
Book Review

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The Managed Heart. Commercialisation of Human Feeling. Twentieth Anniversary Edition with a New Afterword

by: A.R. Hochschild

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The 'Managed Heart' is a famous text; Arlie Russell Hochschild's seminal analysis of how people manage their emotions and how this applies specifically in work settings. She describes the process where, 'seeming to love the job becomes a part of the job'. The object of her in-depth analysis is the emotional labour and work of flight attendants employed by Delta Air Lines, one of main flight providers in the south of the USA at that time. The flight attendants become a personalised 'spontaneous warmth in uniforms' and are supposed to create the best possible experience for passengers. However, there are interesting questions to be asked about the relevance of this text to countries with a different emotional regime. In this review, I discuss the content of Hochschild's text and then apply the lens of my own culture – Poland – to examine the cross-cultural applicability of this work.

Hochschild later moves onto a discussion of debt collectors who, in contrast to flight attendants, are supposed to impose fear on debtors but both groups of workers have to either present and/or create in themselves in the right mood, in order to be convincing. These employees perform what is later defined as 'emotional labour'. This type of labour involves workers in displaying certain emotions as part of their job, and in promoting organisational goals to clients, customers and/or co-workers. Employees can display corporation-desired emotions by acting. The form of acting which seems to be mostly desired by employers is 'deep acting', which involves modifying one's feelings to match the emotion expressions the organisation requires. However, when an individual is unable to modify their feelings on a deeper level, then 'surface acting' might take over and have to suffice. Surface acting involves 'painting on' affective displays, or faking an attitude; the employee presents emotions on his or her 'surface' without actually feeling them.

According to Hochschild, roughly half of working American women tends to perform jobs that subject them to substantial demands for emotional labour. It would be interesting to know how this statistic has changed since the book was published in 1983 and reprinted a number of times. Moreover, the changing nature of work will have radically altered this estimate, most likely upwards and the same will most likely be the case for men as traditional areas of men's employment moves towards person skills, the service sector and the needs of the 'sovereign consumer'. As services are becoming the

main sector of business, and consequently employment, in developed economies, increasing numbers of people will be conducting emotional labour. Even though the author is a sociologist, her book has proven to have influenced organisational studies, health and social care, social policy and a variety of other areas.

The work of Arlie Russell Hochschild would seem to have universal appeal because in every culture, every political system and economic model, people have to manage their emotions in some way and experience influences on the way they present and manage emotions from society. This is imposed on them through the process of socialisation, be it socialisation in capitalistic society in Northern America or in developing economy of Poland after 1989, when democracy and capitalism took over and a political transformation began. Being Polish, I found many aspects of the book's content and theories, applicable in Polish society as well. Twenty years after the collapse of real socialism and the introduction of a market economy in Poland, 'The Managed Heart' was finally translated into the Polish language. Having experience of customer service, from a client perspective, in the USA, the UK and in Poland, my impression is that emotional labour, as seen in Western economies, is becoming more commonly seen in contemporary Poland. However, it still seems to be predominately surface rather than deep acting. When a customer service person has a bad day or loses patience, one is still likely to see real emotions, which might not necessarily be desired by the organisation. One is also much more likely to witness real emotions on display in public sector services rather than in private companies. Furthermore, the bigger the corporation, the greater the expectation of a harmonisation and agreement about models of behaviour within it, rather like in 'more experienced' capitalist societies and pressure on employees to present 'spontaneous warmth in uniforms' seems to be more common in Polish branches of international corporations.

Poor examples of 'spontaneous warmth' can frequently be found within the personal selling sector in Poland, where smiles stick to the faces of sales persons like Venetian masks. The professional face of a person providing services in a developing economy, such as Poland, might differ significantly from the highly tuned professional presentation and etiquette of a person employed in a country where capitalism has a longer history with better wages (a thing that you not have in Poland). Even though the job opportunities are steadily improving in Poland, the financial aspect does not follow. The ideas about what constitutes a proper professional demeanour and behaviour might also differ in Poland depending on the age of a person who is expected to conduct the emotional labour. The experience and attitude of a person who started their career prior to economical transformation (during real socialism) will probably be different to that of someone who entered the same job 20 years later. Whilst there was a shortage of goods at the time of the state-regulated economy prior to 1989, a person working in customer services seemed more empowered than nowadays, where the client is dictating the conditions of exchange and can choose between multiple goods and service providers. However, it is possible that following exposure to the post-communist job market, Poland's emotional labourers will become more and more convincing in their efforts to manage emotions in line with the expectations of newly developing businesses and services, which are influenced by 'western' emotional ideals. This is not to say that in the era of real socialism Poles did not have to manage their emotions, but they had to do so in a different way and in other contexts. There was an ethos of 'stachanowiec', which refers to a model labourer who was outperforming colleagues, by working better and faster than

others and, consequently, raising efficiency norms with a smile attached. This model was widely promoted as a part of propaganda, which does not seem very different from the training methods adapted for Delta Airlines cabin crew and expected afterwards as a central tenet of one's work.

There is plenty of room for Hochschild's text to be reinterpreted through various cultural frameworks. It would seem both justified and fruitful to do so more in depth in order to learn about mechanisms of managing feelings in different cultural and professional settings. Theoretical and empirical cross-cultural investigation of Hochschild's ideas will add to our overall understanding of how emotional labour is performed and emotions managed in different societal contexts.