# DEFINING EMOTIONAL LABOUR: A FEMINIST EXPLORATION


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# DECLARATION

I, Stephanie D'sa, hereby declare that this dissertation titled "Defining Emotional Labour: A Feminist Exploration" is the outcome of my own study undertaken under the guidance of Dr. Shaila Desouza, Head of Department of Women's Studies, Goa University, and co-guide Dr. Mamta Kumari. This work has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of this institute or of any other institute or university. I have duly acknowledged all the sources used by me in the preparation of this dissertation.

Stephanie D'sa

August 2020

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# CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled “Defining Emotional Labour: A Feminist Exploration” is the record of the original work done by Ms. Stephanie D’sa under my guidance. The results of the research presented in this dissertation have not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of this institute or of any other institute or university.

Research Guide

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# EPIGRAPH

"...our real power comes from the personal; our real insights from living come from the deep knowledge within us that arises from our feelings. Our thoughts are shaped by our tutoring… We were tutored to function in a structure that already existed but that does not function for our good. Our feelings are our most genuine paths to knowledge. They are chaotic, sometimes painful, sometime contradictory, but they come from deep within us. And we must key into those feelings and begin to extrapolate from them, examine them for new ways of understanding our experiences. This is how new visions begin, how we begin to posit a new future nourished by the past."

– Audre Lorde (In an interview with Claudia Tate, 1982)

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*For Zoey,*

*The reason behind all my reasons.*

# ABSTRACT

This study attempts to trace the historical evolution of the term ‘emotional labour’, and to define it so as to include it conclusively in feminist academic discourse. It also seeks to understands the perceived value of emotional labour and create a platform for critiquing it. This will be attempted through the qualitative research methodology of inductive discourse and content analysis of secondary sources, mainly online articles and comments on crowdsourcing platforms.

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

The Internet is a vast, time-consuming space. It is a space where dissent reigns – everyone has an opinion, everyone gets shouted down, and everyone who has access gets a say. It is also a space of innovation and challenge, perhaps the largest repository of how culture is constantly being redefined, where some ideas last the test of keyboard warriors and some are broken down beyond repair.

## 1.1The Age of Online Feminism

In the article "Surfing feminism's online wave: The Internet and the future of feminism," author Stephanie Schulte delves deeper into whether the internet works as a 'vehicle for liberation through collective action' (Schulte 2011, 728). Shining light on the conversation between the techno-enthusiasts and techno-sceptics, Schulte places the arguments from both sides on the table. Techno-enthusiasts argue that the internet works as an escape from gendered bodies and constructs which allows women to access a space that is not limited by patriarchy. On the other hand, techno-sceptics believe that with all

its freedom, the internet remains a male-dominated space created for and by men (Schulte 2011, 733).

Schulte concludes that technology and the internet have the potential to facilitate both empowerment and oppression (Schulte 2011, 736), owing to its decentralised nature. The internet allows people to interact with each other in real time. Instead of relying on magazines, newsletters, and meetings, people can use technological advancements like the internet to start conversations, mobilise and boost movements.

Calling digital media an "inescapable space of social research," authors Usha Raman and Sai Amulya Komarraju argue that the internet offers all social movements, including feminism, a new space to "define, mobilize and carry forward their agendas" (Raman and Komarraju 2017, 132). The discourse created by online feminism is conducted under the rules of a "new grammar" (Schulte 2011, 737). The symbiotic relationship between online and offline feminism allows for a lively critique of the ideologies of mainstream discourses and gives rise to what Alison Dahl Crossley calls a "discursive activism."

Social media platforms and online blogs/articles serve a two-pronged purpose then – not only are they a means to disseminate relevant information about feminism, its history, ideology, and campaigns, but they also become a space where new worldviews are constantly being fashioned via discourse.

## 1.2 Resurgence of the Concept of Emotional Labour

Coined by Arlie Hochschild in 1983, the term “emotional labour” resurged into online existence in 2015. The previously known definition of the term underwent a trial by public and the new crowdsourced definition is a much larger umbrella that includes many, perhaps too many, things to be cohesive and coherent.

The idea that there is some work that women alone do, that they ought to be paid for, and that they are being cheated over is one that strikes a chord. The fact that the new definition of emotional labour is a crowdsourced one that sprung organically from feminist blogs, comments, and articles also shines light on the power of digital media to redefine and shape culture. Not everyone agrees with the new definition of emotional labour, including the sociologist who first wrote about it. This study was designed to trace the historic evolution of the term, its new crowdsourced origin story, and to arrive at a synthesized definition that would add the term to feminist academia.

## 1.3 Relevance of Study

Examining the multiple definitions of emotional labour is relevant not just from a socio-cultural perspective but also from a feminist standpoint. This is a term that is being

applied to women and their work, and it is being used to shine light on aspects that have hitherto been in the dark. Questions like ‘is it even work?’ and ‘how can acts of love be considered labour?’ need to be critically evaluated because said work is being done on a daily basis, and a lot of women are feeling alienated from this work and are, therefore, frustrated. The new definitions of emotional labour call into question the very concept of labour and paid work in a capitalistic world.

In Archaeology of Knowledge, French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault proposed that discourse is a historically relevant system designed to produce meaning and knowledge. He describes discourse as producing “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 2013, 54). The power of discourse and knowledge production is maintained by a discursive process that fixes the meaning of a text and effectively negatives alternative meanings so the meaning of the text is finalised and agreed upon. Foucault delineates the purpose of discourse analysis – it has to establish the fact that said discourse exists and is being spoken about, it has to analyse the creation of power and its effects, and it has to unfix the erstwhile accepted meanings and shine light on what the dominant discourse was attempting to exclude.

It is in the interest of the feminist movement to reflect and intervene in the discourse surrounding emotional labour as it is a site of knowledge creation, and ultimately, power. By fixing the meaning of the term in discourse, it can be opened up for critique, analysis, and further research.

## 1.4 Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter that lays the foundation stones for the study. It establishes the online sphere as one of particular interest to feminists, and introduces the evolving definition of the term ‘emotional labour.’

Chapter 2 outlines the research rationale and design of the study. It defines the research sample selection process and the methods used to analyse the data collected.

Chapter 3 traces the historic evolution of the term ‘emotional labour’ by delving into the literature relevant to the study topic, and the gaps that need to be filled. The latter part of the chapter is a content review of the purposefully-chosen data samples.

Chapter 4 contains the discourse and textual analysis of the samples and secondary data of online conversations relevant to the topic.

Chapter 5 includes the conclusions of the study, its limitations, and proposed areas of research in the future.

# CHAPTER 2

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

> "Feminist intervention in popular culture might offer feminist politics a pragmatic strategy to shift the balance of power and prepare the ground for change, and thus help transform society. Since popular culture is a significant site for struggle over meaning, which offers the culture's dominant definitions of women and men, it is therefore crucial to intervene in the mainstream to make feminist meanings a part of everyday common sense."
>
> – Suheyla Kirca (as quoted in Feminist Research Practice: A Primer by Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007, 223)

## 2.1 Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to trace the historical evolution of the term 'emotional labour' and to define it so as to conclusively add it to feminist academic discourse. The researcher believed that a better understanding of the term would allow future researchers and feminist academicians to effectively critique it and use the term with a more informed perspective. In seeking to understand the evolution of the definition

of this term, the study addressed the following research questions: (a) Where and in what context did the term ‘emotional labour’ originate? (b) How has the term been expanded upon through writings in new media blogs and articles? (c) Can a gendered definition of ‘emotional labour’ to be used in feminist discourse be fashioned from the online discourse on the term?

This chapter describes the study’s research methodology and includes the following sub-sections: (a) rationale for research design (b) research sampling and data sources (c) limitations of the study.

## 2.2 Research Rationale and Design

This study is first and foremost a feminist research. In principle, this study is connected to the feminist struggle. The rationale behind choosing an extant qualitative research methodology was to use traditional methodologies but apply it to new media sources and ask different questions centred around online feminist discourse (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007, 4).

Digital media is recognised for offering a variety of content open to feminist research. From tweets, Facebook posts and conversations, to wiki pages, comments, and blogs, the massive volume of content available in the digital space creates the need to assess and discuss the content from a feminist perspective. The blogosphere, in particular, is a rich space of analysis of texts (Raman and Komarraju 2017, 144). Blogs/articles that

lend themselves to online feminism have been found to enlarge networks and deepen feminist communities. The content produced on feminist blogs offers an understanding of feminism, specific ideologies nestled within feminism, the complexities of the movement, an intersectional understanding of issues, and a safe space for feminist discourse and exploration (Crossley 2018).

A qualitative methodology was chosen as the study is concerned with socio-cultural complexities, and an attempt was made to look at the subject matter from a holistic rather than a reductionist viewpoint. An inductive discourse and textual content analysis were conducted to understand the social, political, and gendered meaning of the term "emotional labour."

## 2.3 Research Sampling and Data Sources

A purposeful sampling procedure was used to select this study's sample. The researcher chose a selection of six articles/blog entries published online, which were the first to expand the boundaries of the term "emotional labour" from 2015 to 2018; and the MetaFilter comments and online discourse in the form of comments and posts on these articles.

The data sample comprises of blogs/articles that are pre-existing, naturalistic, and non-interactive, which lends a built-in level of authenticity to it (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007, 227).

## 2.4 Limitations of the Study

This study was designed to fashion a definition for a term that is in popular usage. The hope was to create a definition that allowed ‘emotional labour’ to be a wholesome part of academic feminist debate and discourse.

There was a dearth of academic research on this topic, and since, the evolution of this term was being traced over crowdsourced platforms and new media, there was an overflow of snippets and repetitive information to wade through. With this in mind, the sample size was deliberately kept purposive and small enough to aid in the analysis of the key themes surrounding the issue.

Online feminist research is a new and fruitful frontier. However, it needs to be mentioned that the online world is used by a particular segment of people – a caste/class/access divide exists. Creating the definition of a term that stands to affect the lives of all people from the limited viewpoint of the ones who have the mic right now was done to get the foot in the door – to open up space for academic discourse and further research into who and how emotional labour manifests in our lives by using available new media resources as a launchpad into the conversation.

# CHAPTER 3

# LITERATURE AND CONTENT REVIEW

## 3.1 Introduction

Paraphrasing Edward Sapir, language is more than just a vehicle for expressing ideas, sentiments, thoughts, and values, it is the primary way to express the drift of time, culture, and social identity using a system of symbols that are produced voluntarily (Sapir 2004, 5). The words we use are shaped by social conditioning and culture, and in turn, these words also serve to shape society and culture by defining and refining what we collectively accept as truth.

This review of literature on the term ‘emotional labour’ examines secondary sources that shed light on the historical genesis of the term tracing its origins all the way to the context of its current usage in 2020. It also highlights the tangents that crowdsourcing social media platforms have taken from the original definition of the term,

and concludes that online feminism has reshaped the term and opened up a new space for discourse and debate around the term.

## 3.2 Definition of Labour

In order to understand the genesis of the term ‘emotional labour’, it is important to start with what the agreed upon definition of ‘labour’ is. The Cambridge Dictionary defines ‘labour’ as practical work, i.e. hard physical work. In the world of economics, Karl Marx defined labour as “formative” activity, work through which humans create form from materials. In creation of these objects, Marx stated that humans themselves were objectified. Therefore, he called labour a process of ‘objectification.’ Marx’s theories have been criticised for being driven purely by the notion of productivity in which only tasks that result in the creation of material products are considered labour (Sayers 2007, 435). While this definition would fit craft, art, and industrial work, there are many other types of work that find no place under this narrow marquee.

With respect to the post-industrial world of the 21st century, work that is conducted online, via use of information technology, or indeed work done in the service sector would fail to meet the standards of being formative activities with tangible results. In this day and age, Marx’s basic material creation definition is too narrow and the word labour needs a broader definition to cover new ‘immaterial’ forms of labour.

In his article “The Concept of Labor: Marx and His Critics,” Sean Sayers argues that Marx, coming from a Hegelian way of thinking, is being misinterpreted. He proposes that Marx and his philosophy of Marxism cannot be placed in a box that glorifies the industrial working class. Calling Marx a “dialectical and historical thinker” like Hegel, Sayers argues that Marx insisted on the “liberating potential of modern industry” which if brought under collective control and focused on human good could lead to a universalization of work. With developments in industrial technology, Marx argues that there would come about an end of physical effort and repetitious toil, so that work then undertaken would be “more worthy of…human nature.” From a philosophical interpretative standpoint, this means that Marxism does not, as it criticised for doing, presuppose a ‘productivist’ labour model (Sayers 2007, 454).

Though Sayer presents a holistic argument, it is based on the presupposition that the reader knows Marx’s background and the impact of Hegel on his way of thinking. As it stands, a mere reading of Marx’s definition of labour does not account for immaterial forms of labour. This productivity definition of labour and Marx’s overall gender-blind way of looking at workers has been a matter of great contention, especially studied and theorised on by feminists.

## 3.3 The Woman Question in Marxism

Marxists typically contend that class conflict trumps feminism. Pushing to understand the problems women face, as a specific category, takes the focus off class

conflict, and causes a division between the working class which is largely detrimental to the fruition of the inevitable worker's revolution. In her seminal work "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism And Feminism: Towards A More Progressive Union," Heidi I. Hartmann argues that while Marxist analytics is imperative to understand the laws of historical development and the workings of capital, it is essentially sex-blind and does not give credence to the systemic connectivity and relationship between women and men. Similarly, she argues that a purely feminist analysis is not sufficiently materialist.

Hartmann characterises the relationship between Marxism and Feminism as an "unhappy marriage" similar to a heterosexual marriage under English common law, such that "marxism and feminism are one, and that one is marxism" (Hartmann 1979, 1).

By subsuming the identity of women under the marquee of the working class, early and contemporary Marxists argue the 'woman question' by analysing the position of women with reference to the economic system, while ignoring what feminist thinkers focus on i.e. the inequalities in the relationship between women and men. Hartmann argues that early Marxists such as Marx himself, F. Engels, and Lenin contend that all women will eventually be added to the wage labour force by capitalism and so will experience a breakdown of sexual division of labour.

Contemporary Marxists like Eli Zaretsky subsume women into an analysis of daily life in capitalism. In his series titled "Socialist Revolution," Zaretsky concedes that while women have been added to the wage labour force by capitalism, this incorporation

has not been on equal terms. Zaretsky argues that sexism under capitalism is particularly virulent because capitalism necessitates that women do wage work outside home, and household work of reproducing labour force, providing emotional care for workers and providing “an island of intimacy in a sea of alienation” (Hartmann 1979,4).

While Zaretsky concedes many points to the feminist movement, he maintains that capitalism is the root cause of the problems faced by women, and not patriarchy. While it may look like women are doing house work for men because of the privatization of the home sphere, they are actually working for capital because they are a part of the working class even when working at home.

By reconceptualising production, Zaretsky argues for a “humane socialism” that can be achieved by breaking the boundaries between public and private spheres, and acknowledging that women’s work at home is hard labour necessary for capital reproduction. However, he denies the existence of inequalities between women and men, and does not question why women were assigned the private sphere, and men the public. In doing so, Hartmann concludes that Zaretsky fails to acknowledge the existence of patriarchy and the subordinate position assigned to women.

## 3.4 Addition of Domestic Labour to the Definition: Wages for Housework

"If women were paid for all they do

There'd be a lot of wages due."

-from a 1940s china money box in the form of a rolling-pin (quoted in Wendy Edmond and Suzie Fleming (eds.), All work and no pay: women, housework, and the wages due, 1975)

The use of Marxist methodology to create feminist strategy sounds like the perfect complementary arrangement. However, Hartmann astutely observes that wherever this has been attempted by Marxist feminists, the results show that "their Marxism clearly dominates their feminism."

As evidence, Hartmann considers the essential theoretical analysis of housework as presented by Mariarosa Dalla Costa. While Dalla Costa's work which demands that women should fight for wages for housework has helped greatly to drive attention to the importance and monetary value of housework, it was limited to delving into the relationship between housework and capital. Though it entrenched the idea that housework is real work that deserves legitimacy under capitalism and even goes on to suggest that men will resist the idea that women should justly receive wages for housework and have the right to refuse to enter the traditional labour force, Dalla Costa's theory focuses on capital and not on the relations between men and women. The focus

then is on women putting up a revolutionary struggle to demand wages for housework against capitalism, and not against patriarchy and the perpetuation of male supremacy within the household.

In the introduction to "All Work and No Pay: Women, Housework, and the Wages Due" released as part of the campaign for Wages for Housework, editors Wendy Edmond and Suzie Fleming state that "ALL WOMEN ARE HOUSEWIVES" irrespective of their marital status, sexual orientation, age, and whether or not they had children. Housework, the editors reckon, is the "first job" of all women. Since the identity of being a woman is so deeply entwined with housework, they say that it is difficult for a woman to separate their personal identity from this work. As such, the very act of asking for wages already serves to categorically state that "*we are not that work*."

Edmond and Fleming have an interesting take on job training. They believe that the care-oriented job that is imposed on women is one that they receive a long and meticulous training for as women are being trained to work 'for love.' (Edmond and Fleming eds. 1975, 5). The contention here is not just that women are socially conditioned to do this work, but that they are also conditioned to do it for free – as a means to show love.

Curiously, Dalla Costa's original essay "Women and the Subversion of the Community" first raised the wages for housework notion as a tool that would lead to further institutionalisation of the role of a housewife. However, the demand gained such

popularity in the 1970s that its use as a consciousness raising tool could not be denied. This is also a great example of how crowdsourced opinions sway academic discourse. In the 21st century, the speed at which popular opinions can change the direction of discourse is much higher owing to the medium being used.

In a later work titled "A General Strike" published in "All Work and No Pay," Dalla Costa actively demanded wages for housework without mentioning her erstwhile fear of solidifying women's role as housewives. Dalla Costa states that the weakness of all women is that they are tired and exhausted at the very start of a waged workday because of "13 hours of housework that no-one has ever recognised, that no-one has ever paid for." She further contends that housework has never received the recognition of being work because it is the only work that women all over the world have in common, and the organised and united strength of "millions of housewives" would be difficult to confront (Edmond and Fleming eds. 1975, 125-126).

The wages for housework demand sought to add domestic chores under the marquee of economically productive work to gain legitimacy under capitalism. While it did serve the purpose of uniting women across the globe and livelihoods in its call, there wasn't much focus on the rights of domestic workers (mostly women) who were the vehicles that allowed middle-class women to step out of their homes and take up work for wages. The overall attitude of denigration towards housework simply gets transferred to the domestic workers who do it. The value placed in this type of 'women's work' is also evident in the low wages and lack of benefits offered to domestic workers.

## 3.5 Recognising Different Types of Labour

In her essay "Women: The Longest Revolution" and book "Women's Estate," Marxist feminist Juliet Mitchell nods at all the types of work that women do – productive or market work, reproductive work, as well as sexuality and child-rearing work. However, not every type of work that women do is considered as 'production' work. In fact, market work or waged work is the only type that is considered production. The other types are subsumed under the heading of family, and are demarcated as 'ideological' work that has no material base.

In a subsequent essay titled "Psychoanalysis and Feminism," Mitchell makes a clear distinction between the 'ideological mode' of patriarchy and the 'economic mode' of capitalism, calling them two "autonomous" areas. Hartmann concludes that Mitchell's inability to afford patriarchy the position of a material base that would further the understanding of relations between the labour power of women and men "limits the usefulness" of her analysis (Hartmann 1979, 9).

Hartmann identifies men's control over women's labour power as patriarchy's material base. Recognising the partnership of patriarchy and capitalism, Hartmann proposes that the sexual division of labour within the household replays itself in women's lives in the work force or labour market. This is evident in the types of jobs made available to women which are extensions of roles they played at home (cooking, service, cleaning, care work) as well as the low wages and status afforded to this subordinate job

roles. Quoting Carol Brown, Hartmann reiterates that this a move “from “family-based” to “industrially-based” patriarchy within capitalism” (Hartmann 1979, 19)

The ‘double day’ or what is now categorised as ‘second shift’ of women remains a reality for wage-earning women because the heavy load of sexual division of labour at home and at the workplace ensures the continued financial dependence of women.

Hartmann calls for a feminism that fights against both patriarchy and capitalism simultaneously. The ultimate aim being to fashion a society in which “recognition of interdependence is liberation rather than shame, nurturance is universal, not an oppressive practice, and in which women do not continue to support the false as well as the concrete freedoms of men.” (Hartmann 1979, 25)

## 3.6 Emotions and Housework

Published in a 1970 anthology of writings from the women’s liberation movement edited by Robin Morgan, Pat Mainardi’s “The Politics of Housework” was first published in 1969. Speaking of the banal and repetitive nature of housework, Mainardi presents dialogues with her husband and hypothesizes on the real meaning behind each argument. At the end of the essay, her postscript starts with “Participatory democracy begins at home,” and outlines a few things to remember for women who intend to demand an equitable distribution of housework and related chores (Mainardi 1970, 451).

In the dialogue, Mainardi presents her husband's argument that it is unfair for him to be held to the same work standards as her, especially in the household. While explaining the meaning of this argument, the author says that all men know that all women have an internalised issue called "guilt over a messy house" (Mainardi 1970, 449). Not only are women raised to believe that housework is ultimately their responsibility but not doing it leads to emotional distress and feelings of failure. Another meaning she ascribes to this argument is that a maid can be hired to do the chores, such that a woman does her work and a maid does the work that should have been the husband's share – at the end of it all, "it's women's work."

Calling on women to read about the psychology of oppressed people, Mainardi shines light on the psychological mechanisms used by oppressed people to survive in a world where the oppressor is the only one with power. These mechanisms include admiring, glorifying, and emulating the oppressor while wanting to be liked by them (Mainardi 1970, 452).

Connecting housework and domestic chores with emotions of guilt, frustration, and oppression, Mainardi's work would not be out of place in today's world either.

## 3.7 Emotional Labour in the Workplace

First published in 1983, Arlie Hochschild's "The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling," raised the question of emotional labour. Hochschild defines 'emotional labour' as the labour that is required to "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others." As early as the seventh page in her book, Hochschild makes a distinction between emotional labour i.e. the management of feelings to portray specific visible facial and bodily cues and emotion work/emotion management i.e. similar acts done in the private sphere. The difference, according to Hochschild, is that emotional labour is done for wages and so has exchange value, while emotion management only has use value (Hochschild 2012, 7).

Theorizing on the "feeling rules" laid out by capitalism for workers in the service and hospitality industries, Hochschild uses Marx's alienation theory to explain that for people jobs that require emotional labour, the process of commodifying personal emotions for public consumption leads to an intrinsic and lasting alienation.

This view is considered "absolutist" by her critics who point at the inadequate analysis of alienation in Hochschild's work. Though she implies the others, the explicit explanations and application of Marx's alienation theory to emotional labour is limited to two of the four dimensions in the original theory.

Hochschild applies the first two dimensions that are specific to the work sphere, namely, product alienation and labour process alienation. She convincingly argues that the worker does not own or control the product of their labour, which leads to alienation from the labour product. As such, the product is "a smile, a mood, a feeling, or a relationship" which comes to "belong more to the organisation and less to the self." This alienation results in a human cost for the workers which Hochschild identifies as emotional dissonance leading to feelings of burnout, feeling fake and emotionally dead.

While Marx stated that alienation leads to a worker feeling like their true selves only when not working, Hochschild steps it up in her book to say that the sense of alienation felt by workers doing emotional labour is more deeply entrenched than Marx imagined. She hypothesizes that the only way to deal with this profound sense of alienation from the labour product is by melding the commercial self with the private self by the process of deep acting and transmutation of an emotional system (Hochschild 2012, 19). Unlike surface acting wherein one feigns acceptable feelings for others to see while not deceiving themselves, deep acting runs deeper into the human psyche because it involves deceiving yourself as well as others about the true nature of your feelings (Hochschild 2012, 33).

The second dimension that Hochschild devotes time to is the labour process alienation whereby workers feel a lack of control over the entire process of production.

The labour process is controlled and engineered by management, and these efforts lead to estranging experiences for workers.

While Hochschild does not delve into the remaining two dimensions of alienation, she also does not outrightly reject them. In the 2009 article "The Alienated Heart," Paul Brook acknowledges the "potential for…acceptance and integration" of the remaining two dimensions of Marx's theory of alienation into Hochschild's emotional labour thesis and her "half-made theory of alienation" (Brook 2009, 14).

In the essay, Brook calls for defending and strengthening Hochschild's theory because of the "continuous political potency" he sees in it. Brook applies the two dimensions that Hochschild left as implications in her book, namely, human nature alienation and fellow beings' alienation. Unlike the previous two dimensions that are particularly relevant to the workplace, these dimensions apply to capitalism's distorting effects on society.

Since Hochschild does not explicitly apply the dimensions of human nature alienation and fellow beings' alienation/commodity fetishism to her theory, there is much that is left open to interpretation. Brook interprets Hochschild's ambiguous take on averting alienation.

According to his reading of Hochschild, he argues that the emotional labour theory steps away from the Marxist theory of alienation by suggesting that alienation seen as an "individualized, pathological condition" can be treated within the bounds of capital-social relations by successful management of one's true self. Brook points out that Hochschild's critics have used this point to argue the possibility of removing/reducing the human costs of emotional labour by offering more avenues for self-control and autonomy for workers. Brook believes that this tangent takes the bite out of Hochschild's critique of emotional/feelings commodification (Brook 2009, 19).

Though "The Managed Heart" was first published in 1983, Arlie Hochschild has added an afterword in 2003 and a preface in 2012. Hochschild deliberately chose to research the presence and manifestations of emotional labour among flight attendants as it is not an elite occupation, men and women do almost identical work so any differences are more likely to be gendered, and women do not form a minority in this occupation (Hochschild 2012, 15).

Drawing from the accounts of students, flight attendants, and bill collectors, Hochschild created a theory that can be applied to women and men. While she recognised that emotional labour in the workplace is asked more out of women than men, she does not classify it as a capitalist patriarchal problem.

In the 2003 afterword, Hochschild concedes that the ever-increasing reach of market relations makes it possible for a spill over to be experienced in private spheres of

life and society. She infers a “vital link between larger social contradictions and private efforts to manage feeling.” Leaving the binary realm of emotion management at work or home, Hochschild recognises a third realm that she calls “marketized private life” (Hochschild 2012, 202-203). This third realm includes new service jobs in the care sector such as childcare workers, au pairs, nursing home attendants, nannies, and elder care workers. However, Hochschild also adds jobs that she calls “a commercial extension not of mother but of wife” in the form of household/home affairs management, breast-feeding consultants, birthday party planners, personal chef, kiddy taxi services, bill payers, etc.

Hochschild gives an example of a mild-mannered millionaire who placed an ad for a “beautiful, smart, hostess, good masseuse” who would be a hostess at his parties, provide soothing massages, accompany him at social events, travel with him, and manage his home affairs including bill paying. She contends that this millionaire wants the results without having to follow family feeling rules. He does not want to do emotional labour, and sees buying someone else’s emotional labour as a solution (Hochschild 2012, 207).

Quoting Business Week reporter Rochelle Sharpe, Hochschild also offers the example of a human resources executive who found that her daughter was disappointed to see that someone had been hired to plan her birthday party. While the mother in question comments that she blew a boundary, Hochschild ends the example with, “she’d outsourced too much emotional labour” (Hochschild 2012, 205).

From these two examples, it can be extrapolated that providing soothing services, company at events, managing home affairs, and party-planning are all aspects of emotional labour, according to Hochschild. In the example of the millionaire who wants to buy someone's emotional labour, it is not just the jobs that he is seeking to outsource, but the condition that the woman who does it is good at it – good at thinking in advance about how to be a good hostess/planner, and putting in the advanced emotional work to produce the right affect for the job.

In the second example, the mother contends that she overstepped a boundary by outsourcing a job that she was expected to do out of love for her child. Her child expected her labour, thoughts, and efforts to plan the party as a symbol of her love and interest in her child. However, Hochschild comments that "too much" emotional labour was outsourced. This brings up certain questions – how do you demarcate what is and is not emotional labour within a household set up? If this labour can be outsourced, why is not acceptable to outsource it – why is it seen as an attempt on one's part to shirk their responsibilities towards loved ones? If the person hired cannot possess the right affect for the job, is it a job that can be outsourced in the first place?

While emotional labour and its ramifications on the heath of workers has been theorised extensively in the workplace, this crossover to the home front has been relatively unevaluated academically. For the home sphere, the discourse is being carried forward on the shoulders of blog writers, commenters, and online feminism activists.

## 3.9 Content Review – 1

## ““Where’s my cut?”: On unpaid emotional labour.” By Jess Zimmerman (The Toast, 2015)

Perhaps one of the earliest online articles to speak of emotional labour in a gendered context, “Where’s my cut?” is equal parts satirical and challenging. Referring to Lauren Chief Elk’s trending hashtag #GiveWomenYourMoney, Zimmerman argues that the time and regard offered by women is of value and deserves recognition at the very least. The author draws on her personal experience of playing agony aunt to male friends. She finds that social conditioning ensures that men feel entitled to women’s attention. Proposing that they are not receiving this attention because that is the woman’s wish is radical, and the idea that men ought to pay for the emotional labour of women is an even more radical one.

Zimmerman argues that just like the discourse around household work, there is a concerted effort to make women believe that they provide emotional labour because they have the natural attributes that make them good at it, and because these are free services that women provide out of love. Under the marquee of emotional labour that should be paid for, Zimmerman adds “all the affirmation, forbearance, consultation, pacifying, guidance, tutorial, and weathering abuse” that women spend energy on daily. The cultural construct that underlies housework being seen as a labour of love that does not require payment also underlies emotional labour.

Drawing another parallel, Zimmerman connects the cultural construct underlying paid sexual work. While a market for such services exist, the idea that sexual work should be paid for is one that is met with legal and moral censure because of the patriarchal paternalistic idea that such work should not have a monetary value. Household work, sexual work, and emotional labour are all categorised as work that takes effort but receive no compensation and should be provided by women out of the goodness of their hearts.

Towards the end of the article, Zimmerman grapples with potential ways to monetise emotional labour and take advantage of capitalism such as becoming a therapist or offering 'friend services' at a price. However, the goal, she concedes, is to get recognition that emotional work has inherent value, and that this effort put in by women is not the birth right of men. By starting the conversation that emotional labour requires effort, is predominantly done by women, and ought to be paid work, Zimmerman believes that we can work up to a place where it can be acknowledged that women who are doing emotional labour and not being paid are being cheated, and the men not doing it are being emotionally lazy.

Zimmerman also writes a separate note on the emotional labour done by women of colour who are required to put in the emotional labour to placate men as well as white women while living in a patriarchal and white supremacist world order.

Zimmerman goes so far as providing a sample menu of services and price list.

"Imagine a menu of emotional labor:

Acknowledge your thirsty posturing, $50.

Pretend to find you fascinating, $100.

Soothe your ego so you don't get angry, $150.

Smile hollowly while you make a worse version of their joke, $200.

Explain 101-level feminism to you like you're five years old, $300.

Listen to your rant about "bitches," $infinity."

*Zimmerman defines emotional labour as "offering advice, listening to woes, and dispensing care and attention," constantly placating men while navigating the expectations of patriarchy – work that may be impossible to monetize but has inherent value.*

## 3.10 Content Review - 2

## "'Women are just better at this stuff': is emotional labor feminism's next frontier?" by Rose Hackman (The Guardian, 2015)

In an article titled "'Women are just better at this stuff': is emotional labor feminism's next frontier?" published online in The Guardian in 2015, Rose Hackman questions whether continued emotional management is "yet another form of unpaid labour" akin to childcare and housekeeping.

Hackman's interview with a sociologist from Columbia University, which this article details, was conceptualised as a research story on emotional labour as being the next frontier of feminism. She defines emotional labour as "repeated taxing and under-acknowledged acts of gendered performance." Under this definition, Hackman categories gendered daily responsibilities, multi-tasking expected out of women, organisational tasks, and providing appreciation and positive reinforcement to family members and colleagues as emotional labour. The article argues that there is a positive bias towards women doing this emotional labour and an associated pressure that these tasks need to be done under any circumstances.

One of the interviewees, a human rights lawyer, speaks of needing to be seen nit just as competent but also as kind in order to gain her colleagues' respect. This, she finds particularly grating because the same is not required out of male colleagues. Similarly, a

sociology professor speaks of feeling pressure to be more emotionally aware and present both within and out of the classroom, and doubling up as a therapist, simply because it is expected of her as a woman.

In the article, Hackman delves into a conversation with a male friend who had, multiple times in the past, stood as a feminist ally. Not only did her friend not understand what emotional labour is but his comeback questioned the need to make 'something negative' out of something 'normal.' The unstated presupposition here is that these acts of gendered performances are not imposed upon women but were rather women's work based on merit and innate qualities – the essentialist assumption that women are better at emotions.

Basing her counter on numerous research studies, Hackman shows how little water this essentialist idea holds academically. She further extends emotional labour to the arena of sex in a 'post-pseudo-sexual liberation world' to show that along with faking orgasms to pander to the male ego, a high percentage of women forced moaning sounds as a way to boost the self-esteem of their partners (called "copulatory vocalizations" in the study that Hackman quotes).

Delving into the psychology that precedes emotional labour, Hackman identifies the emotional labour being done in the form of endless thought and planning that goes into seemingly everyday tasks of household organisation, birth control planning, and being the GPS device that zeroes in on the location of items in the house. Commenting on

this, one of the interviewees states that her partner enjoys a level of detachment to home that she does not have. Taking on the role and doing the emotional labour is the only way to ensure that daily life does not turn into a nightmare. “That’s not my authentic self, but I have no choice,” she concludes.

At the end of the article, Hackman throws up thought-provoking questions about the effects of gendered socialisation, the fallout of not doing this emotional labour (the probability that the world would stop turning), and the potential of demanding “adequate, formal remuneration for emotion work provided in the workplace as a skill.” Wages for emotional labour, as Hackman sees it, is likely to be a revolution that has the potential to shake patriarchy to its core.

*Hackman’s definition of emotional labour is “repeated taxing and under-acknowledged acts of gendered performance.”*

## 3.11 Content Review - 3

## “Women aren’t nags—we’re just fed up” by Gemma Hartley (Harper’s Bazaar, 2017)

Though it started out as a gender-neutral term, ‘emotional labour’ has become a catchphrase on digital media platforms. In 2017, US journalist Gemma Hartley wrote an article titled “Women aren’t nags – we’re just fed up” in the Harper’s Bazaar to fashion a link between ‘emotional labour’ as she defined it and the responsibilities of housework and life administration. The release of this article generated plenty of online debate and discussion centred on this gender-specific definition of ‘emotional labour.’ Hartley substantiated her gendered understanding of emotional labour in her book Fed Up, published in 2018.

The meta-description of the article announces that emotional labour is the “unpaid job” that men do not understand. Hartley goes on to describe her asking for a house cleaning service as a Mother’s Day gift – the purpose behind it, she says, was not that she did not want to do the physical work, but that she did not want to be responsible for the “household office work.”

Hartley categorises tasks like asking around for recommendations, calling service providers, dealing with the mentally-exhausting chores around the house, and being the one to do the thankless job of managing the household as emotional labour. She adds

keeping the peace within the household even while explaining what your partner should/should not have done as emotional labour.

Calling her husband a feminist ally, Hartley quotes him as saying all she had to do was ask him to do what was required to be done. However, she contends that the fact that she is the one who has to know what has to be done and then, be the one to tell him is emotional labour that is imposed on her. From reminding her partner about important days, doing laundry, and updating everyone's calendar to tidying up behind family members, finding a babysitter, and household planning, Hartley classifies it all as emotional labour.

She goes on to say that even having a conversation about the amount of frustrating emotional labour she has to do becomes emotional labour because she has to manage her husband's emotions so as to not upset him while pointing out the gender inequality in household management.

Alluding to how women are conditioned to do emotional labour at a very young age, Hartley ends the article by acknowledging that there are perhaps some types of emotional labour (as she defines it) that she enjoys far more than her spouse, and is more skilful at. She also acknowledges that the splitting of this emotional labour is unlikely to be easy or entirely equitable, but hopes that speaking about the issue will help change the future of her children.

*Hartley defines emotional labour as "emotion management and life management combined. It is the unpaid, invisible work we do to keep those around us comfortable and happy. It envelops many other terms associated with the type of care-based labor I described in my article: emotion work, the mental load, mental burden, domestic management, clerical labor, invisible labor."*

## 3.12 Content Review - 4

## "Please stop calling everything that frustrates you emotional labor." By Haley Swenson (Slate, 2017)

Instead of waiting for replies to articles and magazine entries, the Internet allows for immediate creation of discourse. Conversations develop at lightning speed, and get updated in real time. Published on Slate.com, Haley Swenson's article attempts to collate important aspects of the conversation around emotional labour at one place.

Commenting on Gemma Hartley's popular article in Harper's Bazaar, Swenson questions the practice of putting everyday frustrations with gender and relationships into the "emotional labor bin." Calling people to stop naming everything that frustrates them emotional labour, Swenson proposes a three-question checklist to put yourself through before you call what you are doing emotional labour –

- Are you doing emotional labour or just feeling emotions about the labour you are engaging in?

Swenson argues that all kinds of labour gives rise to emotions, but this does not mean that it can be classified as emotional labour. If all labour that causes emotions is put in one category, then the meaning of that category diminishes to nothing. The author argues

against doing this as the emotional labour category, when used right, is important to understand the repercussions of work and gender, as well as their very nature.

- Is emotional labour the right term for what you are doing or could there, perhaps, be a better word to describe it?

Some of the words that might be a better fit, according to Swenson, include social activism, clerical labour, mental load, educational labour, maternal gatekeeping, and patriarchy. Simply feeling frustrated by a task does not make it emotional labour.

- Lastly, are you using the term emotional labour as a catchphrase to escape negotiating expectations in relationships?

Speaking specifically to Gemma Hartley's definition of emotional labour, Swenson contends that Hartley names the typical negotiation of household work as emotional labour. She also points out the incongruency of calling the frustration Hartley feels as emotional labour without addressing the confusion and remorse felt by her husband at all.

Swenson argues that if you chalk everything down to emotional labour then you escape being accountable for having unreasonable expectations or not being able to negotiate realistic expectations.

In conclusion, Swenson asserts that doing household chores, dealing with the frustrations of delegating and relationship imbalances are not emotional labour. Problems rising from these areas can be, as they have been, categorised under the marquee of patriarchy – a term that Swenson contends "unfortunately, still perfectly fits the bill."

For her definition, Swenson harks back to the original definition from The Managed Heart by Arlie Hochschild while making space for bringing that definition from the workplace to the home sphere – *"Emotional labor is simply the management of feelings (your own or someone else's) to accomplish some goal—to leave a customer satisfied or to get someone to do something they might not otherwise want to, or to keep your household functioning."*

## 3.13 Content Review - 5

## "The stupid-easy guide to emotional labor" by Tracey Moore (Mel Magazine, 2018)

Moore's stupid-easy guide dishes out her ideas about emotional labour in a question-and-answer format that is easy to follow and understand. Right off the bat, the author categorises giving partners, male friends, bosses, etc. reminders and emotion management so others feel involved as emotional labour. To get her point across, Moore creates a portmanteau of the words man and handholding to come up with "mandholding" – a word that, according to her, explains emotional labour.

Doffing her hat to Arlie Hochschild's "The Managed Heart," Moore acknowledges that while the term 'emotional labour' was initially used in reference to a workplace environment, it has now been "adopted" to convey the invisible work and attention that goes into caring for others. The author inaccurately states that Hochschild's book focused on women's work in jobs, whereas the book focuses on the emotional weight of jobs like bill collection and flight attending, irrespective of the gender of the worker.

An interesting question that Moore raises in her article is why don't women just stop doing emotional labour if it is so much trouble. Her answer grazes the surface of the

problem which is that if women go on an all-out emotional labour strike, the likelihood is that none of this work would get done. In the article, she also alludes to the fact that women are judged more harshly for not meeting these unsaid expectations as they are considered to be naturally better at it. The little things that constitute emotional labour are not little at all. Moore considers them essential to the fabric of society, and points out at the unfair pressure created only on women to meet these expectations.

Answering the what's in it for me question for men, Moore attempts to show that men who do not do emotional labour tasks are more likely to die of heart diseases. The other reason for men to step up and do it is that women in their lives are exhausted with them shirking this responsibility. Her solution then is for men to learn about emotional labour, talk about it, and pitch in equally so as to create equity in the household and workplace.

*Moore defines emotional labour as the free, invisible work, emotional attention, advice, caring, and listening that women do that acts as "the glue that holds households, and by extension, proper society, together."*

## 3.14 Content Review - 6

## “The concept creep of ‘emotional labor’” by Julie Beck (The Atlantic, 2018)

Author Julie Beck identifies emotional labour as a central term in the discourse surrounding the division of work in households. The article traces the concept creep of the term before entering a Q&A with Arlie Hochschild.

Called the next frontier of feminism, emotional labour is a term that is getting a lot of screen time online. Other than being mentioned in blog posts and academic articles, it is also fast-becoming a part of the daily vocabulary of people online, as evidenced by an increasing number of comments and searches involving the term. Beck takes her questions about the way the meaning of the term has changed right to the source, Arlie Hochschild, author of The Managed Heart.

Speaking of the myriad purely labour tasks that have been added to the umbrella of emotional labour, Beck argues that when the usage of the term becomes murky and vague, the conversation that needs to rightfully had about the term gets lost in translation.

Beck gets the conversation started by asking Hochschild about her original definition of the term and her views on the way the definition is expanding. Hochschild

responds in dismay over the overextension and confusion surrounding a term that she defines as the unpaid effort expended in feeling the right feeling for a paid job.

While she welcomes the interest in the term, Hochschild seems horrified not just with the blurriness surrounding it but also the complete lack of a social-class perspective. Driving the conversation back to her initial idea that stemmed from alienation and disenchantment, Hochschild alludes to alienation when it comes to family issues as a symptom of a deeper-seated problem in society. However, she maintains that this problem is alienation and the causes of it, and not emotional labour as is being touted online.

The new definition of emotional labour as it is evolving, according to Hochschild, seems to feminize things that should actually be treated in a gender-neutral way. In her question pertaining to feminist conversations surrounding emotional labour, Beck believes that the essentialist notion that women are emotional is at play – since women do this work, and women are emotional; the work itself must be emotional work/labour. Such a generalisation can only be detrimental to the feminist movement.

Beck and Hochschild agree that, *"If you have an important conversation using muddy ideas, you cannot accomplish your purpose… It can defeat the purpose; it can backfire."*

# CHAPTER 4

# ANALYSIS

> “If I got paid for all of my emotional labor, I'd have like a lot of money (…) I'd hire an unassuming relatively attractive white man to follow me around so every time you don't believe me, he can just repeat what I said, so then like you do believe me. (…) If I had a nickel for every time, I stayed up too late for someone who would never wake up for me; a dollar for every minute I tried to make a sad man feel less sad; a penny for every time I had to bend and stretch to prove to someone that I'm here- that I exist; my heart would rattle and shake with all of the coins spilling back into it. I'd only worry about saving myself. I'd never feel like any of this was my fault, or like I owed you one again.”

- Melissa Lozada-Oliva - "If I Got Paid for All My Emotional Labor" (transcribed from YouTube Button Poetry video - 2017)

Is there a name for all the work that women put in emotionally? What is emotional labour? Do only women do it? Should women be paid for doing this work? Should women stop doing it? Why is it difficult to stop doing their performative tasks even when the process is frustrating? What is the right compensation – wages or equity in the homestead or something else?

## 4.0 Recurrent Themes: Textual Content Analysis

Like a seed, the idea of emotional labour has taken root in popular imagination. Like a growing sapling, the roots of this idea have spread far and wide from its initial stance. A textual content analysis of the sample blog articles and comments, and the review of literature reveals a set of recurrent themes. In order to arrive at a feminist academic definition of the term 'emotional labour,' an analysis of the sample, and a comparative discourse analysis of crowdsourced comments has been conducted.

## 4.1 Women are 'Naturally' Better at Certain Tasks

A recurrent theme in the samples, the idea that women are 'naturally' better at emotional and household management tasks that require attention to detail and concern is a gender essentialist idea. Philosophically, essentialism refers to the primary essence of things, but in feminist theory, essentialism is a biologically deterministic term that groups together people on the basis of gender, sexuality, or race and assigns to them stereotypical characteristics (Mukhopadhyay 2016, 131). Women are natural care-givers, men are innately aggressively, men and women have differently wired brains – all of these are examples of gender essentialism.

In Woman and Labour (1911), Olive Schreiner became one of the first women intellectuals to define attributes like love, generosity, and co-operation as essentially

feminine virtues (Mukhopadhyay 2016, 49). Owing to their focus on the capacity of women to proffer care and nurturance, cultural feminists have also been accused of being essentialists.

> "I think the thinking really is as simple as "I am bad at X, other people are good at X, therefore I will leave X to them." Which often is accompanied by the assumption that people who are good at X actually enjoy it. Which is possibly true for some people, and some variations of X. But when I ask my son to help empty the dishwasher or some other chore and he responds "I don't want to," or "I don't feel like it," my response is always, ALWAYS, "Nobody likes it. But it has to get done." To me that is the insidious thinking that has to be overcome -- that somewhere out there is the Helping Fairy who enjoys washing dishes and cleaning up pee and making sure there's always milk in the fridge, and who rushes in to do so because it's fun for her."
>
> -posted by Mchelly (MetaFilter)

In the samples, not only did the women allude to their frustration with the misconception that women are naturally better at certain tasks, but men classified as feminist allies also failed to understand the issue behind emotional labour partly because they saw the work as women playing to their strengths.

Gender essentialist norms have long played a role in what women are allowed to do – these stereotypes are used to define what women can/cannot do within the household and at the workplace. The classification of household work as mindless drudgery which is women's work is gender essentialism strutting down the aisle under the mantle of patriarchy.

In her article, Hartley agrees that there might be a few household tasks that she is better at, but that is because she along with women all over the world have been conditioned to accept these tasks as their own work – the resulting efficiency is merely a representation of practice and not inherent nature.

## 4.2 Women's Role: Imposed yet Denigrated

True to form, patriarchy wields a double-edged sword – not only are certain tasks (such as household duties, management of household chores, anything to do with emotions) imposed upon women, these very same tasks are simultaneously denigrated and denied any worthwhile recognition.

> "I'm not a dude, but my sense as an outside observer is that men are discouraged from taking pleasure in emotional labor because it's so widely understood as inextricable from womanhood itself, and thus seen/treated as a practice that is inherently emasculating when engaged in by any man, ever. So many men are openly ridiculed, if not outright physically and psychologically punished, for displaying any kind of "feminine" traits, and our culture explicitly AND implicitly codes emotional labor (emotion, period!) as one of the most "feminine" traits of all."
>
> -posted by divined by radio (MetaFilter)

Whether it is women or domestic workers undertaking household chores, the tasks themselves are seen as having reduced value and not contributory to societal productivity. The essentialist notions that women are emotional, care-giving, and nurturing by nature does not come with respect for these qualities. Classified as feminine virtues, these emotional aspects of personality are characterised as hysteria, over-sensitivity, and

nagging – all of which have negative undertones. A man is never hysterical, overly-sensitive or a nag, except when he is behaving like a woman – an entirely undesirable trait in men.

This denigration makes it difficult for any work that involves emotion management to be given its due recognition and respect. Since being emotional is classified as a feminine trait, any product associated with it is automatically marked down in value in a patriarchal world.

## 4.3 Social Conditioning

A recurrent theme in the samples, the authors agree that women are raised, socialised, and conditioned to behave a certain way. This social conditioning is the reason why women take on the emotional labour assignments. It is also the reason why showing dissatisfaction with ‘women’s lot’ and even insinuating that domestic chores, emotional labour, or sexual work deserves monetary recompense is so blasphemous. Being unhappy with taking care of your family and friends is just not something that women are supposed to or allowed to do.

> "For a bunch of practical reasons, Atropos Jr's dad ended up being the one who took her to ballet class, did her hair in a bun, made sure she had her ballet slippers etc. Fast-forward to her recital one year and I introduce myself to one of the other mothers as I'm dropping off some costume piece. She stares at me for a second and says, "we all assumed Atropos Jr didn't have a mother." At first, I thought she was just being snotty, and there was definite disapproval there, but she was also completely sincere. For this woman, the only possible scenario in which a kid's dad did that job was one in which the mother was dead or otherwise absent. My husband got either pity or adulation from women for doing this stuff; once it turned out I was alive and just not doing "my" job, I was treated with a lot of hostility. Yeah, dance tends to be gendered but this kind of thing happens all over."
>
> -posted by atropos (MetaFilter)

This societal discomfort with women's unhappiness and frustration is perhaps best exemplified with how motherhood and mothers are treated in social circles and media. In an abusive manipulative relationship, hegemony need not be maintained only via force – heaping excessive praise that is devoid of any action is another way to manipulate the status quo to fit the abuser's needs.

> "How much of this labor has a woman got to pay out before dudes will do anything in return? Seriously, what's the price? Because we've been doing this shit all our lives, yet we've never saved up enough goodwill to have our needs acknowledged. We've asked politely and waited patiently, but we're made out to be the bad guys for even bringing it up."
>
> -posted by gueneverey (MetaFilter)

Mothers are praised for being 'superheroes' who can do everything. From whipping up four separate breakfast items while balancing an infant on one hip, to getting clothes ready for other family members and ensuring the household runs like clockwork

before heading to work, what can't a mother do? If the glorification of busy is capitalistic trope, the glorification of superhero mothers is a patriarchal blow.

Not only are these guidelines unrealistic, they are inhumane. The ideas that a mother can just be tired and fed up of hearing children cry, that a woman may not want to be a mother at all, that a mother is not good at cooking, or that a woman may prioritize waged work over domestic pursuits are ideas that are denied and invisibilized.

Online spaces where women have access and can use it to put forward their opinions without censorship and policing offer one safe space where these conversations can be had. However, no bid for freedom goes unpunished, and harassers, trolls, and patriarchal stooges abound online – always ready to call a mother who is not superhuman, an unnatural failure.

Since women are supposed to be born care-givers who are naturally attuned to their family's needs, their frustration with performing emotional work tasks is seen as something to be invisibilized, if not demonized.

## 4.4 **Putting the Emotion in Emotional Labour**

Men are protectors and providers; women are care-givers and nurturers – this is the sexual division of labour that patriarchy prescribes. Over the years, with more and

more women entering the workforce, the role of provider is no longer gendered. When you consider that women need protection from men, the dangerous patriarchal standards behind men being protectors is revealed. However, for women, being a part of the workforce is in addition to being care-givers and nurturers. It is not an either/or prospect. Working outside of home is what women are 'allowed' to do.

Not only are women supposed to handle household chores and the emotional labour associated with it, they also have to do it with a smile on their face, while ensuring that every other family member is happy, too. This mentally-consuming task of keeping peace in the household is assigned to women. Those who do not fulfil it, and are not good at managing other people's emotions are labelled nags, high maintenance, and are said to have 'issues.'

The management of other people's emotions is done at a cost to the manager. Here, patriarchy introduces another essentialist quality that women have to have – being self-sacrificial. It has been decided that managing other people's emotions and the household necessitates sacrifices on a woman's part and that is how it is – patriarchy is comfortable with this status quo, even if women are not.

"... But I too have been shouldering the emotional labour as my parents have aged, and so I'm dropping off my story here. It's this: when my mother came out of the hospital after having both hips replaced, I left my apartment and slept on her living room couch for three weeks so that I could help with her recovery, and cook for her and be available in case she needed anything during the night. And everyone thought that this was the correct and appropriate thing for me to do, despite the fact that my brother was already living there. So yes, this thread is one that resonates a great deal in my own life, despite everything."

-posted by jokeefe (MetaFilter)

Asked from the privileged, accountability feels like oppression. Changing this status quo would require recognition that said dynamic exists, that it needs to be changed, and the willingness of the privileged (those who profit from women's emotional labour) to give up their privileges and shoulder an equitable burden. This has always been easier said than done.

As with the examples of "feminist allies" in the samples and comments, men who are in other ways believers of gender equality find it difficult to accept the existence of emotional labour and consequentially, fail to see what they are not contributing towards. This male pattern blindness is socially-conditioned. The inability to recognise emotion work and its importance in the household also stems from an overall learned inability to see emotions as worthwhile.

## 4.5 Alienation and its Discontents

In the essay "Can Emotional Labor Be Fun?" Arlie Hochschild delves into the reasons why workers and professional care-givers take up the jobs that they do and reveals that there is a certain affinity that these workers feel towards the jobs that they apply for. For example, a teacher typically enjoys spending time with children, and a nurse finds a sense of gratification in taking care of the elderly. So, while emotional labour can be fun, Hochschild contends that the fact that this work has to be conducted within a broken system (lack of funds, bureaucracy, low wages, low recognition) is what causes the anxiety, thereby, requiring deep acting (Hochschild 2013, 24-31).

> "It's hard to see, and it's easy to fall into these patterns - society pushes it onto us, we take it onto ourselves, and sometimes don't even notice. I didn't get to the state where I was being the Invisible Logistical Wonder Woman overnight. I've been calling myself a feminist since I was eleven years old, but I didn't notice that my own desire to "just help out" was toxic. Nobody ever stopped me back then and said "hey, are you doing all right? You don't have to do this much, you know." I just thought it was what I was supposed to do. No, instead, the refrain I heard from others was always "wouldn't it be nice if..." alongside some version of "please do more." (…) It's not easy to get to a place where emotional labor is even noticed, much less valued."
>
> -posted by lriG rorriM (MetaFilter)

Quoted in "The Concept Creep of 'Emotional Labor,'" Hochschild points at the pervasive feeling of alienation or disenchantment that women are feeling while doings tasks that express connection and love i.e. tasks that are not inherently alienating. According to Hochschild, the solution is not an equitable split of alienated work between men and women, but to understand why enchanted work becomes alienated work in the

first place. While men can simply choose not to do certain tasks at home, women are not taught the power of saying no.

Author Deepa Narayan writes about the creation of an Indian woman's identity. Stating that Indian women are taught to be gritty, perseverant, persistent, indomitable, and self-sacrificial. However, she notes that when these women get stuck in "endless, joyless duty," they pay for it with the death of their passion and life purpose. Without this enchantment or passion with their own lives, women become "half-dead even when they dress up to sparkle for family functions" (Narayan 2018, 236).

Most women then are stuck in dead-end familial lives, whether or not they are waged workers, where the labour assigned to them is strongly imposed, denigrated, mostly ignored, rarely recognised, and sometimes, completely invisibilized.

## 4.6 Internalised Pressure and Mental Health

If emotional labour is such a gargantuan task and it is creating so much frustration in the women doing it, then why don't they just stop? This is a question that men and allies ask again and again in the blogs/articles. Pat Mainardi's husband countered that if she didn't like the way he did a chore, then she ought to do it herself. These questions highlight two main problem areas – why do women persist in doing emotional labour if it costs them so much, and why does housework, emotional or otherwise, need to be done in a specific way.

Calling it a 'sore,' Mainardi points at the guilt that women feel over a messy house. The underlying understanding, according to her, is that household work is ultimately a woman's responsibility. It is a responsibility that women are taught to accept from birth. If a man and woman fail to complete the same task – household or emotional – they are judged for their perceived failure in different ways. A woman should have known better, and a man did well just by showing up and trying.

This creates a sense of pressure that women are taught to internalise. In this way, the cultural hegemony unleashed by the family and society are internalised to the point that women become their own judge, jury, and executioner when they fail at tasks that they should have known how to do.

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"My brother once said, proudly, that he doesn't take any notice of anything unless it splats in his face, because that way he knows he is only dealing with the important stuff.
vs.
The expectation that women will be naturally, effortlessly skilled at
1) keeping track of what's important to family members, friends of the family, work colleagues;
2) having antennae out for others' invisible and subtle expectations/missives/tone/ frequency of contact/mood/needs;
3) noticing entropy and taking note of potential problems;
4) acting as a fixer-facilitator-logistics coordinator;
5) making things comfortable/easy/non-threatening for others; while
6) doing this on an unpaid basis;
7) doing this on an unnoticed basis;
8) being mocked and/or gaslighted for mentioning the existence of all of this as work, and as exhausting;
9) being called nags and told to lower our standards, because we notice so much; and
10) feeling like we are failing at "being in charge of everyone's happiness."

-posted by MonkeyToes (MetaFilter)

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This internalised pressure applies to household chores as well as emotional labour tasks. The need to be nice while correcting the behaviour of others, or indeed, the need to correct the behaviour of other adults as if it were your own responsibility are symptoms of this pressure.

Dedicating an entire chapter in her book “Chup” to people-pleasing, Narayan contends that women are raised to be “pleasing drones” (Narayan 2018, 93) and are taught to suppress their own emotions in order to please others. When the life purpose of women is pleasing other people, there is no other alternative but to hide their own emotions and pretend to be loving, happy, unaffected, and unhurt (Narayan 2018, 103). While women are taught to be emotional radars for other people’s feelings, they are required to ignore or hide their own. This results in a disconnect within the mind making it difficult to even identify personal emotions after years of ignoring them.

Also known as self-love deficit disorder, codependency is another mental health issue that is likely to arise from this kind of rigorous training to forget oneself. Unfortunately, like emotional labour, there is no broadly accepted definition of codependency. The process of diagnosis and treatments proffered have been heavily critiqued by feminists.

Codependency was identified as enabling behaviour displayed by family members and partners of alcoholics in the 1970s in the United States. Considered a seminal work on the topic, Melody Beattie’s “Codependent No More” (1987) loosely defines a codependent person as someone who allows another person’s behaviour affect their own

and is, therefore, obsessed with controlling others' behaviour to their detriment (Beattie 1987, 36).

Lindley, Giordano and Hammer present a comparatively well-accepted list of codependency dynamics such as "lack of autonomy, excessive involvement in caretaking for the purposes of gaining emotional support, and low self-confidence" (Lindley et.al. 1999, 60). Calling out the authors who write about codependency self-help for primarily talking to women who are seen as the obvious inheritors of this trauma behavioural pattern, Marguerite Babcock and McKay (1995) critique them for pushing the burden of oppression on the oppressed i.e. victim blaming. Babcock and McKay characterise this excessive focus on women as a misogynist construct, and believe it to be a backlash against feminism (Babcock and McKay 1995, 21).

Thus, women are socialised to be over-responsible for other people's emotions, ostracised for failing at what they are 'naturally' good at, and diagnosed for voicing their frustration with the imposed job role and lack of equity.

## 4.7 The Quantification Conundrum

Is quantification of emotional labour possible? Is it a desirable outcome?

Nobel Laureate Simon Kuznets is known for working out the primary aspects of national income accounting in the 1930s. Known as the GDP, this is the metric countries all over the world use to compare year-on-year growth. However, Kuznets focused only on tangible goods and services as having production value. The result is that the GDP in use today ignores the value of unpaid work entirely.

In 2011, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) generated a paper titled "Cooking, Caring and Volunteering: Unpaid Work Around the World" that used time-use surveys across 26 OECD member states and 3 other emerging economies (including India) to drive attention to the fact that household production continues to contribute to economic activity to a large extent. The report suggested that this unpaid work, done primarily by women, accounts for 33-50% of all valuable economic activity conducted in these countries. The study found that Indian women put in between 4.3 and 5 hours of extra unpaid work than men (Miranda 2011, 11).

Unpaid work includes routine housework (cooking, gardening, cleaning, caring for pets, home maintenance), care of household members, shopping, care for non-household members, volunteering and travel related to unpaid work (Miranda 2011, 15-16). The OECD has created a Better Life Index that includes a variety of components including health and work/life balance to measure a country's success.

Similarly. Bhutan follows a Gross National Happiness model to measure its national success rates. Till a capitalism-driven GDP remains the dominating success metric for countries, unpaid work remains unseen and unaccounted for.

After the International Wages for Housework Campaign in Italy in 1972, there have been a number of calls for wages for housework. Some proposals called on the spouses to pay homemakers for household work, while some put the onus on the state. These proposals have the same basic flaws. Not only do they blanketly assume that household labour is women's work, they also stray into a dangerous area – if a spouse has to pay the "salary" then the payer automatically owns the labour product and labourer's time. This would impact the idea of equal partnership within a marriage, something that is already difficult to realise in real life.

By placing the onus of paying wages on the spouse, these proposals also allow the state to escape its responsibility. Since 2006, Venezuela has been paying its homemakers around $180 per month in lieu of a salary. While many see this as a step in the right direction, the amount agreed upon is 80% of the minimum wage of the country.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a homemaker's work is equated with that of a student – the work is non-economic and voluntary. However, with socialisation and conditioning in place, there is very little that is actually voluntary when it comes to the unpaid work that women do at home.

In an attempt to quantify and monetise the household work that women do, the work has been divided into jobs done by specific waged workers outside of home. For example, a part of a homemaker's time is dedicated to doing the job of a teacher, laundry

manager, accountant, staff nurse, interior designer, psychologist, and academic advisor, to name a few.

While such a quantification does acknowledge the many roles that women play in their households, the call is for wages based on work hours alone. As these job roles are not neatly put aside in boxes that do not intermingle with each other, and women don multiple roles simultaneously, it is difficult to accurately quantify and monetise this work. Emotional labour is not accounted for at all, and since the same situation may or may not cause emotional labour and its frustrations in two different people, it is nigh impossible to put an amount to it.

Often, it is easy to get stuck answering the question whether or not something can be done, without delving into the more important question of whether or not it should be done in the first place. Considering the task of putting a monetary value on a number of things that come under the umbrella of emotional labour is such a gargantuan task, it is likely that a push for this kind of quantification might cause the issue to disappear without being addressed by being deemed impractical.

Another important question to answer is whether a push for monetary value is actually desirable from a feminist standpoint.

"Some additional complications this market would present:

1. What counts as emotional labor and what doesn't count?
2. Can a person contract around emotional labor payment? Couldn't a husband and wife agree in a prenuptial agreement that each will provide the other with emotional labor gratis?
3. What of those who live alone? They clean their own houses free of charge because the value flows only to them? What if they are cleaning in order to host a party on behalf of another person? (I supposed this could constitute a gift.)
4. What would this do to the childcare, eldercare, housekeeping, hospitality, etc industries.

It is interesting that this solution would just lock us into market capitalism even more. Monetize everything.... Or is this just recognizing a value that already exists (a flaw in the market)?"

-posted by sallybrown (MetaFilter)

Kowtowing to the understanding that if work is not 'productive' in a fiscal sense, then it isn't work at all is demeaning and dangerous for the role that women play within and outside households. Taking from Audre Lorde's Sister Outsider, "*For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (Lorde 2007, 112).

Fighting to squeeze in this very real work that women do into a capitalist framework does not allow for the creation of a new space of recognition and equality for all the layers of work done by women. It also trivialises the components that are love's labour by attempting to quantify it. Trying to gain monetary approval from a broken and rigged system is a fool's errand.

> “It’s a substantial amount of overhead, having to care about everything. It ought to be a shared burden, but half the planet is socialized to trick other people into doing more of the work.”
>
> -posted by Lyn Never (MetaFilter)

Perhaps, the goal ought not to be that there has to be a monetary value assigned to emotional labour tasks but to receive recognition for it as labour, to push for a more equitable division of the same, and to ease the alienation being felt while doing these tasks.

# CHAPTER 5

# CONCLUSION

## 5.1 Emotional Labour: What it is, what it isn't

From a textual analysis of the chosen samples and the review of literature connected to the topic, a few broad guidelines can be drawn about what does and does not constitute emotional labour. Emotional labour includes the work being done to manage the emotions of oneself and those around us that cause the manager anxiety (stemming from fear of complete failure and fear of making a mistake). This negative emotion is not inherent in the act of delegating household or emotional work, but in the insurmountable need to do so, and the pressure to ensure that the work is done in a particular way and in good time. Even when tasks are delegated, emotional labour rears its head in the form of supervisor's anxiety or stress.

## 5.2 Proposed Definition

*Emotional labour is the essential, unrecognised, and endless emotion management (of self and others) work that causes anxiety/negative affect in the doer, and is guiltlessly expected and accepted by the patriarchally-entitled receiver.*

While this type of labour is a necessitated by-product of patriarchy and capitalism in both public and private lives of individuals, in itself, it is not gendered. However, a deeper understanding of it is only possible by looking at from a feminist intersectional lens. The burden of this labour has historically rested on women's shoulders, as well as those from marginalised sections of society who have to put in the extra effort to manage their own real emotions so as to manage those of people around them. This includes non-heteronormative people, people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ communities, people considered to be from a lower class/caste, and anyone who has to express opposition to their oppression keeping the oppressor's feelings in mind.

## 5.3 Way Ahead

Women are not a homogenous group whose opinions can be generalised and applied across the board. This definition of emotional labour has been fashioned from crowdsourced blog articles and new media inputs. It is important to acknowledge that not all women have access to the online world. Further research into how women from other backgrounds (women of colour, across caste and class divides, minority communities, different age groups) experience emotional labour and what it elicits from them is necessary to significantly contribute to the definition and the feminist body of literature.

Furthermore, emotional labour as an ungendered patriarchal problem deserves a deep dive to understand how it plays out within protest culture, and in LGBTQIA+ individuals and their relationships.

Another area of study is how men see and experience emotional labour, a process that stems from aspects of patriarchal conditioning they have not been privy to.

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