Sociology 3308: Sociology of Emotions

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Lecture 15: Emotion and Emotion Management 1: Hochschild on Emotions

Today we will begin moving away from the primarily structural models of emotion exemplified by theorists such as Kemper and Collins, and begin discussion of one of the major writers emphasizing a more cultural approach: Arlie Russell Hochschild.

Hochschild asserts that "As I see it, the sociology of emotions is a name for a body of work that articulates the links between cultural ideas, structural arrangement, and several things about feelings: the way we wish we felt, the way we try to feel, the way we feel, the way we show what we feel, and the way we pay attention to, label, and make sense of what we feel." In typical interactionist fashion, Hochschild sets the tone by asserting that "the sociology of emotions deepens theories about how people think or act," and, as such, "*we are not simply adding a new dependent variable to the traditional roster*."

Hochschild's work may be divided into four issues. First, she outlines three models of emotion. Next, she outlines what she calls her "interactional model" in relation to these. Third, she discusses the socioeconomic context and practical methods of what she terms "emotional labour" and "emotion management." Finally, Hochschild describes her concepts of "expression rules" and "feeling rules," both of which are central to her idea of "emotion work."

Three Models of Emotion:

Hochschild begins by noting that there are three models of emotion current in the growing social science literature on emotion: (a) the organismic; (b) the interactional; and (c) the social constructionist. These models differ in how much significance they accord to social influence: the social constructionist accords most importance, the interactionist next most, and the organismic the least importance.

According to the organismic model (Charles Darwin, William James, Sigmund Freud), social influences enter in only to elicit feeling, and to regulate its expression. For Darwin, emotion is instinct, for James it is the perception of a psychological process, and for the early Freud it is libidinal discharge. By virtue of their stress on instinct and energy, the organismic theorists postulate a basic *fixity* of emotion and a basic *similarity* of emotion across categories of people. Secondly, in this model the manner in which we label, assess, manage or express emotion is seen as *extrinsic* to emotion, and therefore of less interest than how the emotion is motored by instinct. Third, in the organismic model emotion is assumed to have a *prior existence* apart from introspection, and introspection is thought to be passive, lacking in evocative power (i.e. emotions are there regardless of our thoughts about them). Finally, the organismic stress on instinctual fixity reflects an interest in the *origins* of emotion. It is argued that social factors merely "trigger" biological reactions and help steer the expression of these reactions into

customary channels. Of course, following Cannon's 1929 experimental work refuting James' theory (by separating dogs' viscera from their central nervous system, and finding that they still reacted emotionally), psychologists began looking more at cognitive factors.

This leads to Hochschild's second category. She contrasts the organismic approach with what she calls the "interactional model." For theorists taking this more flexible approach, social factors enter in not only to elicit feeling, but do so in other ways as well. Social factors enter not simply before and after but interactively during the *experience* of emotion (e.g. in its very formulation, codification, management and expression). There are more points of social entry, but biological factors are still included as socially shaped "ingredients" in this process. Because of its greater complexity, the interactional model poses a choice between models of how social factors work (e.g. Mead/ Gerth and Mills' focus on interaction/ gesture/ experience in a social context; Goffman's focus on displaying the socially appropriate feeling). While these earlier interactional approaches have their good points, Goffman's, for example, focuses too much on the surface level, and doesn't emphasize a self with a developed inner life. Hence his language is riddled with passives, and too much primacy is given to the situation; too little to the person. In his view, the social system affects our behavior, not our feelings.

Finally, Hochschild discusses the social constructionist model of emotion, where biology doesn't enter into emotion as a causative force at all. Feeling is considered entirely constituted by social influences (e.g. Gordon's early work took this approach with regard to sentiments such as nostalgia and sympathy).

Hochschild argues that "probably some of the emotions, some of the time, fit the organismic model, and some of the emotions, some of the time, fit the social constructionist, but in my view most emotions, most of the time, fit the interactional model."

Hochschild's Interactional Model:

Hochschild next moves on to outline her *own* conception of the interactionist model. She begins by outlining her definition of emotion. She defines emotion as an awareness of four elements that we usually experience at the same time: (a) appraisals of a situation; (b) changes in bodily sensations; (c) the free or inhibited display of expressive gestures; and (d) a cultural label applied to specific constellations of the first three elements. We learn how to appraise, to display, and to label emotion, even as we learn how to link the results of each to that of the other. (Note: Hochschild also defines a "feeling" as "an emotion with less marked bodily sensation," or "a milder emotion").

Significantly, Hochschild also speaks of the *signal function* of emotion in this regard. In her words:

> "Emotion functions like a sense. Indeed, it is a sense, and our most precious one.
> It is part of our sentient nature. We feel just as we hear, or see, or touch. Like
> these other senses, emotion communicates information to the self...(it) has a

'signal function.' It is hard to know for sure what is true about where we stand in the world. We continually guess. In this context of uncertainty, one important clue is how we feel. From feeling we discover our own apparent viewpoint on and relationship to the world. Feeling tells us 'what is out there from where I stand.'" (i.e. what is real, for example, why I'm not as upset as I thought I'd be.)

Hochschild's definition draws elements from all of the above approaches. From the interactionists and social constructionists she explores what gets "done" to an emotion. From the organismic tradition is a sense of what is there, impermeable, to be "done to," namely a biologically given sense related to both cognition and an orientation for action. Yet, what does and does not stand out as a signal presupposes certain culturally taken for granted ways of seeing and holding expectations about the world.

Emotional Labor and Emotion Management:

Hochschild says that such an interactionist conception of emotion points to a certain paradox: a feeling is what happens to us, yet it is also what we do to make it happen. Moreover, both of these are intrinsically tied up in our socio-political circumstances. Particularly important in this regard are issues of political economy (e.g. class/gender). For example, she points out that in the growing service sector of the modern economy, *the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself.* It is a *commodity.* Indeed, it is important to note that Hochschild's ideas arose largely out of her field research on service workers who do a great deal of "*emotional labour*," that is, the work of trying to feel the right feeling for the job. She contrasted the work of flight attendants, whose job is to be "nicer than natural," with the work of bill collectors, whose job is to be, if necessary, "nastier and natural," arguing that "these two occupations represent the toe and the heel of the growing service sector in the American economy." In her view, "most work falls somewhere between these two extremes."

We try to feel, but how can we try to feel? Hochschild argues that both the act of getting in touch with feeling and the act of trying to feel may become part of the process that makes the thing we get in touch with, or the thing we manage, into a feeling or emotion. In managing feeling, we contribute to the creation of it. In Hochschild's conception, emotional labor (a.k.a. "emotion management," in a private setting) can thus be accomplished by *two basic methods* (some of which may actually involve formal training sessions, as in the airline industry). In what she calls "*surface acting*" we change feeling from the "outside in" by deceiving others. For example, we consciously alter outward expression of emotion in the service of altering our inner feelings. We do not simply change our expression; we change our expression in order to change our feeling (e.g. one of Hochschild's flight attendants stated: "if I pretend I'm feeling really up, sometimes I actually cheer up and feel friendly. The passenger responds to me as though I were friendly and then more of me responds back"). In Hochschild's second method, what she terms "*deep acting*," we change feeling from the "inside out" through self-deception. Here we change our feeling by altering something more than surface appearance. For example, we may alter our feelings by changing our bodily state (such as through taking deep breaths or ingesting drugs), by prompting ourselves (e.g. "Don't let him get to you"), narrowing our mental focus to a

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particular image or point of reference (e.g. an "emotion memory"), or by deliberately visualizing a substantial portion of reality in a different way (e.g. visualizing a belligerent drunk as if a frightened child, someone with a phobia about flying, or someone who had suffered a tragedy). Hochschild argues that in everyday life, we all manage feelings through surface and deep acting. Yet, considering the economic context of emotional labour, not only is the need to apply these methods unequally distributed (e.g. by gender, race and class), the role of the director is more formally taken by institutions. It is thus possible that we can become alienated from our artificially induced feelings (e.g. overcoming the "artificial elation" one may induce on the job; a sense of personal phoniness: 'Is it me or the company talking?').

Hochschild also speaks of people using these methods in private settings, where she terms them aspects of "emotion management" rather than emotional labour. For example, the young woman who tries to fight her love for a commitment shy man attempts to emphasize everything negative about him to keep her feelings in check (deep acting), and uses her friends almost like a Greek chorus to reinforce these feelings and prevent herself from getting hurt (surface acting). The same strategy can be applied in reverse, emphasizing everything good about someone to try to convince yourself you love them (deep acting), and acting as if you do to encourage similar responses and convince yourself (surface acting). In short, "what distinguishes theatre from life is not illusion, it is the honour accorded to illusion."

Emotion Norms:

According to Hochschild, the importance of emotion management lies not in our success at it, "for we often fail miserably," but in the continual homage we pay, through it, to "*the social conventions of affective life*" (e.g. people often talk as much about their failed efforts to feel as they do about having feelings. Common phrases include 'psyching oneself up," "forcing" oneself, "putting a damper on it," etc.).

Thus, Hochshild turns, finally, to a consideration of what she calls "expression rules" and "feeling rules." Hochschild notes that "we often try to *appear* amused, pleased, or sad, and in doing so we follow *expression rules*." We also "try to feel *actually* amused, pleased, or sad, and in doing so we follow *feeling rules*, which are rules about what feeling is or isn't appropriate in a given social setting." According to Hochschild, feeling rules are not simple yes-no norms. They are more like "zoning regulations" that demarcate how much of a given feeling, held in a given way, is crazy, unusual, but understandable, normal, inappropriate, or almost inappropriate for a given context. We recognize these by inspecting how we assess our feelings, how other people assess our emotional display, and by sanctions issuing from both. Feeling rules govern how deeply we should feel, and for how long. According to a feeling rule, we can be off or on in our timing, and in the duration, or intensity of our feeling (e.g. the 'ought' struggles with the 'is' of feeling on one's wedding day, where one is frazzled but supposed to be happy; feeling nothing, relief, or something amusing at a funeral when one is supposed to feel sad - each of which prompt emotion management techniques). While advantage seeking and pain avoidance are also involved here, both operate within the context of feeling rules.

Hochschild argues that while socially ascribed roles such as brides and mourners live out roles, adhere to feeling rules, and manage emotions that are specific to an occasion:

> "...the achievements of the heart are all the more remarkable within roles that last longer and go deeper. Parents and children, husbands and wives, lovers and best friends expect to have more freedom from feeling rules and less need for emotion work; in reality, however, the subterranean work of placing an acceptable inner face on ambivalence is actually all the more crucial for them. In fact, the deeper the bond, the more emotion work..." (e.g. the "relief zone" of the family itself imposes emotional obligations, such as the duty to love one's spouse or children in the face of various difficulties).

Hochschild adds that the tasks of emotion management in response to feeling rules becomes even more complicated when there are conflicting norms governing close personal relationships (e.g. between the outside society and "free love" communes), and when emotional experts such as doctors and psychiatrists come out with new norms of appropriateness.

In addition, Hochschild speaks of feeling rules in terms of social exchange. Feeling rules provide a baseline for emotional exchanges between individuals. Individuals and their interactants may be "owed" something according to these rules, and behavior follows accordingly. There are two types of exchange: straight and improvisational. In the former, we simply use rules to make an inward bow (e.g. paying for advice by inadvertently acknowledging one's inferiority to an expert). In the latter, we presuppose the rules and play with them, creating irony and humour (e.g. self-depreciating humour with one's supervisor on the job when having difficulty performing a task in front of a long line). In both types, it is within the context of feeling rules that we make our exchanges and settle our accounts. We either try to feign the owed feeling, such as gratitude (surface acting), or to offer the greater gift of amplifying a real feeling we already have (a variation of deep acting).

There are also various forms of nonpayment (e.g. not showing the expected emotional actions) or anti-payment (e.g. making no effort to prevent the opposite feelings from showing, such as in obviously feigned gratitude or sarcasm). Thus, in this respect, display and emotion work are not matters of chance, but may be seen as payment or nonpayment of latent dues - and inappropriate emotion may be construed as a nonpayment or mis-payment of what is due.

This is complicated by social inequality, where parties at one level may end up owing or paying more than others - and being seen as displaying inappropriate emotion more readily by those in the driver's seat. According to Hochschild, for example, many friendships and marriages die of inequality. But this inequality of exchange is even more of an issue in the public world of work where the boss and customer are prioritized over the employee.

Finally, Hochschild argues that feeling rules establish zones that mark off degrees of appropriateness, or understandability of feeling, what Hochschild calls "*emotion lines*." She talks for example of an individual's "anger line," which represents the line which, if pushed beyond,

he or she becomes angry (e.g. "the last straw"). There are different kinds of emotion lines here, for example, jealousy lines, love lines, sadness lines - notions of how much it would take of certain provocative events to inspire just how much "appropriate" feeling. Hochschild argues that societies and subcultures, families and individuals vary in their ideal emotion lines.

Hochschild notes that if we don't apply feeling rules to ourselves, others may gently remind us of them. They may express concern for us so as to signal what expression of ours seems inappropriate. If we seem "off" in our feeling, they may express surprise and puzzlement. Or, if we don't seem to feel enough, they may give us permission to feel more. Conversely, Hochschild asserts that we may also become aware of feeling rules when we or others have feelings that are "wrong."

In the end, both the content of feeling rules and the seriousness with which they are taken probably vary from one social group to another, and are integral to emotional culture. Some cultures may exert more control on the *outer surface* of behavior, allowing freedom to actual feelings underneath. Such cultures may focus on the *expression rules* that govern surface acting. Other cultures may exert relatively more social control on the *inner emotional experience*, focusing on the *feeling rules* that govern deep acting.

> "Thus, the study of emotion leads us, on the one hand, from emotions to emotion management, emotion rules, and emotional culture. On the other hand, it leads us to the social structures that pin a person into his or her immediate social world, and to the influences of that social world, which evokes the emotions a person feels."

In the next class, we will focus in more squarely on Hochschild's emotion management perspective as applied to gender issues in the family.