Trolley dolly or skilled emotion manager? moving on from Hochschild’s Managed Heart

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ABSTRACT
This article examines emotion in organizations and the emotion management skills organizational actors possess. While Hochschild’s (1983) seminal work on emotional labour is perhaps one of the greatest contributions to our understanding of emotion in organizations, this article challenges key tenets of Hochschild’s thesis and goes on to offer an evolved analysis of emotional labour and alternative conceptualizations of organizational emotionality. Using comparable data, this article depicts airline cabin crews as skilled emotion managers who are able to juggle and synthesize different types of emotion work dependent on situational demands. In addition, the capacity for cabin crews to resist and modify the demands of management and customers acts to further contradict Hochschild’s claim regarding the ‘transmutation’ of feelings.

KEY WORDS
cabin crew / emotional work / Hochschild

Over the past two decades emotion has been firmly placed on the organizational agenda. It is now widely recognized that ‘organizations have feelings’ (Albrow, 1994, 1997); that they are sites of ‘love, hatred and passion’ (Fineman, 1993) and that the ‘commercialization of feeling’ (Hochschild, 1979, 1983) is a common occurrence. It seems that we are witnessing a significant ‘scaling up of institutional privilege over the ownership of emotion’ (Fineman, 2000). Employers are openly engaging with hearts and
minds (Warhurst and Thompson, 1998) and, some would say, souls (Willmott, 1993) as the management and manipulation of employees’ feelings is securely tied to the idea of competitive advantage. Amongst contemporary literature perhaps the greatest contribution to advance an understanding of emotion in organizations is Hochschild’s (1983) work concerning the ‘Managed Heart’. Her empirical study of air-stewardesses highlights how actors’ emotion management skills have become a saleable commodity commonly referred to as ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1983). Hochschild successfully links the ideas of work and emotion, thereby recognizing that social actors are able to carry out emotion work, which can be used as a vital part of the capitalist labour process (Hochschild, 1979, 1983).

Hochschild’s work has proved to be enduringly popular and there is little that has been written concerning the subject of emotions and organizations in the last 20 years that does not refer to the ‘Managed Heart’. Many recent accounts use the term ‘emotional labour’ to highlight emotion as a new area of study in organizations (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Fineman, 1993, 2000; Hearn, 1993) and to emphasize how organizations seek to regulate an employee’s emotion management as part of the labour process (Dent et al., 1991; James, 1989, 1992; Smith, 1992; Sturdy, 1998; Taylor, 1996, 1998). However, the term is not benign and the implications of its continued use for the study of organizational emotionality are immense.

Hochschild’s concern with management attempts to seduce employees into ‘loving’ the company, its product and its customers, creates an illustration of emotionally crippled actors. For Hochschild; ‘in the realm of feeling, Orwell’s 1984 came in disguise several years ago, leaving behind a laugh and perhaps the idea of a private way out’ (Hochschild, 1983: 23). Despite Hochschild’s recognition of both ‘surface’ and ‘deep’ acting, her concept of emotional labour is ultimately ‘absolutist’ in its implementation and consequences (Korczynski, 2002; Tolich, 1993; Wouters, 1989a, 1989b). For Hochschild, offering cynical performances in the form of ‘surface acting’ results in ultimate alienation from one’s ‘true self’ and deep acting, that is efforts to conjure up sincere performances, results in ‘altering’ one’s self (Hochschild, 1983: 186–88). Either way, feelings become ‘transmutated’ by the organization and the ‘smile, ‘mood’, ‘feeling’, or ‘relationship’, ‘comes to belong more to the organization and less to the self’ (1983: 198). However, the emphasis on the ‘transmutation of an emotion system’ when acts of private emotion management ‘fall under the sway of large organizations, social engineering and the profit motive’ (Hochschild, 1983: 19), arguably disqualifies the possibility that employees may exert an ‘active and controlling force’ in relationships with both management and customers (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Paules, 1996: 265).

This article suggests it is time to move on from Hochschild’s ‘Managed Heart’ and offers a conceptual means of understanding how emotion in organizations is governed and controlled by both employees and management in a number of distinct ways. Drawing on survey and qualitative data collected from airline cabin crews, we provide an evolved analysis of emotion in organizations.
offering different ways of conceptualizing organizational emotionality. The voices of the cabin crew are framed within a typology that distinguishes four distinct types of emotional self-management in organizations. Two of these, ‘pecuniary emotion management’ and ‘presentational emotion management’, may be compared to Hochschild’s (1979, 1983) terms ‘emotional labour’ and ‘emotion work’. They denote the commercial use of emotion in organizations whilst recognizing that the social actor brings the necessary skills into the organization through a lifetime’s training in ‘the presentation of self’ (Goffman, 1959). On the other hand, it is also suggested that there are in fact two other types of emotion management: these will be designated ‘prescriptive’ and ‘philanthropic’ emotion management. Unlike Hochschild’s (1983) term ‘emotional labour’, ‘prescriptive’ emotion management allows a detailed analysis of times when an employee may follow occupational feeling rules but not necessarily as an exercise in cost-efficiency. ‘Philanthropic’ emotion management displays how an organizational actor may not only follow organizational prescription but may decide to give that ‘little extra’ during a social exchange in the workplace.

Recognition of different types of emotional self-management makes it clear that emotion within organizations cannot be simplified and condensed into one category. As a consequence, the conceptual ideas presented in this article differ markedly from the well-established topic of ‘emotional labour’. Our analysis offers practical insights into the contemporary workplace and demonstrates how actors are able to draw on different sets of feeling rules according to context and their individual motivations to do so. In so doing, it becomes clear that it is not always the organization that defines the emotional agenda – marking an important point of departure from Hochschild’s ‘emotional labour’.

**Hochschild’s ‘Managed Heart’**

Hochschild (1979, 1983) offers insight into the social actor’s ability to work on emotion in order to present a socially desirable performance and capitalism’s appropriation of that skill. The greatest contribution is her emphasis on how the self-management of emotion can, just as physical labour, entail conscious effort and hard work. When looking for a clearer understanding of two of the most popular terms used to describe emotion in organizations: ‘emotion work’ and ‘emotional labour’, there is little doubt that Hochschild is the place to begin. 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). Her concern to show that emotion is not ‘a periodic abdication to biology’ (1983: 27), but something which is subject to acts of personal management, according to implicit ‘feeling rules’, has allowed Hochschild to wrest the study of emotion away from ‘its traditional guardians’, the psychologists (Fineman, 1993).
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). These 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 of ‘suitable’ emotions: ‘I tried not to laugh’, ‘I forced myself not to cry’, ‘I was determined not to show my anger’. As Hochschild points out, ‘work’ differs from the usual concept of controlling or suppressing emotion: “emotion work” refers more broadly to the act of evoking or shaping, as well as suppressing, feeling in oneself (1979: 266). The ability to manage emotion according to the ‘rules’ of the situation emphasizes the need to acknowledge the power of the ‘social’ (Hochschild, 1979). Nevertheless, the giving and receiving of emotion work is not always a smooth transaction. The gesture may be carried out half-heartedly, it may not be carried out at all; either in 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: if they care for the people involved or feel the situation is special then a generous ‘tribute’ is offered.

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’ (Hochschild, 1983: 76). Hochschild questions what happens ‘when deep gestures of exchange enter the market sector’ (1983: 86). 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 ‘commoditized’: ‘Just as gestures of emotion work can be exchanged in private, so they can be exchanged in the marketplace’ (Hochschild, 1979: 277). In the ‘Managed Heart’ (1983) Hochschild introduces the term ‘emotional labour’ to describe emotion management with a ‘profit motive slipped under it’ (1983: 119). It could be said that the use of emotional labour manufactures the profitable product of ‘customer contentment’ (Hochschild, 1983: 8).

The originality of Hochschild’s work has meant that there is little that has been written concerning the subject of emotions and organizations in the last 20 years that does not take ‘The Managed Heart’ as a reference point. Crucially, Hochschild identifies the incursion of management into the area of emotion (emotional labour) and the pre-existing ability of employees to control themselves (emotion work). Hochschild, therefore, contributes a fundamental insight into the conflict of commercial and social feeling rules that explains much of the tension concerning the expression of emotion in the contemporary workplace. From the above discussion, it can be seen why the use of the terms ‘emotional labour’ and ‘emotion work’ have become so popular; such simple descriptive phrases to describe such a complicated phenomenon as organizational emotionality prove to be irresistible.
However, there are two central weaknesses in Hochschild’s (1983, 1989, 1990) accounts of organizational emotionality. Firstly, Hochschild over-emphasizes the divide between the public and private performances of emotional self-management and tends to use the terms ‘public’ and ‘commercial’ interchangeably, creating an oversimplified dichotomy. For Hochschild’s cabin crew there is no distinction between emotion work as part of the capitalist labour process, emotion work due to professional norms of conduct, or emotion work during normal social interaction in the workplace. She goes on to reinforce this view in her later work: ‘by “emotion work” I refer to the emotion management we do in private life; by “emotional labour” I refer to the emotion management we do for a wage’ (Hochschild, 1990: 118). Hochschild operates with the underlying assumption that there is no room for the ‘private’ in organizational life; when operating within organizational boundaries our feelings are ‘transmutated’ and are, therefore, no longer our own:

The more the company offers the worker’s true self for sale, the more the self risks seeming false to the individual worker, and the more difficult it becomes for him or her to know which territory of self to claim. (Hochschild, 1983: 196)

Secondly, Hochschild mistakenly equates a physical labour process with an emotional labour process. This, again, is based on ‘transmutated feelings’ becoming a commodified object that exists apart from the worker (Korczynski, 2002). As Hochschild states of the cabin crew: ‘her have-a-nice-day smile is not really her smile but is an indirect extension of the company smile’ (Hochschild, 1989: 440). Just as the factory worker produces tangible goods (Hochschild uses the example of wallpaper) from which s/he feels estranged, the flight attendant creates the product of customer contentment from which s/he feels equally estranged. On this basis she suggests that just as workers may become alienated from their physical labour they may also become alienated from their emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983, 1989). Emotional labour, however, carries the greatest personal costs to the worker, as the factory worker who draws upon her/his physical labour does not have to ‘love the wallpaper’ whereas the air stewardess has to invest the product of passenger satisfaction with feeling (Hochschild, 1983, 1990). Not to do so would not only damage the product but also the worker’s sense of self; ‘neither the passenger nor the worker is really having “a good time”’ (Hochschild, 1983: 135, 187).

There is some merit in comparing the emotional labour process with a physical labour process, both often require ‘patience, tolerance and stamina’ (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002) and have exploitative potential. It is in the latter, however, that the differences emerge. It is now well recorded how various normative control devices are implemented in order to create the ‘committed employee’. The success of these strategies remains a contested area of debate – just how committed is the committed employee? Cabin crew do not have to ‘love’ the product, the passengers or the airline. They do not have to feel estranged from the emotional labour process. Unlike the factory worker, they own the means of production and, therefore, the capacity to present a ‘sincere’
or ‘cynical’ performance lies within the emotional labourer (Goffman, 1959). Whilst the organization creates parameters of control defining what constitutes ‘good service’, via mechanisms such as scripts and customer-care programmes, it is the worker who calibrates how much feeling is invested into the performance. Arguably, the deterministic feel that the term ‘emotional labour’ carries with it undervalues the vitality and independence of outlook that participants bring to organizations and neglects their ability to carve out ‘spaces for resistance and misbehaviour’ (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995) and to produce the ‘unmanaged organization’ (Gabriel, 1995). Crucially, what Hochschild fails to recognize is that the indeterminacy of labour is further exacerbated within the contested terrain of the emotional labour process.

**Methodology and background**

The data presented in this article are primarily drawn from a 1998 survey of airline cabin crews where the primary focus was on their working environment, health and working conditions. In describing their experiences, respondents’ comments shed light on a number of key issues within the emotional labour debates and it is this part of the data that we present in this article. Fieldwork entailed a semi-structured questionnaire survey of airline cabin crews in three UK airlines, comprising 926 respondents (response rate 41%). Of this sample, 83 percent were female; 72 percent were aged between 21 and 35 and 37% had at least five years service (38% had 6–11 years service). Additional qualitative data were gathered from 10 structured interviews with cabin crew trade union representatives. Of the airlines, one is a scheduled airline and the others are charter airlines. Data are also drawn from two other studies of airline cabin crew carried out by one of the authors in order to introduce a broader scope, over both time and space, and hence a greater potential for depth of analysis. The 1996 (N = 75) and 1999 (N = 142) studies were also qualitative studies combining semi-structured questionnaires and cabin crew interviews.

There are of course material, rather than just conceptual, differences between this and Hochschild’s empirical study of cabin crew in the early 1980s. This research process covers a larger group of participants, a slighter larger proportion of whom are male, it was based in the UK rather than the US and, perhaps most importantly, the exploration of issues around emotional labour was not the original focus of data collection. Despite these differences, and the 20-year gap, there are extensive similarities. Both studies are situated in commercial airlines during periods of intensifying competition for the industry as a whole, following the deregulation of air travel in the 1970s in the US and in the 1980s in the UK. During these periods the tensions between differentiation on cost and quality of service in the competitive airline market have been played out in the labour process of the cabin crew. By drawing on these similarities this article aims to highlight how it is possible to move on from Hochschild’s ‘emotional labour’ and understand the emotional labour process in very different ways.
Moving on from Hochschild’s ‘emotional labour’

It is proposed that recognition of four different types of emotion management in the workplace will help to deconstruct the complex subject of emotion in organizations (Bolton, 2000a). In order to effect varied performances the organizational actor must draw upon different sets of feeling rules of which the typology broadly distinguishes three classes: commercial, professional or social feeling rules.

From Table 1 it can be seen how it is possible for all forms of emotion management to be performed by organizational actors for a wide variety of reasons: for example, legitimacy, conformity, instrumentality and/or empathy. In addition, actors may also respond to differing ‘rules’ such as organizational regulations, professional norms and social guidelines. High levels of emotional dexterity are also apparent where organizational actors appear to effortlessly move from one performance to another during a normal working day. For example, during a social encounter within the workplace they may well perform ‘presentational’ emotion management, while in direct, face-to-face contact with a customer of the company they may be expected to perform ‘pecuniary’ emotion management as a means of producing ‘customer contentment’ or, equally, they can decide on whether to offer ‘philanthropic’ emotion management as an extra ‘gift’.

The typology of emotion management displays how actors, whilst constrained by organizational structures, are still capable of possessing ‘multiple selves’ (Goffman, 1967). It shows how they are able to draw on different sets of feeling ‘rules’ in order to match feeling with situation. From this it can be seen just how skilled organizational actors are when considering how they balance conflicting demands and are still able to effect polished performances.

Whilst the distinction Hochschild makes between ‘commercial’ and ‘social’ feeling rules and the motivations of the individual to control emotions is valuable, she does not make any distinction concerning feeling rules in the workplace that are not commercially motivated. For example, it is common for employees to undergo secondary socialization where they become involved with and committed to a distinct set of feeling rules, such as the feeling rules that

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**Table 1** A typology of emotion management

Moving on from Hochschild's ‘emotional labour’
inform professional codes of conduct for airline cabin crews as separated from the commercial feeling rules airlines wish to impose. As such, the possibility of other prescriptive bases for emotion management must also be considered. It is perhaps most useful to distinguish externally imposed rules of conduct that have been developed mainly out of commercial motivations, which are described in the typology presented here as ‘pecuniary’ emotion management, from other kinds of ‘prescriptive’ emotion management. In doing so, much clearer distinctions concerning workplace emotionality are presented, while the basic social regulation of emotional expression and its relationship with work is more clearly explicated.

In addition, while Hochschild uses the term ‘emotion work’ to indicate that social actors are able to calibrate how much effort they invest in their emotion management performances, depending on what they believe is ‘emotionally due’ to another person, the use of the term ‘work’ tends to imply that all emotion management performances in the social realm take conscious effort. The perceived capacity that the individual has to exert special efforts in the management and presentation of emotion is an important special case in the management of emotion and, in this account, the notion of ‘philanthropic’ emotion management has been retained to take account of it. But the philanthropic attitude is not the typical outlook of individuals in the regulation of their conduct; primary socialization is effective enough that social actors enact many social encounters routinely. Actively working on emotion should be distinguished from the framework of assumptions that are usually operative. Goffman (1959) would call the routine compliance with social feeling rules the ‘presentation of self’ and it is suggested here that actors’ abilities in presenting socially desirable performances are better thought about in terms of ‘presentational’ emotion management, with ‘philanthropic’ emotion management being distinguished as a special case.

Using a typology that recognizes four types of emotion management performances as an alternative to Hochschild’s term ‘emotional labour’ has major implications. It recognizes that only a small proportion of feeling rules and associated motivations come under the ‘sway of large organizations’ and are governed by a corporation’s profit motive. This allows practical insights into contemporary organizational life that other theoretical approaches do not. For instance, it shows that organizational demand for ‘pecuniary’ emotion management does not negate employees’ individual subjectivities. Actors continually seek spaces in organizations and perform ‘presentational’ or ‘philanthropic’ emotion management according to the social rules with which they are so familiar. The acceptance of the view of organizational actors as active, knowledge-able agents indicates just how tenacious primary socialization is and how resistant actors are to organizational demands that they must ‘buy in’ to organizational values. For instance, organizational actors are able to achieve convincing performances through their compliance with commercial feeling rules. Nevertheless, these performances are instrumentally motivated; they tend to be empty of feeling and, as such, are relatively impotent as a means of mapping
new identities onto workers. In addition, there are some occupations where actors are not only financially motivated but abide by prescriptive feeling rules due to status or altruistic motivations or, quite simply, they enjoy the social nature of their work (Korczynski, 2002; Wouters, 1989a).

The remainder of this article will use empirical data collected from airline cabin crews in order to explore in more detail the three sets of feeling rules introduced as part of the typology of workplace emotionality: firstly, those implicit social feeling rules that result in ‘presentational’ and ‘philanthropic’ emotion management and serve to form an employee’s enduring identity; secondly and thirdly, the commercial and professional feeling rules which organizations attempt to impose to engender ‘pecuniary’ and ‘prescriptive’ emotion management performances. In this way insights are given into the motivations and, therefore, the limitations of certain feeling rules to control employees’ emotion management performances.

‘Presentational’ and ‘philanthropic’ emotion management

From the typology introduced in this article, it could be said that the ‘presentational’ category represents the basic socialized self. When entering into organizational life, although unaware of the particular rules of the game, actors are already prepared with a basic understanding of how the game will be played (Flam, 1990b; Mills and Murgatroyd, 1991; Wouters, 1989a). Organizational actors are highly effective emotion managers, who are able to present themselves in the proper manner according to the often implicit rules of the situation. In other words, social actors can manage to feel or manage not to feel, in order to fit into the accepted ‘conventions of feeling’ (Hochschild, 1979, 1990). A lifetime’s social training prepares actors with the ‘traffic rules of social interaction’ enabling them to ‘stay in the game on a proper ritual basis’ (Goffman, 1967: 45, 91).

Rules, scripts and norms (Strauss, 1959) are, of course, an everyday part of organizational existence but, as Mills and Murgatroyd usefully point out, ‘the deliberately formulated rules of an organization only form part of a given reality’ (1991: 22). When a situation arises where specific prescriptive organizational rules do not apply, or when they are significantly relaxed, an ‘unmanaged space’ may be created. Most especially in work situations such as the restricted area of the airline cabin, these ‘spaces’ (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Gabriel, 1995), ‘back regions’ (Goffman, 1959) or ‘zones’ (Fineman, 1993) are not necessarily created as actual physically delineated areas where agents may congregate. They may only be fleeting moments, an exchanged smile or a small nudge, which indicate how actors are able to be both present and not be present on certain occasions (Goffman, 1967). Neither does it mean that these spaces are always sites for resistance or misbehaviour; unmanaged activity can often work in the organization’s favour. This is particularly true for the cabin crew occupation where teamwork and support from colleagues are regarded as
'lifelines' in coping with the various demands of the job. In response to a question concerning how cabin crew dealt with difficult situations, ranging from intensive work schedules to dealing with difficult or abusive passengers, a large number of cabin crew responded that they relied upon a sense of 'camaraderie'. According to one respondent:

The other crews are the best thing about this job and the only thing that keeps me going. We always manage to have a laugh during flights and that's what makes the long hours, annoying passengers and terrible working conditions bearable.

As noted in the above statement, a particularly good example of how emotional activity may cross organizational 'boundaries' is that of workplace humour. Humour appears to be an important coping mechanism for airline cabin crews. When asked what they enjoyed most about their job almost all respondents mention the role of humour and how 'having a really good laugh' and the 'team spirit and fun' is very important to them. The occurrence of pranks amongst crews during flights is commonplace, particularly during night flights when fewer services mean that crews often suffer from boredom. Completing 'fake' performance assessment forms is a popular activity where crews present an antithetical profile of one of the crew, containing descriptions of a range of inappropriate and outlandish behaviour during the flight. One respondent provides an example of a fake review:

Cabin crew X always deals promptly with passenger requests. However, her manner is a little abrupt, particularly when she shouts in their faces to sit down and shut up. In terms of improvements, I have suggested that crew member X refrains from picking her nose and scratching her arse when walking through the cabin.

Cabin crews' use of humour in this way supports other research findings that show instances when humour in organizations is not only in the interests of 'group conformity' but can also act as a means of relieving boredom (Collinson, 1992), 'letting off steam' (Fine, 1988) and offering support and friendship (Bolton, 2001).

Airline cabin crews' commitment to their colleagues is also an expression of 'philanthropic' emotion management – the freedom to give that little extra. Respondents report that a main reason for not 'calling in sick' for a flight even when they are ill is because they do not want one of their colleagues to be called out from standby duty. It is notable here how it is a sense of commitment to colleagues that is the motivational force behind this generous gesture, not successful normative control regimes implemented by the organization. The ability to give emotion management as a 'gift' is a vital part of both social and organizational life. Without this social actors would appear to exist in a cynical world of self-concerned agents, when in fact much of social interaction is centred on not only saving actors' own 'faces' but also those around them (Goffman, 1967).

The cabin crew often draw upon social, rather than organizational, feeling rules to engage in 'face-saving' activity that entails restoring the 'ceremonial
order’ of interaction. The duration and proximity of cabin crews’ interaction
with ‘customers’ is an important factor in understanding their role, during
which time, cabin crew may be exposed to a range of emotionally charged sit-
utations. An earlier study records incidents involving interpersonal disputes
between passengers during flights where cabin crews are expected to intervene.
In one instance, the affected individuals were so upset that they had to be seated
apart for the remainder of the flight. This meant that the flight attendant had to
persuade another passenger to switch seats as the aircraft was full. First-aid
emergencies are also common, where crew may have to comfort and assist
unwell passengers. They may feel empathy and compassion and, due to this
‘attunement’, decide to go beyond mere ‘prescriptive’ or ‘pecuniary’ rules of
emotion management in order that they may reassure others of ‘genuine’
motives and commitments (Bolton, 2000b; Fineman, 1993; Giddens, 1987;
Goffman, 1961; Scheff, 1990). One respondent describes an incident involving
an elderly passenger:

As I walked past the toilet an elderly passenger fainted. I crouched down to assist
and she immediately vomited over both of us. I had to help her to clean her clothes
and try to calm and reassure her. It was very traumatic for both of us but I did not
mind.

This cabin crew member did not merely adhere to professional feeling rules in
restoring order and dignity to the situation. She worked hard to mask feelings
of distaste and offered ‘deference and demeanour’ (Goffman, 1967) to care for
the elderly passenger as a fellow social interactant, not merely as a ‘customer’
of the airline.

The cabin crew respondents show how within the ‘presentational’ category,
it is possible to be many things to many people: close friend, casual acquain-
tance, colleague, adversary, father/mother-figure, practical-joker, bully, author-
ity figure. Some of these roles may demand quite ‘hard’ emotion work. At these
moments, when actors become aware of a discrepancy between how they actu-
ally feel and how they think they ought to feel, they are in a position con-
sciously to decide how much effort is put into making their own feelings match
the socially prescribed face or even whether to present the desirable face at all.
When conforming to commercial and professional feelings rules, however,
many of these choices are constrained by different motivations and the presen-
tation of self is an essential pre-requisite of doing the ‘job’.

‘Prescriptive’ and ‘pecuniary’ emotion management

When considering the need to fulfil organizational objectives it can be identified
that the rules governing emotion management are often much more explicit than
the implicit rules which guide actors when performing ‘presentational’ or ‘phi-
lanthropic’ emotion management in the social domain. In many routine, face-to-
face service jobs a bureaucratization of the rules governing organizational
emotionality are at their most obvious (Leidner, 1996; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987; Van Maanen, 1991). In this way the organization establishes norms of conduct that dictate only certain emotions should be expressed. Frequently due to the essential part such performances play in the labour process, this form of emotion management is referred to as ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1983) or, in the case of the typology presented here, ‘pecuniary’ or ‘prescriptive’ emotion management.

Increasingly organizations would prefer that its members internalize company values so that their emotion management performances become sincere. Often it is not only impression rules that are being bureaucratized, but companies are attempting also to bureaucratize the spirit (Goffman, 1959). Organizations such as commercial airlines require their employees do more than ‘surface act’; they want them to invest their performances with feeling (Hochschild, 1983; Tyler and Taylor, 2001). In their quest to gain the competitive edge by offering superior customer service, the international airline industry operates highly selective recruitment programmes, which identify those applicants with the particular qualities required for the job. Contrary to the belief that the ‘right’ personality will be enough (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Mann, 1999; Morris and Feldman, 1996), upon entering the organization successful candidates undergo intensive training and culture management programmes. The airline goes to great lengths to inculcate employees into the values of the company. Interestingly, customer service training takes at least the same amount of training time as safety and emergency training, while training in areas relating to the health and well-being of crew (e.g. dealing with violence, manual handling) is minimal, if it occurs at all (Boyd and Bain, 1998; Boyd, 2002). The resounding message received by crews is the primary importance of how they present themselves to passengers. As a crew member notes:

Over the years the airline industry has taught its cabin crews to be very subservient towards passengers.

Airline cabin crews, like other organizational actors, are asked to assume a particular identity which helps them to perform their work role more efficiently – in this case the cabin crew are being asked to assume the status of servant in relation to the customer who is master. In the interests of efficiency, the airline requires that work routines are predictable and continually correspond with pre-determined standards. Temporal and spatial constraints mean that there is little room for any variation in routine; the airline needs to be able to rely on its employees to give a homogenous performance on every occasion. When these performances involve face-to-face interaction with customers they try to ensure that such interaction does not differ from the set guidelines by attempting to make employees’ emotions ‘solidified and permanent’ (Flam, 1990b; Goffman, 1959). In this way, the cabin crew act out various performances of ‘pecuniary’ emotion management in order to produce the profitable product of customer satisfaction, for example, calming irate customers. As two respondents explain:
The passenger is ‘always right’. The customer is fully aware of this and takes full advantage of the situation. They know they can say anything they want to cabin staff and get away with it, and they usually do. I have been employed as a cabin crew member for the past 21 years and I have had to suffer a range of indignant remarks and affront on a daily basis.

As crew we encounter verbal abuse on a daily basis. Many people have no respect for crew and see them only as servants. This is shown in their manner – i.e. they expect you to carry/place bags in overhead lockers as this is ‘part of our job’. They blame you for delays, the weather and other passengers not showing and holding up the flight. Many passengers are stressed before they board the aircraft. People can’t ask or inquire in a pleasant manner, they ‘demand’. Passengers are more aggressive as every day goes by.

It would seem that with increasing competition in the ‘marketing of bon-homie’ (Parkinson, 1991) the perspicacious customer expects to be satisfied and is liable to ‘pounce on trifling flaws as a sign that the whole show is false’ (Goffman, 1959: 235). It is hardly surprising that the commercial feelings rules of the airline are supported by more direct means of control. Regular performance appraisals are conducted in order to dissect and evaluate the performance of individual cabin crew members during particular flights. Passenger surveys and ‘ghost fliers’ also act as control mechanisms to ensure cabin crew compliance in the absence of a base manager during flights.

Despite the implementation of comprehensive direct and indirect control mechanisms, there is little in the above statements from cabin crew to imply, as Hochschild would, that they are employing ‘deep acting’. Emotional labourers, Hochschild suggests, actively alter their perceptions of aggressive passengers and imaginatively give them characteristics with which airline crew can personally identify, such as frightened children, in order that they can more easily offer a sincere caring performance (Hochschild, 1983: 25). As Hochschild states of the cabin crew she studied ‘by pretending deeply, she alters herself’ (Hochschild, 1983: 33). This does not appear to be the case with the cabin crew who took part in this study. They remain very aware that they are dealing with demanding, sometimes ‘obnoxious’, customers and that they are offering an ‘empty performance’. There is an absence of ‘feeling behind the appearances’ and it should be noted how organizationally prescribed performances can be an ‘exquisite drama’; a way of enacting the organization’s ‘display rules’ (Goffman, 1967). That is, the cabin crew act out their role obligations without ever ‘buying-in’ to the norms set by the company.

Moreover, efforts to recruit, train and socialize workers to deliver ‘sincere performances’ will be undoubtedly constrained by the range of contradictions created by those cost-cutting strategies which undermine the quality of cabin crews’ working conditions and, ultimately, their physical health and well-being (Boyd and Bain, 1998; Boyd, 2001). Boyd and Bain (1998) report that respondents suffered from an average of 10 symptoms of ill health on at least ‘some’ flights – symptoms that they blamed on poor cabin air quality, intensive service
schedules during flights and irregular shift working patterns. As two cabin crew respondents explain:

When I joined the airline four years ago, I was in perfect health. Since then I’ve had severe ear problems, kidney infections and an unidentified blister rash that covered my whole body. Five hospital doctors did not know what it was. I now have constant back pains through lifting heavy atlas boxes/moving carts – even the catering men struggle with these! I have a constant cough and chest infections. I am covered in bruises from either carts or passengers, so much so that when I was wearing my swimsuit the other day, people thought that I had been beaten-up by my boyfriend!

I suffer from digestive problems due to being unable to use the toilet during flights because it is too busy with passenger use and also the workload – I don’t have time to stop.

From the accounts cited above, it does seem clear that in some occupations at least there remains a ‘dual consciousness’ (Collinson, 1992). In fact, there are instances when we may witness ‘pecuniary’ and ‘prescriptive’ emotion management in direct conflict. Airline cabin crews are very conscious of needing to adhere to professional safety and service standards even though the work has intensified, the physical conditions deteriorated and the customers are ever more demanding. This respondent is quite clear in where her priorities lie:

As safety is our prime concern whilst on the aircraft it is important that cabin crew do get proper breaks on board to at least have a glass of water every now and again. I do fear that if a serious incident did occur cabin crew would be too tired/weak to respond as quickly as they might otherwise do.

Similarly, managing irate and abusive customers may be thought of ‘as part of the job’ (according to purely commercially feeling rules), while engaging with this type of customer interaction may conflict with employees’ expectations of what is involved in their job (according to professional feeling rules). Cabin crew are quite clear that placating abusive customers was not part of their professional role and that they undertook this task reluctantly with barely concealed contempt. Three different cabin crew members talk about their frustrations:

Verbal abuse is a bit more common than physical abuse and it is also more emotionally stressful. There is no need or reason for cabin crew to have to take the blunt end of another person’s ‘bad day’, as on the whole cabin crews are polite and provide good service. It is upsetting and demoralizing to be treated like shit.

We are expected to accept a degree of ‘verbal’ from passengers and ‘keep smiling’. No one should be expected to tolerate another person’s frustrations.

I have noticed an increase in rude and sometimes verbally abusive passengers over the last 12–18 months. In my experiences, the passengers involved had not been drinking but were regular travellers. Their anger is directed at us as JetOne representatives and we cannot always answer back and tell them what we really think.
Respondents were also asked about how episodes of verbal abuse made them feel. While almost one-quarter felt intimidated and almost half felt angry, well over half of respondents reported reduced job satisfaction as a result of experiencing verbal abuse. According to one respondent,

A combination of emotions is experienced and sometimes you feel like this so often you stop noticing how you feel.

The above comment alludes to notions of ‘emotional numbness’ and alienation from one’s self as described by Hochschild (1983). It is the disjuncture between ‘feeling’ and ‘face’ that is said to be the major cause of ‘harm’ in emotion workers. Many writers follow Hochschild in the belief that the commodification of emotion work results in an estrangement from genuine feelings and that cynical performances may be less of an ‘exquisite drama’ (Goffman, 1967) and more a form of ‘abuse’ (Hopfl, 2002) likely to produce burn-out and even a loss of a sense of one’s ‘true self’ (Hochschild, 1983; Tyler and Taylor, 2001; Wharton, 1996). However, all of the respondents quoted earlier show an acute awareness of the material conditions in which they work. The anger, exhaustion and frustration experienced by the cabin crew do not indicate an ‘invasion of the self’ but the ‘contradiction, opposition and dynamic’ (Pollert, 1996: 655) involved in the emotional labour process.

The ‘juggler and synthesizer’

The four types of emotion management introduced in this article (‘prescriptive’, ‘pecuniary’, ‘presentational’ and ‘philanthropic’) have been used to highlight the blurring of boundaries and the blending of different roles. They offer a multi-dimensional view of organizational emotionality rather than the one-dimensional view that the term ‘emotional labour’ offers. Despite close similarities in research context, there is little resemblance between Hochschild’s research participants and those who are represented here. The cabin crew in this study are uncannily like Hochschild’s air stewardesses in their objections to the physical strain of their job and the unreasonable demands made by customers. They also share feelings of emotional exhaustion. What we do not see in Hochschild’s analysis is the potential for unmanaged spaces where ‘moments of truth’ may occur. This is surprising given the particular conditions under which cabin crew work. The absence of a ‘manager’ on board highlights the novelty of the aircraft working environment where crews (who regard themselves totally separate from management), are able to interpret, manipulate and implement the managerially-prescribed rules of engagement, albeit within constraints acknowledged throughout this analysis.

This is not to deny the importance of Hochschild’s seminal contribution (Hochschild, 1979, 1983). ‘Emotional labour’ does offer valuable insights into the contemporary workplace and capital’s awareness of the value of employees’
emotion management skills. There can be little doubt that emotion work in organizations can be demanding, boring, exhausting, tedious, arduous, and stressful. It is often exploited as an ‘invisible’ skill and poorly rewarded (James, 1989; Korczynski, 2002; Tancred, 1995). The ‘culture of the customer’ bestows a superior status to the consumer and the interaction between service provider and customer is an unequal exchange (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992; Goffman, 1967; Hochschild, 1989). And management prescription invents ever more imaginative ways to extract the maximum, and most sincere, performances from emotion workers (Barley and Kunda, 1992). The term ‘emotional labour’ captures all of these insights and opens the emotional labour process up to critical scrutiny.

Nevertheless, Hochschild mistakes aspiration for outcome in assuming that capital’s attempts to appropriate ‘emotion work’ will be so successful that our feelings are ‘transmutated’. Hochschild offers a view of organizations as flat, lifeless landscapes. Where is any sense of the satisfaction, enjoyment and reward that can be gained from various forms of emotion work? Where is the innuendo, humour and imperfect customer service? Where are the cabin crews in her study?

A multi-dimensional approach to understanding emotion in organizations exposes the contradictions involved in the emotional labour process. The concept of contradiction highlights how the provision of distinct categories within the typology do not suggest that only one form of emotion management may be performed by organizational actors at any one time. This would be to duplicate the error of those who describe a solid divide between the public and private (Hochschild, 1983, 1989). Rather, the typology should be used to display how there are ‘multi-situated systems of activity’. As revealed by the cabin crew members cited in this article, organizational actors may apparently comply with an organization’s rules, scripts and norms whilst performing ‘prescriptive’ or ‘pecuniary’ emotion management, but they are not wholly defined by the official definition of the situation (Goffman, 1961). The cabin crews perform ‘presentational’ and ‘philanthropic’ emotion management in addition to ‘prescriptive’ or ‘pecuniary’. For instance, they may genuinely empathize with a passenger rather than present the cynical face of a service-provider, and they use humour to alleviate stress and support each other. This is not to say their private feelings have been ‘transmutated’. They do not offer this ‘gift’ of philanthropic emotion management directly to the organization. Rather it is the case that their skills are so fine-tuned they are capable of mixing and managing all forms of emotion management according to ‘rules’ other than those solely controlled by the organization.

The way the cabin crews are able to re-define the situation through their emotion management skills highlights how ‘action logics’ are being mixed (Flam, 1990a). As Goffman (1961: 139) states:

The image that emerges of the individual is that of a juggler and synthesizer, an accommodator and appeaser, who fulfils one function while he is apparently
engaged in another; he stands guard at the door of the tent but lets all his friends and relatives crawl in under the flap.

Overall, the typology of workplace emotionality utilized throughout this article recognizes, unlike the concept of ‘emotional labour’, that organizational life cannot be treated as a homogenous entity. The cabin crew have diverse, varied and multiple ways of enacting an organization’s rules and the difficulty lies in attempting to unravel the meanings behind their actions. That is the multiple meanings and multiple motivations of the multi-skilled emotion manager.

Notes

1 Though an obvious area of further study, the gender differences in the application of feeling rules were not analysed.

2 Hochschild notes, for example, the reductions in crew numbers on flights and the subsequent increase in the remaining crews’ workloads as well as the proletarianization of air travel: the ‘luxury cruise liner of the sky’ becoming more like a greyhound bus herding in discount travellers (Hochschild, 1983: 124).

3 The category of ‘philanthropic’ emotion management borrows directly from Hochschild’s (1979) ideas concerning the concept of working on one’s emotion as a ‘gift’ in order to present the ‘correct’ face to another in social exchange. However it differs greatly in that Hochschild does not allow this to be part of organizational life, believing that the ‘gift’ of emotion management belongs solely in the ‘private realm of feeling’.

References


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