



The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling

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In private life we try to induce or suppress love, envy, and anger through deep acting or "emotional work," just as we manage our outer expressions through surface acting. But what happens when this system of adjusting emotions is adapted to commercial purposes? Hochschild examines the cost of this kind of "emotional labor." She vividly describes from a humanist and feminist perspective the process of estrangement from personal feelings and its role as an "occupational hazard" for one-third of America's workforce.

The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling Details

Date : Published June 15th 2003 by University of California Press (first published November 1983)

ISBN : 9780520239333

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Format : Paperback 339 pages

Genre : Sociology, Nonfiction, Feminism, Psychology, Academic, Gender, Business

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Katya says

Well, first things first: After reading this book, you will not be able to see "View from the Top" the same way again.

Hollywood sugar-coating stuff. Who knew?

When I was little, I noticed a strange thing. My parents seemed to really hate it when I raised my voice, but let my brother do his thing without a second thought. When I was little, I thought it was unfair, but since raising my voice only got me discredited, I learned to argue without letting my temper get the better of me.

It wasn't until I grew up and started reading that I realized what this was. "Girls should be seen, not heard." And while this book isn't a strictly feminist study, it does point out how "managing your emotions" affects women nowadays.

Does any of this sound familiar to you:

"Given the circumstances, I **should not** be upset."

"They're getting married! **Isn't** this wonderful?"

" **Why** do you say such things?"

The sentence constructs aren't out of the ordinary. In fact, they're very cliched phrases. But they also imply that the person they are addressed to has not reacted to a situation the way they are supposed to.

The heart of Hochschild's thesis lies in that there is a gap between what we feel, what is socially acceptable to feel and what part of our emotions we show. That gap is navigated with the help of "emotional management", or the art of presenting a certain image of oneself and one's emotions.

All is well and good, however, until we start using "emotional management" for profit. The author studied flight attendants because of the huge role emotional management plays into their jobs - they not only have practical tasks to fulfill, such as a safety instruction and pushing a cart around, but they also represent the company. They are the company representatives people have the most contact with, and they're under an enormous pressure to appear serene and unruffled, even when people take extreme liberties with them. The results, as Hochschild shows, are harrowing for the attendants.

I found the theories expressed as very solid and well researched. Hochschild does a good job at heading for the heart of the issue - that emotional management is a part of life and we perpetuate that, whether we mean to or not. That, combined with the latest GR drama, made a very powerful impression.

In fact, this whole book reminds me of this post by Ilona Andrews in which she describes her experience with a reader. She talks about how the Internet and Facebook blur the lines between person to person interactions, and person to enterprise interactions. However, those lines are already blurred - think about how

many times you've seen someone take out their frustration on a flight attendant, even though the woman has nothing to do with the flight being late. Or how many times someone has yelled at a sales clerk because some good was not properly packed.

In any business interaction, we view the company representative not as a person, but as an extension of an enterprise, or a community. We feel like we're a single person against one huge corporation. Readers feel it when authors stalk their reviews. Authors feel it when readers turn on them. Flight attendants feel it when people spit on them and throw tea at them (yes, such instances are described in the book), and passengers feel it when their flight is late.

Where does this go? Well, as soon as you apply it to your everyday life, you'll think that it is a huge problem. Hochschild is a little vague on that point. But then again, aren't we all?

Holli Hanson says

I found this book to be a helpful tool in learning about Emotional Labor. As a woman in the business world, I've spent/wasted much of my time managing other people's feelings. It was good to take some time to consider how and why I've been doing some of the things I have been doing.

Carlos says

A great read and a diligent effort to understand how emotional work has been commercialized. It remains remarkably relevant even though the decades since its publication have seen the study of emotional labor expand greatly and the continued evolution of work has gone in unexpected if not unimagined directions. Reading it from the perspective of a union organizer, and more generally as an advocate for social justice, the book illuminated important but overlooked ways that power and control are exercised at work.

Ysa says

This is the seminal sociological work that coined the term "emotional labor," now widely used to identify the unique psychological burdens placed on women and (often female) service workers. Hochschild locates emotions not just as naturally or spontaneously occurring, but as *social objects* that are socially mediated, and can be coaxed into different forms. She illustrates the ways that "emotional gift exchange" functions in our personal social lives, as well as the emotional machinery of "deep acting" used to transmute one feeling state into another for the sake of social appropriateness. Through investigation of the corporate training expectations placed on the flight attendant--the epitome of the feminized laborer--she then shows how the "feelings rules" workers must adhere to are explicitly articulated and imposed from higher up a corporate bureaucracy. The techniques of neutralizing anger at an abusive customer, for example, are enforced by management not for the sake of their workers' mental health but for the sake of securing a unflappably docile and "nice" worker whose service will earn them profit. The book includes a much-needed analysis of the way that hierarchy and inequality replicate themselves in the form of unbalanced reciprocity of emotional labor. Women in particular are socialized to do behind-the-scenes work to enhance the feelings of status and well-being in men, something that men come to expect from women, while also masking this work to appear as natural. In the case of the wage worker, this unbalanced reciprocity is codified in the nature of the labor contract. *The Managed Heart* is a game-changer, definitely a work I'll be referencing often from here on out.

Anurag Sharma says

I read this book as part of group assignment.

This is a phenomenal book in the way it explores various and numerous linkages between work life and personal life.

In the first part of the book she explores what emotions are and how they constitute an intrinsically precious part of one's identity. What I feel in a particular context tells me how to understand an event in my life and how to respond to it, in addition to helping me understand better the context that I find myself in. Emotions, seen in this way, are something that originate inside the body naturally, but also include the human work done on them, to change them according to a particular situation and institution. All of us, in our private lives, do this tempering with our emotions according to the institutions governing. So naturally, how much tempering you do or have to do, depends largely on power you enjoy in such institution. For example, in a patriarchal situation, women who enjoy less power would have to control their emotions much more than men have to do and girl child may be most of all. Hochschild calls it *emotion work*, done towards paying emotional dues to the collective resources of the institutions. We can do this via outer acting and deep acting. In the former, we know what we feel, but we portray otherwise, which leads one to realize the inferior position they enjoy, if not totally removing emotions from the equation. In deep acting, we mold our emotions in order to conform to what we are doing, sort of relaxing that tension between false self and true self. But this also leads to a situation where are unable to distinguish what we feel truly. Regardless of what option we choose, there is a heavy cost to be paid in terms of loss of identity in the form of emotions. She argues that when our emotions become part of what we sell as labour, this boundary between work life and private life becomes arbitrary, and serves to play the role of ignoring **emotional labour**, which is tempering with emotions in order to be able to work properly, to display what is required of the job. She supports her claims with the help of ethnographies that she did with flight attendants and bill collectors. Flight attendants, most of the women, are systematically taught and trained about how to control their emotions, so that the customer is always happy with the experience. So sexual advances are to be taken as a token of desirability, particularly 'irate' customer is to be taken as a child etc. They are supposed to be completely hospitable. Most of them are women because their upbringing in patriarchal setup has made them learn emotion tempering from a very early age. Men flight attendants are supposed to step up whenever situation gets out of control of women. Ticket collectors are supposed to be rude and demeaning to the defaulters and most of them are men. In a way, work situation becomes a derivative of private situation inside our homes, both reinforcing each other. Similar arguments can be given for class dimensions of work life.

In the *service economy* we are living in, face-to-face interactions become synonymous with controlling emotions. Everyone working has to do it, some more than others. Still, in work life or in our employment contracts, there is no mention of it at all. Managers are allowed to vent and employees are supposed to let it go. On the part of customer as well, there develops a tendency to calculate genuine emotions mandated by job and what is actually meant for themselves. In doing this, we start ignoring emotions in our daily lives, which form a very basic sense of what constitutes us.

A word or two about unmanaged heart. In a society, where we know everyone is tempering with emotions, displaying something that they are not feeling, we also begin to glorify the ability of not doing it. This obfuscates the fact that not everyone has power to do that, with differential access to this unsold heart being highly hierarchical according caste, class and gender etc. We tend to ignore people on the margins, because they are being nice to us as it is part of their job, which relieves us from having to acknowledge their emotions like greetings. They become background noise, which we learn to ignore.

Ebru says

Duygusal emek kavramı?n? literatüre ilk defa sokan kitap. Bu konuda yazacaklar ilk bu kitaba bakar.

Jacky says

Phenomenal book that really resonated with me.

Hochschild talks about the how commercial enterprises have put a value on emotions and how people have learned to detach themselves from their emotions, smiles, etc. in order to achieve a company objective.

She calls this sort of work emotional labor, a source of work that falls primarily on women in occupations such as secretary or flight attendant whom are expected to always have a cheerful smile written across their faces. A cheerful smile - the hallmark of a friendly flight attendant, but who's really smiling? Is it the natural self, or a fake self that we put on?

Not only has emotion management fall under the umbrella of commercialization, but it has also come under scrutiny in our private lives. How often do we engage in surface or deep acting in order to convey a feeling that we might not really feel? Grief at a funeral. Joy at a celebration. Hochschild looks into the gap between how we actually feel and how we think we should feel.

Chantal ♥? says

Downloaded this book by mistake for a buddy read.

Nothing wrong with this book.

Please enjoy but it was not the book I was looking for.

Namgay says

I might be slightly fangirling over Arlie Hochschild!!!

But 'objectively' speaking, this book made so much sense. I am grateful, as the other people mentioned in this book are, for Hochschild to put a name on something that we have all felt: emotional labour.

As someone with an *undisclosed job* I would often feel so exhausted after work ended, which would end up in resentment because I felt like I gave so much of 'myself' away. Now that I have a better understand of what's happening, I am certainly not more at ease with my job.

Tldr: Read this book if you want to know why your capitalist corporate job is sucking your soul.

Zachary Jacobi says

This book was rough on me (and on my whole book club!). Each of us found ourselves unable to process our emotions for a short while after reading it. First be warned of that.

Second, I found this book a bit of a disappointment compared to other books by Professor Hochschild. The other books I've read by her had much more in the way of interviews with subjects. I find her at her best when using interviews as fodder for theorizing. Her theorizing on its own was considerably drier.

Still highly recommended, probably the most thought provoking book of this year, but be prepared for more of a slog than other books of hers you might have read.

Kathryn Coffman says

Hochschild perfectly captures the perils of emotional labor in this book. Reading this in my college class, I was able to perform some empirical research inspired by Hochschild's work and realized, as a retail employee myself, how much corporations and companies can commercialize off your emotions. The comparisons between male and female workers were not shocking, but very intriguing, and surprised me when I experienced them face-to-face while researching. Even as an employee who utilizes emotional work daily, as a customer, I never thought about the employees I come into contact with and how much their job demands from them. Loved the references she makes to Erving Goffman--the perfect balance between psychology and sociology in this book, great for anyone fascinated by gender studies and/or minority classes within the workplace.

Vicki says

This book articulates one of those vague things you think about in the back of your mind but never put roger there. It's an extremely smart look at the service economy, and a depressing one as not much has changed 40 years later. Minus one star for organization that could have been tightened up.

Joe says

Reads like an academic study of flight attendants that was turned into a book. That's not a complaint. The author uses flight attendants to explain the book's core concept: "emotional labor."

The idea here is that, in Marx's day, laborers were alienated from their work physically as they trudged through repetitive task (the author notes that even Adam Smith found that this was an unappealing aspect of the division of labor). The author's perspective on today's work shows a different kind of alienation in our service economy: an alienation from our emotions. Think about how a flight attendant needs to smile and be subservient all the time. This affects their core personality in a way that factory laborers didn't need to "put on a good face" while working on the factory floor. For service workers, it is hard to "turn off" their artificial personality and become whoever they're supposed to be outside of their jobs.

That's the core of the book. The author explores different themes around it, e.g., differences in emotional

labor for men and women, differences between poor and middle class, etc. She focuses largely on jobs where emotional labor is a large part of the job. She briefly mentions that, within the higher realm of the corporate rat race, a large part of a senior executive's career can be determined by the personality that they create as their face within the company. That reminded me of a favorite business book, Moral Mazes, and an article from The Onion, "Woman Can't Wait To Get Home and Take Off Uncomfortable Persona." Or that scene in "The Graduate" where Dustin Hoffman's character is expected to be enthusiastic about a career in plastics.

In the book's afterword, the author writes about how flight attendants and other workers have told them that they appreciate that she has put a name ("emotional labor") to something that they all think about. That's probably the biggest value to the book. You don't need to read the entire book to understand that concept. But if you're curious about a deeper exploration into how the emotional parts of your job can affect your personality (and your co-workers' personalities), go ahead and read the whole thing.

Melissa says

This is an important book, but the research is focused on the airline industry and the claims are about emotional labour in general (a pretty big leap). Strictly sociology, doesn't engage directly in economic debates (to its detriment i think). I didn't find the "divided self" idea very convincing, either.

Rachel says

There were some important takeaways for anyone working in a service-driven field. When customer service is treated as a commodity and not the genuine culture of an organization, there is a toll exacted on employees. I have saved some of the passages to continue examining the toll of customer service work as burnout can be common in my industry and education on customer service isn't a standard part of graduate school education for library science.
