emotions when interacting with customers or clients, displaying a lack of genuine emotion on Wanderlust trips was occasionally referred to with derogatory terms such as leading a "canned" trip. Scott described what this means:

We've got a lot of systems in place at Wanderlust which are very helpful for everyone. However, you run the risk when you rely too much on your systems, you run the risk of making it a systematic trip. . . And it becomes "participants" instead of, you know, Wayne and Sandy. It's no longer individuals, it's participants. There's not a real genuine interest in what is going on in these people's lives, and a genuine concern for how they've developed over the past five days. And that's a canned WI trip. There's very little of your emotion in it.

Similar to Hochschild's (1983) report on flight attendants, being "phony" with one's emotions was seen not simply as poor acting, but as a moral flaw. Conversely, just as poor acting was seen as a moral flaw, a successful performance was seen as a moral accomplishment (Hochschild, 1983). Guides approached the emotional demands of the job as a personal challenge, and their ability to sustain the performance even when faced with difficult participants was a source of pride. Guide Scott captured this idea in a story he told about struggling to be "genuine" with a difficult participant. His story was one of facing—and overcoming—a test of character:

We had one gal on our trip who was just. . . her irritating personality was enhanced by her incompetence in everything. And she was just so. . . she totally could not see beyond herself. It was so irritating. There'd be only so much food

left or so much dessert, and she'd go and scoop off almost all of it, you know? And there'd be four people behind her that still had to eat. One time she wanted to know how to get the cocoa into her cup, and the cocoa was sitting there with a spoon and a cup. Figure it out! Not too tough. The whole trip was like that. And it was important. . . I went out and paddled with her for probably a couple of hours one day on a layover day, just because she wanted to learn how to paddle. And so she sterned and I bowed, and I taught her how to paddle, or tried to. But I tried to spend some quality time with her. And it was tough. It was tough to be genuine and sincere and encouraging. But it was important, and it was a good lesson for me. It was good. I don't remember if we drew straws for it, but. . . (laugh). That was a good trip.

The Guide Role as Persona

Overall, the guides at Wanderlust were expected to be courageous and calm, caring and giving, friendly and fun-loving. For some, these behavioral expectations differed from the behavior they would maintain at home—so much so that these guides came to describe their behavior as a role or a “persona” they assumed when they were on the trail. As Guide Rick said earlier, “it's like I step on a stage and a different persona comes over me.” Guide Steve provided more detail on how his trip persona differed in lifestyle and behavior from the person he was at home:

When I'm doing Wanderlust trips, you assume a certain persona. And you are performing. And whether [participants see] the real me, I don't know. Even for me, I leave my wife and my life and my job and move here and live a single, early 20s, gypsy lifestyle for three months of the year when in reality I'm married, I have a cat, I pay bills, I have a job. . . So even me being here is a different persona of sorts, but definitely on trail. And that's part of it.

However, while guides recognized they were giving a performance, they also generally resisted describing their actions as simply an enactment of the Wanderlust adventure guide persona. As a consequence, guides had difficulty determining the relationship of the persona to the “real” person that they believed themselves to be. For example, when asked if they thought that participants saw the “real me,” the responses guides provided were conflicting and incongruous. Ben's comments provide a useful illustration of such incongruity. Although he clearly recognized how the emotional expectations of the job led him to act differently on the trail than he would have at home, he had difficulty establishing which setting was the home of his “real self.” Interestingly, he suggested that he was “more himself” on trail:

[Your behavior] is more intentional when you're on trail because you're always around people and people are always in your face, or in your zone, because that's your job. You're playing the zone with the whole thing. And they see you for who you are. And I think I'm more myself when I'm on the trail rather than at home or something like that. Because when I'm home or in other settings I just like to chill out and not be in charge.

Similarly, Guide Eric seemed to contradict himself when he suggested that he felt like himself when he was guiding trips, but also recognized that his participants got to know “the leader” but not the person:

[Do you ever feel like you're acting out there?]

Not really. . . I feel pretty much like myself. A lot of times when I'm traveling in the wilderness, not necessarily leading trips, I feel more comfortable than when I'm not. I really enjoy it, and I think it brings out some things that I really like. . .

[Do you think the participants get to know the real Eric?]

Uh no, not necessarily. Not really. . . For leaders, I think a lot of times. . . people get to know "the leader" but not really the person. I know for me, I'll just say for me personally but I think it's true for a lot of people, that on these trips people see a piece of someone's skills and personality.

What is also interesting is that although guides did talk about how maintaining the persona could be emotionally exhausting—as was discussed earlier in the paper—what the guides did not convey was any sense of anxiety around their inability to locate their real self. Instead, they seemed to feel little need to resolve the incongruity and appeared quite comfortable maintaining a blurry distinction between what they identified as their work role and their true self. This finding is in contrast to the work by Hochschild (1983), who suggested that emotional labor demands fostered feelings of identity confusion and estrangement from self. Further, Hochschild noted that self-estrangement often led to an anxiety-ridden existential struggle and the need to firmly differentiate the "real" self from the role. These guides reported no such anxiety or need to make clear distinctions between self and role.

Discussion

At this point three things are clear: (1) These guides were required to fulfill a demanding set of emotional expectations, mostly set by Wanderlust, the organization; (2) These guides regularly engaged in strategies to help them manage these expectations, including carving out backstage areas and self-talk; and (3) These guides thus recognized that they were being called upon to enact a persona, but interestingly, they resisted the notion that they were acting. As a result, the descriptions guides provided of where to locate their "real self" were conflicting and incongruous.

The important question that results from these findings becomes how to account for the incongruity. Why do these guides resist seeing themselves as actors, even as they recognize they are required to follow a set of prescribed emotional behaviors and often find themselves so in conflict with these expectations that they devise strategies to help minimize the burden?

One reason for the incongruity likely relates to the meanings our culture—and Wanderlust guides, as cultural members—ascribes to outdoor adventure experience. Outdoor adventure is solidly embedded within cultural scripts or discourses that link outdoor adventure experiences to ideas of authenticity. Indeed, the story that pervades outdoor adventure is that it is a setting in which we experience life in a more authentic way. If in everyday life we play roles for our bosses, spouses, friends and neighbors, then it is in outdoor adventure that we are free to drop these personas and expose our

true selves. In other words, when it comes to outdoor adventure, our culture inverts the order of reality, believing that outdoor adventure is “more real” than the everyday world that houses the bulk of our day-to-day living.

We believe this story about outdoor adventure for two reasons. One reason, which was discussed earlier in the paper, is based upon the idea that the challenge and danger individuals face in outdoor adventure has the potential to reveal character—character that we believe as the true essence of who we are. Not only is this idea expressed in Goffman’s work, but it also appears and reappears in classic and contemporary writings about outdoor adventure experience. For example, famed wilderness writer Sigurd Olson (1938/1998) described the wilderness as a place of “actual struggle and accomplishment, where the odds are real and where [people] know they are no longer playing make-believe” (p. 98). Popular writer Jon Krakauer (1997) similarly described the mountain environment as a place to find something more authentic than what he experienced in his everyday life:

Achieving the summit of a mountain was tangible, immutable, concrete. The incumbent hazards lent the activity a seriousness of purpose that was sorely missing from the rest of my life. I thrilled at the fresh perspective that came from tipping the ordinary plane of existence on end. (p. 23)

A second reason for this belief stems from our cultural understandings of nature. In a similar vein, we believe that the closer we are to nature and the further we are from culture, the closer we are to what is real and true. As Fine (1992) stated, we view nature as “ultimate and authentic, whereas that side of the world that we humans have organized is often seen as artificial and derivative” (p. 173). He suggested that we assign to experiences in nature a “deep reality”—the sense that they offer a more real or authentic way of experiencing life than what is found in the everyday world, even in cases where it is equally constructed, contrived, and illusory.

Thus for these adventure guides, the incongruity surrounding their descriptions of the location of their “real” self may have had much to do with the discourse of authenticity that surrounds outdoor adventure. Although these individuals may have recognized the theatrical elements of their performance, they too were influenced to believe that their on-trail actions were the truer expressions of their core self. Thus, the idea that they were merely acting out a persona was resisted because of how it directly conflicted with this belief.

However, there may be a second explanation for the incongruous descriptions of self, which is that these adventure guides have a different understanding of self than has traditionally been assumed. Indeed, one of the assumptions in Hochschild’s (1983) work on emotional labor is that individuals have a core self—a fixed and stable essence or character that guides their actions and outlook throughout the different settings and situations they encounter. In fact, it is her belief in a core self that causes Hochschild to be so concerned with emotional labor, because of how she believes it can lead to identity confusion, self-estrangement, and resulting feelings of anxiety, frustration, and exhaustion. Hoshchild is definitely not alone in her com-

mitment to the idea of the core self; Gubrium and Holstein (2001) suggested that the belief in the self as a discrete, private entity remains one of the leading experiential themes of our times. As they noted, "members of our culture believe that the personal self has a life of its own, residing deep within. We cherish its autonomy and authenticity" (p. 2).

However, in recent years, some have begun to question the grand narrative of the self (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000), and what seems to be emerging is the recognition of a process of self-fragmentation and multiplication. Instead of having one true self, contemporary subjects have many different selves, with each of version of self equally as true as any other. Often the explanation for the fragmentation of self is associated with the characteristics of contemporary, postmodern life. For example, Gergen (2000) contended that such fragmentation of self is facilitated by the fast-paced and highly social nature of contemporary living, where individuals come into contact with so many meanings and messages about the self that it has the effect of populating, even saturating the self. In the process, what disappears is a sense of allegiance to or even recognition of one version of self. As Gergen (p. 7) described, individuals now have the potential to maintain "a multiplicity of incoherent and disconnected relationships," with the consequence that the relationships "pull us in myriad directions, inviting us to play such a variety of roles that the very concept of an "authentic self" with knowable characteristics recedes from view. The fully saturated self becomes no self at all."

The finding that the Wanderlust adventure guides were able to so easily accept the incongruities in their understandings of self—indeed, they felt little of the anxiety of self-estrangement as described by Hochschild—suggests that these guides may have little commitment to the idea of a core self. Thus, even though these guides were cognizant that the guide role led them to act in ways very different than they do at home, they did not consider their actions to be fake or disingenuous because they likely saw the trip persona as another equally true manifestation of who they really were. In other words, the trip persona was one of many versions of self that they held to be true.

Conclusion

Outdoor adventure has long been understood as a space to experience the real—to feel genuine emotions and encounter the essence of our true selves. However, as we continue to move into the realm often described as postmodernity, the idea of what is real becomes blurred, and the real begins to blend with its own performance. As we see for those who work in the outdoor adventure setting, locating the real, in terms of the emotions they feel and the self they encounter, is no straightforward task. Actions and emotions of adventure guides are both genuine and contrived, and selves are expressed as well as imagined and constructed.

Although we have long been inclined to think of outdoor adventure as a deep reality, we must realize that the authenticity we associate with outdoor adventure is of our own invention. What differentiates the real world of

outdoor adventure from a fantasy enclave such as say, Disneyworld, other than the stories we choose to tell about it? Indeed, outdoor adventure has much in common with descriptions of such fantasy enclaves. For example, Belk and Costa (1998, p. 237) have noted that fantasy emerges in contexts "when a group rallies around key shared symbols and hallows a time and place where these focal symbols are celebrated and an atmosphere set apart from everyday reality is created and sustained." Further, in fantasy, alternative versions of self can be enacted. Indeed, "we can deliberately act as if we are someone quite different" (Cohen & Taylor, 1992, p. 92). This surely describes outdoor adventure experience.

In contexts where the fantasy is provided as a consumption experience, workers are called upon to help maintain a customer's engrossment in the illusion of the fantasy world, of which emotional labor plays a central role (Bryman, 1999). In outdoor adventure, the fantasy workers assigned this task are the adventure guides.

This study offered a descriptive account of adventure guiding, with special attention given to the emotional labor of adventure guides. The hope is that the study will contribute to a broader understanding of the social construction of adventure, and encourage new explorations of ideas around fantasy and reality in leisure studies. Indeed, as we continue to move toward a postmodern world, the enactment of fantasy and illusion takes up an increasingly dominant role in leisure (Rojek, 1995). We would benefit from a further understanding of the meanings of fantasy leisure, both for those who experience it and those who work within these spheres.

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