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The affective style of equality expertise in the service economy

In the article, we examine the affective requirements of work-life equality expertise. We ask how one becomes an equality expert in the service economy, and what kind of affective style the role reflects. The research context was a separately funded, two-year equality expert training programme. Our research data consist of students' diaries, interviews, and field notes. The results show that the avoidance of negative affects and the pursuit of neutrality were investments in 'correct' ways of doing equality work. These investments then resulted in an affective style prioritising smooth and conflict-free interaction and pre-rehearsed techniques and arguments. We conclude that the expertise produced by the training programme was seemingly neutral, but it turned out to be white, binary-gendered equality professionalism. In the context of marketised equality work where experts should provide their services to as many as possible, an overly personal or radical affective style creates the risk of producing 'legitimate equality experts'.