

## Hochschild's 'Managed Heart'

Questions concerning the notion of a 'managed heart' were first explicitly asked by an American sociologist, Arlie Hochschild (1979, 1983), especially in relation to the concepts of 'emotion work' and 'emotional labour'. Hochschild offers deep insight into the social actor's ability to work on emotion in order to present a socially desirable performance, and also into capitalism's clever appropriation of that skill.

In her earlier work, Hochschild attempts to put the subject of emotions firmly on to the sociological map by linking 'emotion work, feeling rules and social structure' (1979: 276). To carry out emotion work is the act of attempting to change an emotion or feeling so that it is appropriate for any given situation. In order to be able to assess the situation correctly, and produce the expected feeling, social guidelines are used: 'a set of shared, albeit often latent, rules' (Hochschild, 1983: 268) which help fit together the emotion and the situation - for instance, feeling sad at funerals but happy at weddings. The use of the word 'work' to describe the management of emotion stresses that it is something that is actively *done* to feelings. It is an effort directed towards the production, on call, of 'suitable' emotions: 'I tried not to laugh', 'I forced myself not to cry', 'I was determined not to show my anger'.

The ability to *manage* emotion according to the 'rules' of the situation emphasises the need to acknowledge the power of the social: as socialised beings actors 'try to pay tribute to official definitions of situations, with no less than (their) feelings' (Hochschild, 1979: 257). Emotion work is a gesture in everyday social exchange; the rules exist to ensure social stability and the well being of those involved. Nevertheless, the giving and receiving of emotion work is not always a smooth transaction. The gesture may be carried out half-heartedly, or it may not be carried out at all, either because of ignorance, dislike or complete disregard for the rules of the situation. On the other hand, a person may work harder at emotion management than would normally be expected, especially if they care for the people involved or feel the situation is special.

The acceptance of the view that, within the social framework, actors can 'do' varying degrees of emotion work, that there is choice in what, when, how much and to whom they give, allows the introduction of the concept of the 'gift exchange'. Here Hochschild (1983: 86) questions what happens 'when deep gestures of exchange enter the market sector.' When people are no longer free to negotiate their own rate of 'exchange', when emotion management becomes another aspect of saleable labour power, then feelings become commodities (Hochschild, 1979: 277).

In her book *The Managed Heart* (1983) Hochschild introduces the term 'emotional labour' to describe emotion management with a 'profit motive slipped under it'. Her study of air stewardesses highlights how emotion management is being increasingly used by organisations in a 'service-producing society.' In this sense, 'commercial love' is now becoming an essential part of many routine face-to-face service jobs (Hochschild, 1983: 10).

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***Further Reading***

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