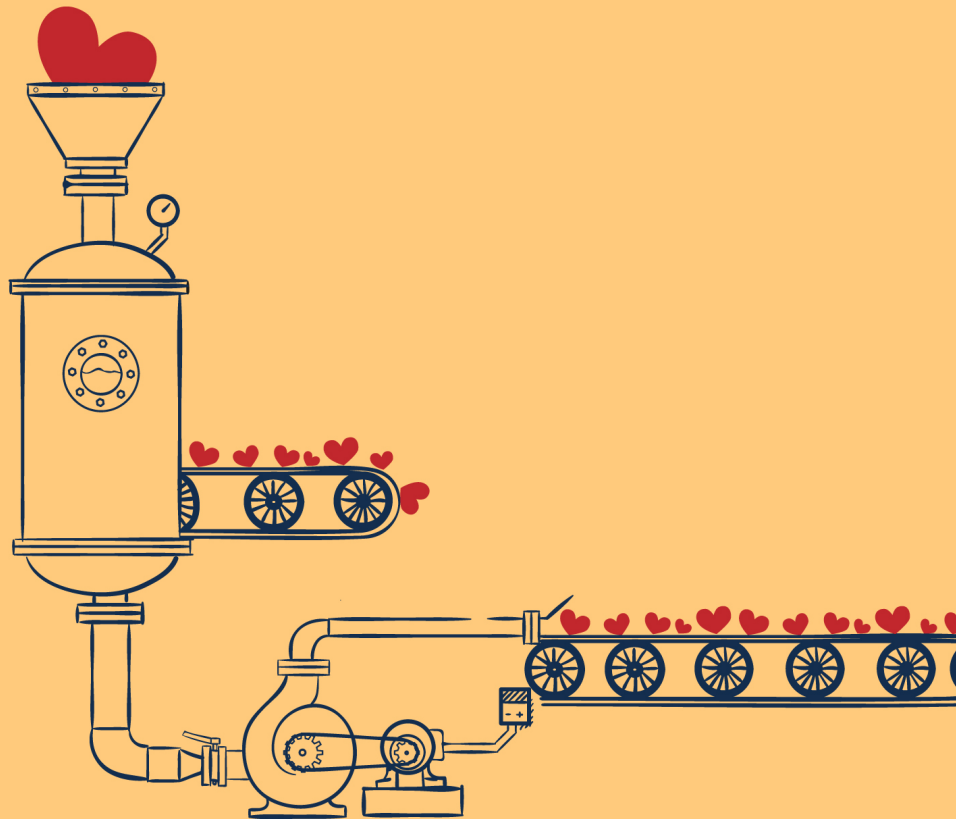


# SUMMARY

## THE MANAGED HEART

ARLIE RUSSELL HOCHSCHILD



# **Summary of “The Managed Heart” by Arlie Russell Hochschild**

Written by Lea Schullery

Learn about the commercialization of human feeling.

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# Introduction

At the age of twelve, Arlie Russell Hochschild found herself passing a dish of peanuts among the guests of her parents. As she offered them the dish, the guests would smile their diplomatic smiles in return, a gesture that many of us do each day. Afterward, however, Hochschild would listen as her parents dissected the various gestures of each guest, “The tight smile of the Bulgarian emissary, the averted glance of the Chinese consul, and the prolonged handshake of the French economic officer.” Through these conversations, she learned that conveyed messages were universal and she found herself wondering, “Had I passed peanuts to a person, or to an actor? Where did the person end and the act begin? Just how is a person related to an act?” Thus began Hochschild’s interest in emotions. Later in life, Hochschild was a graduate student at Berkeley where she read the writings of C. Wright Mills, particularly a chapter called “The Great Salesroom.” In it, Mills argued that when we “sell our personality” in the course of selling goods or services we engage in a seriously self-estranging process. Unfortunately, this is a process that many of us do each day at work as we attempt to sell goods, ideas, etc. In fact, the act of selling involves active emotional labor. This labor is part of a powerful, yet invisible, emotional system - a system composed of a variety of exchanges between people in private and public life. Hochschild then concluded that our emotions function as a messenger from the self and largely guide the actions we do each day. “Many emotions signal the secret hopes, fears, and expectations;” however, it is this function of our emotions that causes us to engage in emotional labor for a wage.

As Hochschild studied the daily lives of flight attendants and bill collectors, she saw life through the eyes of the male and female workers. She learned how these people limit their emotional offerings to just surface displays of the “right” feeling in which is expected of them. They felt “false” or “mechanical” in their daily interactions and Hochschild learned that the more we give and receive these emotions, the more we engage in emotional

labor. All of this has helped Hochschild learn how to interpret the smiles she sees around her every day.

# Emotional Labor in Our Everyday Lives

As we go about our daily lives and run errands, go to restaurants, go shopping, etc., we expect exceptional customer service. We expect service with a smile. Many times these employees must go about their day while burying any emotions they feel and putting on a friendly attitude. For instance, in 1980, a pilot once speaking to a room full of Delta Airlines Stewardess trainees told them, “Now girls, I want you to go out there and really *smile*. Your smile is your biggest *asset*. I want you to go out there and use it. Smile. *Really* smile. Really *lay it on*.”

Like many companies, Delta Airlines relied on smiling flight attendants to “reflect the company’s disposition - its confidence that its planes will not crash, its reassurance that departures and arrivals will be on time, its welcome and its invitation to return.” The smile has come to reflect a sense of professionalism; however, it’s not always so easy to take that smile off at the end of a long day. One flight attendant noted: “Sometimes I come off a long trip in a state of utter exhaustion, but I find I can’t relax. I giggle a lot, I chatter, I call friends. It’s as if I can’t release myself from an artificially created elation that kept me ‘up’ on the trip. I hope to be able to come down from it better as I get better at the job.”

Flight attendants especially are paid to smile *genuine* smiles to provide an authentic experience full of real happiness. They are expected to put the traveler’s minds at ease as they serve food and drinks. But they aren’t just providing a service, they are also providing warmth and calmness. Additionally, they are expected to engage in small talk, asking passengers a simple “How are you doing today?” Smile and small talk have become the basis of quality customer service, and while it may seem trivial, you notice when you don’t receive it. Imagine boarding a plane and *not* being met with a smile and a simple “*how are you?*” Would you consider the flight attendants to be providing inadequate customer service?

This type of work is what many sociologists today call *emotional labor* and can be defined as labor that requires us to suppress our feelings and ensure they are appropriate for a particular personal or professional setting. While the difference between physical and emotional labor may seem quite obvious, there is one similarity in the cost of their work: an estrangement or alienation from an aspect of self - either the body or soul - that is *used* to do the work. For instance, when a factory boy's arm functions like a piece of machinery, his arm becomes an instrument. Is his arm, in any meaningful sense, his *own*?

The same could be said of emotional labor, at what point is the flight attendants elation in doing her job her *own* elation? Of course, flight attendants aren't the only ones who must pay the cost of emotional labor. Take a look at actors, for example, whose job is to create the illusion of experiencing emotions that aren't his own, emotions that he may have never even felt before. However, there is one major difference in the emotional labor of actors and flight attendants. You see, actors engage in emotional labor for the sake of art whereas flight attendants must follow the policies set forth by corporations who solely wish to make a profit.



# How Our Emotions Can Go Against Society's Expectations

What happens when you become angry? For many people, anger might make their body tense, their heart race, their breath quicken, and their adrenalin rise. So what do you do? You curse, get the urge to hit something, yell, or even cry in response. Of course, doing any of these on the job if you're a flight attendant or in customer service is unprofessional. Therefore, training is often completed to teach trainees and future employees on how to keep their emotions in check.

For example, an instructor at flight attendant training once gave the following example of how to handle irate customers. She stated that when a man is being particularly rude, cursing, threatening to get her name and reporting her to the company, she pretends that something traumatic has happened in his life. This man, in particular, had just found out his son died, so whenever she encounters an irate customer, she thinks of that man. She tries to think about the *other* person and why they might be so upset. Doing so takes the attention off herself and allows her to remove herself from the equation, in the end, she doesn't feel so angry.

However, when we feel emotions, like anger, it is a clue into something more. Not only do your emotions reflect your current mood, but they are also powerful clues that reveal how you feel about the people and events in your life. For example, take a look at the following situation of a nineteen-year-old man. The man had agreed to host a party with a young woman who was an old friend. However, as the date for the party approached, the man realized that while he liked the woman, he didn't want the social identification that would come with jointly hosting a party. So the day before the party, he bailed. While the woman was placed in an embarrassing situation, the young man only felt relief. Why didn't he feel guilt or shame? Because he acted on his true feelings and his lack of guilt became a signal that he didn't belong with that woman.

When working emotionally laborious jobs, there becomes a disconnect between how we feel and what we know we *should* feel. Feeling guilty about our emotions happens when our feelings go against what we've been taught to feel; meanwhile, we also feel guilty sometimes for feeling too much or too little. For instance, a woman whose husband is a nationally ranked gymnast gets the opportunity to travel the world and compete in gymnastic competitions. He was even able to head to Japan to train at the Center for Men's Gymnastics. Meanwhile, his wife is home holding down the fort. So when people ask her, "Aren't you excited?" she pretends to feel excited because that's how people expect her to feel. In reality, she feels depressed and deserted.

These situations are good examples of how we force ourselves to create illusions of feelings that we don't. We might feel guilty for not displaying the appropriate emotion, we may even fear being scolded by another person for not feeling how we should. Have you ever been told, "You should be grateful"? Or asked, "Aren't you excited?" These questions reflect those sentiments. At the end of the day, emotional labor and social rules regarding our feelings are essential to our lives and can reveal more than just how we feel.

# Emotional Labor As a Form of Currency

In today's society, we often use feelings in exchange for gifts or forms of payments. For instance, have you ever done something nice for someone and expected them to be a bit more grateful? That's because we like to pay with our feelings. Let's take a look at the following exchange between a novice worker in a Social Security office who tries to get advice from a more experienced worker, an "expert."

When the novice worker asks for help, he is acknowledging his inferiority to the expert; meanwhile, the expert is receiving a bit of an ego-boost for taking the time to help his colleague. The advice seeker can simply nod his head, smile, and say, "Thanks Charlie, I sure appreciate it. I know how busy you are." The payment here is a facial expression, choice of words, and tone of voice. In this exchange, both parties benefit as the advice seeker receives the information he was looking for and the expert receives an ego boost and the satisfaction of helping another.

However, the exchange rates between these interactions can fluctuate. For example, if the receiver of the favor responds less generously than expected, the giver might say something like, "So that's all the thanks I get?" Or he might respond in a cold and resentful manner, which indicates that he is rejecting the thanks and considers the receiver still in his debt. Ultimately, as the expert continues to help the novice, a simple comment will no longer pay the debts. You see, "When one person has a higher status than another, it becomes acceptable to both parties for the bottom dog to contribute more."

And when it comes to the public world of work, it is often part of the job to accept the unevenness of these exchanges. We normalize being treated with disrespect or anger by the person of higher status; in fact, in a world when the customer is king, unequal exchanges are normal. Those of higher status often believe flattery is simply part of the personality of the employees but at the end of the day, it's all just part of the exchange.

# The Inequality of Emotion Work Between Men and Women

Tradition suggests that middle-class American women feel emotion more than men. At the same time, they are also believed to *manage* their expressions and feelings not only better but more often than men do. In fact, the evidence is clear to prove that women do *more* emotion managing than men. So why do women tend to manage feelings more than men? Simply put, women, in general, depend on men for money, and how they repay their debt is to complete extra emotional labor.

For example, a 1980 statistic showed that around 50 percent of American men received an annual salary of over \$15,000; meanwhile, only 6% of women were making that same amount. Of course, today that statistic has improved; however, inequality certainly still exists between men and women. Women largely find it more difficult to gain financial independence; therefore, their ability to manage feelings becomes a financial aspect. In fact, women often use emotions to get what they want more often than men. In a study at UCLA, only 20 percent of men but 45 percent of women said that they deliberately show emotion to get their way.

One woman put it this way, “I pout, frown, and say something to make the other person feel bad, such as ‘You don’t love me, you don’t care what happens to me.’ I’m not the type to come right out with what I want; I’ll usually hint around. It’s all hope and a lot of beating around the bush.” In other words, women have cultivated emotional art as a way to increase their opportunity for class advancement. While these skills have long been labeled as “natural” and part of a woman’s disposition, people fail to realize that these skills are something of a woman’s own making. The emotion work of enhancing your status and well-being is what Ivan Illich calls “shadow labor,” an unseen effort. Similar to how housework doesn't quite count as labor but is crucial for living, women’s emotional work often goes unnoticed, as if it doesn’t take any effort at all.

Another word we have for shadow labor is “nice.” Niceness has become a necessity for any civil exchange. One flight attendant, for example, said, “I’ll make comments like ‘Nice jacket you have on’ - that sort of thing, something to make them feel good. Or I’ll laugh at their jokes. It makes them feel relaxed and amusing.” At the end of the day, being “nice” is a way in which women exhibit deference in society, like a formal bow of submission. And while almost everyone does the emotion work that produces deference, women are certainly expected to do more of it. For example, a 1976 study compared male and female university professors and found that students expected female professors to be warmer and more supportive than male professors. With these expectations, students proportionally found more women professors to be perceived as cold.

In reality, many people see activities like listening patiently, giving advice, and nurturing others to be part of being a woman. However, women need to do these things to make up for the disadvantages against them in terms of power and status. This is especially apparent in the workplace where emotion work has become more public, more systemized, and more standardized. Emotion work is performed largely by middle-class women in public-contact jobs. In fact, “jobs involving emotional labor comprise over a third of all jobs. But they form only a *quarter* of all jobs that men do, and over *half* of all jobs that women do.”

# Women's Feelings are Taken Less Seriously

While society has taken strides in creating equality among men and women, women still experience an imbalance when they take on the additional labor of emotion work. For instance, “although some women are still elbow-guided through doors, chauffeured in cars, and protected from rain puddles, they are not shielded from one fundamental consequence of their lower status: their feelings are accorded less weight than the feelings of men.”

Overall, women find their opinions are more likely to be rejected or even ignored versus a man's. This is simply because women are typically taught to control their feelings and manage them carefully, so when they fail to manage them in the way society expects, they are taken less seriously than men. For example, when a man expresses anger, that anger isn't seen as a weakness of character but a deeply held conviction. On the other hand, when a woman expresses an equivalent degree of anger, she is often seen as unstable and irrational. You see, women are believed to be more emotional, and this belief is used to invalidate their feelings. Therefore, when a woman loses her temper, it's not a real response to an event but a reflection of her as an “emotional” woman.

We can even see this in medical responses to male and female illnesses. One study showed how doctors responded to complaints of back pain, headache, dizziness, chest pain, and fatigue - all symptoms in which a doctor must take the patient's word. The results showed that among 52 married couples, the complaints of husbands elicited more medical responses than those of their wives. Hochschild concludes that physicians tend to take illness more seriously in men than in women.

Because of this relationship between status and treatment of feelings, women find their jobs to be much harder than men. For example, the job of a flight attendant for a woman is far different from that of a man. Throughout the day, female flight attendants are more exposed than men to

rude passengers. Additionally, they are expected to play two roles: the loving wife and mother who serves food and tends to the needs of others and the glamorous “career woman” who is professional and controlled. This dichotomy makes the job of flight attendants much harder. They are expected to uphold the rules of the airlines; however, when trying to enforce these rules, they are not taken as seriously.

As a whole, the division of labor in society means that women, in particular, are assigned lower status and less authority than men. And more often than men, they become the complaint department. In other words, they are the ones to whom people express their dissatisfaction. At the same time, their own feelings are treated as less important.

## **Final Summary**

Today, emotion work is an everyday part of life and work. However, like housework, emotional labor is often unnoticed and unacknowledged. Unfortunately, this shadow labor becomes a problem for women who are expected to perform more emotion work to pay their debt to men for providing more financially. In fact, emotions have become a form of currency in society that people of lower status pay to those of higher status. Of course, women are completing much more emotional labor than men as they are expected to keep their feelings in check; meanwhile, those same feelings are often ignored or rejected. At the end of the day, the same job for a man and woman can look drastically different, and women largely find their jobs to be more taxing and draining due to the expectations put upon them.





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