

Encountering Arlie Hochschild's Concept of "Emotional Labor" in Gendered Work Cultures: Ethnographic Approaches in the Sociology of Emotions and in European Ethnology

Irene Götz

I first encountered Arlie Russell Hochschild through reading her modern classic *The Managed Heart*¹ during my ethnographic study on gendered work cultures in a large bakery (Götz 1997). Ever since this first encounter, I have been observing that Hochschild's approach often coincides with the research interests of an expanding community of work ethnographers in the discipline of European Ethnology². In this essay, I will point out some of these striking similarities by focusing on the influence of her books on my own ethnographic work. Yet before discussing my research, I will sketch some of the characteristics of Arlie Hochschild's work and terminology, looking through the lens of a cultural anthropologist. I will conclude this essay with a preliminary summary, which will provide a short account of some of the key characteristics of the ethnographic approach to work life in the service sector.

Arlie Hochschild – a Cultural Anthropologist? A Holistic Perspective on Emotional Labor

Because of her particular way of approaching research, Arlie Hochschild would probably not object if she were adopted as a cultural anthropologist for her approach to research. In fact, this has already happened: In 2006,

1 Hochschild (1983). In this essay, I will cite the 20th edition of 2003 (Hochschild 2003a).

2 For an overview of the current development of work ethnography in European Ethnology, see Götz (2010). The work ethnographers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland are organized in the *Kommission Arbeitskulturen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde* (see its publications, for example, the latest collection of essays, edited by Koch and Warneken (2012), on <http://www.dgv-arbeitskulturen.de/>).

she received the Conrad Arensberg Award of the American Anthropological Association³. In the introduction to the latest German edition of “The Managed Heart”, sociologist Sighard Neckel (2006) points out that she uses an approach similar to that of cultural anthropology: an *inductive and creative, situational approach based on a variety of data and perspectives*. Working like a cultural anthropologist/ethnologist, Arlie Hochschild has collected a wide range of oral and written material for all her books – without following strict “evidence-based” and standardized research plans.

In *The Time Bind*, Hochschild (1997) focused on the specific organizational culture of a “Fortune 500 company” called Amerco, and she analyzed the unwritten laws governing the workplace. She looked at this culture from different perspectives and revealed its interconnectedness with family life. Hence, her approach to research is definitively similar to what European Ethnologists do, who also focus on *micro-analysis*, on *case studies* centered on the attitudes and practices of subjects. In this monograph, Hochschild traced the company’s new family policy and its failure to make women (and men) take advantage of the parental leave and part-time work arrangements available. She developed creative strategies in order to explore individual work-life-arrangements and the “time binds” of men and women with different places in the hierarchy at the workplace: She spent time in the company’s parking lots in order to check who goes to work on Sundays, and she visited kindergartens with the aim of analyzing the time binds of the children of dual-career couples, who receive an hour of condensed “quality time” with their parents after dinner.

In other words, Arlie Hochschild *followed the actors* in their daily work routines like an ethnographer, and sometimes she also accompanied them to their homes to learn more about the personal cost of doing both a challenging job and the “second shift” at home: A surprising number of dual-earner couples still have to cope with powerful traditional value systems. Interviews with couples from different social classes, both used in an earlier book from 1989 called *The Second Shift* and in *The Time Bind*, revealed that traditional gender and class ideologies were affecting the couples and were at odds with their intended – and pretended – egalitarian arrangements of sharing paid work and house work.

As Arlie Hochschild showed in *The Second Shift* (1989), the male workers, especially in the expanding service sectors, are torn between traditional

³ This award was established by the Society for the Anthropology of Work in 1991 to recognize contributions to the field.

*feeling rules*⁴ and more modern demands, for example, accepting or even supporting the careers of their wives. Hochschild explained the logic and individual coping strategies of the traditional "economy of gratitude" informing housework: According to this value system, the husband should be thanked for his "help" around the house, as doing such a "female" job cannot be expected of the traditional breadwinner. These inner and outer conflicts have several consequences for the individual's "management" of his or her feelings. As Arlie Hochschild showed in her case studies, the management of feelings and the acts of balancing inner tensions are essential parts of the daily, fragile emotion work necessary for sustaining private relationships as well as keeping an (often precarious) job.

According to Arlie Hochschild, it is necessary for scholars working in this area to widen their perspectives and to include in their research both work cultures and the private life worlds of the actors. Otherwise, they will not be able to detect the complex, multi-faceted inner and outer strategies of identity work and of accommodation to existing social structures pursued by the actors. Arlie Hochschild never limited her research field to either the work life or the reproduction sphere, but regarded *both of them as interconnected realms located in a single social field*. As a result, she succeeded in providing deep insights into everyday struggles and the daily transfers from home to work life (and vice versa), which involve values, beliefs, attitudes, gendered hierarchies, practices, emotions, services and commodities.

In the light of the interconnection of the two domains and the expansion of the service sector, which tends to colonize "the whole personality" and leads to the "Commercialization of Intimate Life" (Hochschild 2003b), Arlie Hochschild developed a *broad and open concept of work*. This coincides with "our" own, open approach in work ethnography (see Herlyn et al. 2009): Work can neither be restricted to paid work nor to visible work practices altering the outside world. As a result, Hochschild's concept takes into account both the *inner*, invisible processes of "emotion work" and the effects of this inner management of feelings, which, taken together, constitute "emotional labor". As Hochschild (2003: 7) puts it:

I use the term emotional labor to mean the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore as *exchange value*. I use the synonymous terms emotion work or emotion management to refer to these same acts done in a private context where they have *use value*.

4 See Hochschild (1979) and Hochschild (1983), especially in chapter 4.

Thus, emotional labor “requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild 2003: 7). Emotional labor is observable in the body language and interactions between the service worker and the client; it is objectified and guided by commercial directives and bought and sold on the market.⁵

Moreover, work is always *gendered work*. This is due to the different socialization of men and women, which is reflected in traditional gender roles. There are still many jobs that rely on employees making use of their experiences as housewives. This aspect of the work usually does not have to be remunerated, for the skills and feelings involved are still considered the “natural” gifts and instincts of a mother. Many low-wage service jobs are a domain of female work.⁶ In her bestseller *The Managed Heart*, Arlie Hochschild depicted how Delta Airlines’ training centers and manuals relied on the “emotional memory” of female private work contexts: Young flight attendants were trained to recall these in order to manipulate their emotional behavior towards problematic passengers (see Hochschild 2003: chapter 6). Focusing on normative instructions and trained feeling rules as well as on interviews with the flight attendants, trainees and supervisors, Arlie Hochschild analyzed the numerous normative demands of this type of “home-like” emotional labor, as well as particular incidents and various practices connected to it. Like perfect “hosts” at a dinner party, they were expected to serve their “friends” with never-ending patience and sincere friendliness. They had to learn that the “passenger has no obligation to return empathy or even courtesy” (Hochschild 2003: 110). If the “guests” got angry or afraid, it was the job of the flight attendants to suppress their own anger and fear, and soothe them like a mother who calms down her angry or anxious children. The supervisors trained the recruits, according to this “cabin-to-home analogy”, to use the “company language”, which contained standardized “expressions of empathy” (Hochschild 2003: 109–113).

In Arlie Hochschild’s research the subjects have always been conceptualized as *active persons*, even if they have to cope with manipulating feeling rules in a challenging, alienating workspace. This shifting focus on the subjects’ practices and their dependence on given structures again reveals the similarities between a cultural anthropological approach and Hochschild’s work (see Götz 2010). Although Hochschild – somewhat pessimistically –

⁵ See Hochschild (2003), chapter 1, 4–6.

⁶ Concerning the “gendered labor market” in Germany, see Beck-Gernsheim (1976).

highlights how the structure of this commercialized world is increasingly alienating people through stealing and commodifying their authentic feelings, she emphasizes the agency of the subjects. This is demonstrated by her use of concepts such as "surface acting" and "deep acting" (which is deliberately not called *reacting!*).⁷

"Deep acting" refers to Constantin Stanislavski's "method acting" technique: He taught professional actors and actresses to recall emotions from their personal "emotional memory" – a situational performing practice of recalling (Stanislavski 1961). Accordingly, the service workers of Delta Airlines have to educate themselves either to feel "serious" friendliness or aggression *vis-à-vis* their clients. "Surface acting" accords to superficial behavioral rules from manuals; in contrast, the transformations of the self in question go deeper and, therefore, may cause more severe psychological damage if they are applied in commercial contexts. Arlie Hochschild has warned us of this state of affairs on many occasions. If a service worker has to sell her feelings in the service industry day by day, her emotions are rearranged and her entire personality becomes a commodity.

In the process, she (or he) might lose her (or his) inner voice and sense for genuine feelings, which are important "signals" helping people to grasp and interpret situations and the attitudes of other people they interact with.⁸ Even though Hochschild developed – in a critical elaboration on Erving Goffman⁹ – a more differentiated *concept of emotional acting*, some action theorists criticized her concept of alienation for treating subjects merely as victims who can do nothing but adapt to challenging structures (see Neckel 2006: 22).

This objection does not seem to be justified, for Hochschild always considered the actors' own creativity in subverting the rigid rules and demands of their companies. For example, she showed how the flight attendants managed to develop strategies of coping with unfriendly customers who had offended and humiliated them; in fact, they even found covert ways of paying them back for their nasty behavior – a sublime form of revenge (see Hochschild 2003: 114). It is this sensibility for subversion and resistance that brings Arlie Hochschild's attitude towards research close to that of European

⁷ See chapter 3 in Hochschild (2003).

⁸ As Hochschild puts it with reference to Freud: "Emotional states – such as joy, sadness and jealousy – can be seen as the senders of signals about our way of apprehending the inner and outer environment." (Hochschild 2003: 119 and 230 ff.)

⁹ Hochschild (2003: 224–228) blamed Goffman for neglecting the fact that the subject is a person with agency, who has to manage an inner life when displaying a special emotion.

Ethnologists: “We” also consider it a primary task to learn more about subversive strategies and, to an extent, encourage workers to use them as instruments of political empowerment and change (see Götz 2010; Herlyn et al. 2009; Koch and Warneken 2012).

Arlie Hochschild has always chosen and reflected on her case studies thoroughly. Her intention is to develop her conceptual framework and hypotheses building on the solid basis of *well-selected and well-arranged examples*. Just like in the work studies of ethnologists, there is always an emancipatory attitude and tone in her writings. The flight attendants had the task of managing their feelings in order to create a homelike atmosphere of wellbeing, trust and safety; in contrast, the bill collectors of Delta Airlines (Hochschild 2003: 138–147) operating on the backstage were obliged to train themselves according to antagonistic, more “male” feeling rules: They had to create an anonymous and frightening climate of distrust and humiliation which helped to “convince” defaulting customers in an aggressive and intimidating way to pay their bills. Although they were obliged to behave aggressively, some of them also attempted to find hidden ways of bailing-out clients.

These research conceptions and practices of field research are reminiscent of the *phenomenological approach* in ethnology, which is based on “thick descriptions” (Geertz 1973) and interpreting culture as a “web” of interwoven symbols, practices and meanings. In accordance with this ethnographic and casuistic way of representing and textualizing field material, Arlie Hochschild tells stories about her characters.

Her narrative includes case studies; she focuses emphatically on the perspectives of the actors and their practices of managing divergent impulses and feeling rules. However, this is always conceptualized with reference to the corresponding socio-cultural and economic context. Arlie Hochschild’s research has always covered both the *macro- and the micro-levels of the field* – as well as different layers and perspectives, such as the different hierarchies, departments and gendered subcultures of a company.

Although Sighard Neckel emphasizes the closeness of Arlie Hochschild’s approach to cultural anthropology in his introduction to *The Managed Heart*, he sticks to the old prejudice against ‘under-theorized’ ethnographic work in one respect: He sees a crucial difference between ethnological and sociological case studies. According to him, only the latter are able to extract, from exemplary cases, more general statements on the social structures of life worlds (Neckel 2006: 15). Hochschild’s books are brilliant examples of such an inductive and explorative way of developing and ‘sensing’ theoretical con-

cepts, but the ethnographic work of European Ethnologists also theorizes the data produced in an inductive fashion and with the aim of developing more general explanations of everyday life and concepts describing it.

Participant Observation in a Bread Factory – Theorizing Gendered Work Cultures through the Lens of the Female Ethnographer's Emotions

Why do (mostly female) shop assistants in a bread factory still earn less money than their (male) co-workers, who work either as mostly unqualified bakers or as suppliers delivering bread to the shops? This question and my observation of deeply rooted gender segregations in the work environment of this company motivated me to conduct an ethnographic field study on corporate culture. For the next three years (in the mid-1990s), a highly industrialized bakery with about 100 shops spread all over southern Germany became my research field (Götz 1997).

I investigated the interactions between the female shop assistants on the one side, and the male suppliers and the customers on the other. Their interactions formed part of the everyday work routines in this highly rationalized and standardized work setting. I learned about the daily routines in the different departments of this company by means of conducting interviews and nosing around in the shops and store halls, the bureaus and the bakery, by attending training courses and participating in Christmas parties and meetings and, last but not least, by digging in the company's archive. Step-by-step, I identified the special ingredients of the professional honor of every job, of its particular reputation and problems.

I was nosing around in the role of a trainee on an internship, and seemed to be mostly useless for the hard work of the bakers. I had to cope with distrust on the work floor – and with official restrictions whenever I seemed to be too interested in "serious" problems concerning, for example, unsatisfied workers. Especially the shop assistants, who in the end accepted me as a "colleague," tried to instrumentalize me for their particular needs, hoping to become more "visible" – for example, in terms of work overload and a lack of recognition from their supervisors.

There were various instrumentalizations of, and projections on, my person, and they helped me to become socialized into the gender-dominated life worlds characterizing the different work places. I was treated as somebody who did not fit into this work environment – at least in the male-dominated areas. I got into this position due to my lack of physical strength and toughness – and because women daring to stay after having experienced that they do not fit in must have “other interests.” I fled this work place because I was afraid of sexual assaults, through which the men seemed to compensate for the “mistake” of allowing a younger woman into a work environment that obviously was supposed to be reserved for males. Through this “mistake,” I learned about their values, and how they would have supposedly treated any woman who would have demanded to get one of these “male” jobs that were “better” regarding payment and status. These more or less subtle conflicts of power between males and females were still handled in those days by staying in one’s “own” restricted work environment, and the personnel office of the company openly supported this policy.

In other words, I managed to gain deeper insights into the unwritten rules and values of the workers on the shop floor by thoroughly reflecting on my role in the field. I grasped these rules and role patterns by studying how cultural roles were projected on my person – and I often found these projections inadequate and disturbing. This is what Arlie Hochschild hints at, when she states that feelings have to be taken seriously: They are important “signals”, which reveal the nature of certain situations.¹⁰

When I started my internship in the shops, I was confronted with an environment completely different from that of the male dominated workplaces. I immediately found myself appropriated for all the routine work which had to be done. As a young woman, I had to be trained for the job of a shop assistant by experienced “mothers”. So they taught me the “right” emotions to be used for different types of customers, and to decorate the shop artistically, and – most importantly – to keep everything clean and nice. Again, I experienced what this “female” work culture is like through having to play cultural roles – and through my sensory experiences and feelings. Thanks to the shop assistants’ strict lessons, I felt detached, sometimes amused, bored, or even humiliated. Through this introspective stance, by reflecting on why I felt this way, I could get a glimpse of their feelings and a sense of their more or less conscious attitudes to their jobs and role models.

10 See footnote 8.

Why did the shop assistants emphasize the virtue of being a housewife? They presented the superiority of housewives as a necessary precondition for doing their jobs. This enabled me to understand that there are few other skills to be proud of in an unskilled and badly paid job. Through intensive contacts and my daily observations in the shops, I learned that the women attempted to present themselves as honorable and qualified shop assistants who draw their self-esteem from the very values and skills they have acquired at home. They gained their self-confidence from being working housewives who managed to do challenging part-time jobs in the bakery in addition to their home duties; in other words, they were able, at last, to transfer their confidence into a professional setting, where they received a salary and gained a certain reputation for their labor. Moreover, by teaching me how to become a good, responsible shop assistant, I sensed that they felt a certain satisfaction: For the moment, they were superior and could turn the existing social hierarchies and power relations upside down.

“This job is not for a man!” – The Devaluation and Revaluation of the Informal Knowledge of Housewives

When I observed how the shop assistants supervised other trainees in their shops, I realized that my feelings had shown me the right way to interpret this “female” work culture. Some shop assistants as well as the workers from the personnel office explained in my interviews that the company preferred to employ experienced housewives “as they were able to learn the job within 14 days”. Like the supervisors of the flight attendants in *The Managed Heart*, they referred to the housewife’s “emotional memory” when they explicitly stated that a mother has all the necessary “practical” qualifications, such as serving (their children), cleaning (the house), multi-tasking and handling food skillfully.

For example, I observed during a workshop for shop assistants that the company explicitly expected them to make use of their expertise gained from cooking for their families. The supervisor encouraged a group of middle-aged shop assistants to test some of the recipes at home that were on the flyers handed to the customers in the shops. These flyers contained recommendations on how to use the products on sale, for example, organic “dark” rye flour. The women replied that their conservative husbands would neither

like this “dark” flour nor the organic pasta made of it. The supervisor joked: “Then you better turn off the light before dishing up the pasta for your husband!” This joke reflected the supervisor’s persistence. She tried to make use of the women’s informal knowledge as housewives. Moreover, the company attempted to change the women’s cooking habits and thus to colonize the private time of their employees as well as the taste of their families.

“Please, use dark (organic) flour for baking a cake, it tastes wonderful”, said the supervisor in alluring manner. A shop assistant responded: “If the company pays for it, then, yes.” The supervisor was astonished: “But you bake at home anyway!” All shop assistants replied with laughter: “No, we don’t bake cakes anymore, we have no time!” The supervisor did not give in. She stated with urgency: “So, your homework for our next training session next week is to find out what you can bake with the organic flour!” A week later, she checked the results of this exercise.

This example highlights how the company expects their employees to identify with its products at almost any cost. This process of “socialization” partly has to take place at home. The company relied on, and strengthened the interconnection of the domains of work and home, as well as colonizing the women’s time and abilities as domestic workers without paying for this extra service and the extra skills required. These strategies of “educating” the workers’ tastes resulted from the idea of shaping their consciousness according to the corporate identity and language of the company, which praised the tasteful, sustainable and organic products. Furthermore, this example highlights normative demands of subjectification advancing into the realm of a formerly Fordist workplaces characterized by clear-cut boundaries between work and non-work.

The closeness to housework and reproduction work seemed to be one reason for the relatively low wages of the shop assistants. As my case study on the workshop showed, the form of housework in question is traditionally considered to be based on the “natural” tasks of caring and cooking, which mothers and wives have to do anyway. According to these “gender stereotypes”, the “labor of love” is not “real” work at all – and this stereotype devaluates the status of all jobs that show a certain closeness to housework. In line with these traditional ways of devaluing female work, the job advertisements of the company explicitly looked for women and offered part-time positions only.

“You can’t offer this part-time job to a man!” This was the response of a manager from the personnel office when I asked her why the job of a shop

assistant seemed to be restricted to women. According to her, a man would not be able to support his family with a part-time job. She also explained that most of the women, who started to work in one of the shops "for a few hours a week" after their children had left home, were only planning to earn "a little money" while their husbands remained the main breadwinner. As I learned in the field, this assumption and the corresponding official corporate language of "part-time jobs for mothers" were a euphemism for the fact that many shop assistants worked almost full-time in addition to their "second shift" at home. Many of them did not have well-earning husbands and had to look after themselves.

Yet, what seemed unacceptable for men was presented as a good deal for women, especially for those with low qualifications. The company's ideology of empowering middle-aged women by offering them "part-time work" and a "second income" was a distorted account of the situation of these women, who were often forced to do precarious jobs such as these, which did not pay a living wage. Thus, the logic behind these policies of the company contributed to fixing gender roles and gender inequality in the workplace. This in turn served to justify the wage level, which was lower than in "male" unskilled jobs, for example in the bakery. The inter-linkage between unequal payment and status and the gendered evaluations of work seemed to be taken for granted in the personnel office and on the shop floor.

The most striking issue in this context was the perception of the few young men who worked in the shops, and who were eye-catching exceptions in those days. The jobs were only considered adequate for either young students on university vacation or for "really odd guys" who were "satisfied with low pay". The treatment of these men, who were seen as funny exceptions, revealed that being a shop assistant in a bakery was considered a female domain.

Female jobs are assigned a lower status; concerning the different "status shield" at work for men and women, the parallels between the bakery and Arlie Hochschild's observations in the plane cabins are obvious. There were jokes mirroring this difference in social status and the diverging expectations concerning male and female careers. Similar to the male flight attendants, the young helpers in the shop were asked by the customers, in a humorous manner, if they now had become the "boss" in the shop. The male flight attendants were asked whether they had plans to become managers, and as authorities, they were also treated with more respect (Hochschild 2003: 174–186). Nevertheless, male workers in the shop and in the cabin were often

mothered. Arlie Hochschild and I observed quite similar processes where mother-son-relationships were transferred to the workplace. In my case, the experienced mothers kept her “sons” from doing dirty and “humiliating” jobs like cleaning the shop floor. What they saw as natural tasks for the female trainees, the “daughters”, was called a “victimization” when it concerned the young men: “I won’t let him clean the floor when there are enough women in the shop!” If a young man was able to explain the recipe of a special kind of bread or was cleaning the floor thoroughly, he was almost admired for this “exceptional” behavior. As Arlie Hochschild showed, some male flight attendants tended to “bow out” of the “hard jobs” of handling babies or “old folks”, preferring to deal with young attractive female passengers (Hochschild 2003: 176).

Flirting was a popular practice among the male bread sellers and their female customers. Male customers tended to look down on men dressed in the white apron of the shop assistants. Some of the more conservative customers and suppliers of the company treated the men who “served” customers as weak “mother’s boys” who had sold out their male virtues of strength and dominance. In doing so, the gendered stereotypes characterizing work cultures were, once again, fixed and enforced. “Female work” is downgraded by the still wide-spread attitude of regarding it unacceptable for “real” men.

“My most awful customer” – Stories on Emotional Labor in a Highly Standardized Work Environment

Another amazing issue, from my academic perspective, was the notion that most of the shop assistants regarded their job as “independent” work, which offered them a lot of responsibility and opportunities for being creative.

Thus, I wrote about another “contradiction” that I observed: the contradiction between a highly standardized work environment, which regulates every hand and body movement in the narrow shop. This standardization follows the idea of a Fordist, highly functional work place design. It is a form of job engineering and rationalization policy that allows the company to exchange the employees from one day to another or recruit unskilled (and therefore badly paid) workers. These workers will at once come to terms with the strictly organized order in the shop. Selling bread had more to do with

working on an assembly line than with being "challenged" by the independent responsible work of a seller who must convince people.

This was the very moment when I discovered Arlie Hochschild's book *The Managed Heart*. Suddenly I began to understand: What these job assistants actually did was the hard job of everyday emotional labor: being friendly and being patient even with the most unfriendly, impatient customer. Such emotions had to be performed within a high-speed and physically straining work culture.

As I learned from Arlie Hochschild's book, emotional work requires training; the corresponding practices are governed by feeling rules. Considering this novel hypothesis, I became aware of several training materials, for example, a video which was used for training new shop assistants. The video and some manuals about being a good seller explicitly fixed and standardized these feeling rules and role models.

In this video, the main mottos of the training – "Friendliness trumps everything!" and "The customer is king!" – are illustrated with the help of a number of practical scenarios. The film sequences present two women aged around 50. They are behind the sales counter of the shop, dressed conservatively in white, clean aprons. Their outward appearance – "neither too fashionable nor too extreme in their bodily constitution"¹¹ – matches the conservative corporate image of the company and the anticipated taste of the middle-class customers, who can afford to buy expensive organic products. The slight Bavarian dialect of the two shop assistants emphasizes the regional, "traditional Bavarian" image of the brand and helps – as an integral part of the folkloristic shop aesthetics – to advertise the products. The company is looking for a special type of woman who is prepared to treat the customers according to the following ideal:

With never-ending patience and discreet helpfulness, the shop assistant finds out about the customers' wishes. With alertness and courtesy, she asks regular customers how they are. With her perfect memory, she easily remembers their names and favorite bread. With great concentration, she keeps eye-contact while hurrying to find the ordered product. With the correct order in mind, she wraps the bread, and with natural helpfulness, she puts it in the bag provided by the customer. With professional competence, she gives advice to new or insecure customers, identifying the right kind of bread for them by finding out about their individual tastes. With persuasive power, she addresses unusual requests. With compassion and regret, she comforts an old

11 As the personnel officer once stated, see Götz (1997: 105 ff.).

woman whose favorite bread is sold out. With the experience of a housewife, she identifies the bread suitable for a certain meal. With the strictness of a mother, she calms down “naughty” children – the customers of tomorrow (see Götz 1997: 108 f.).

Another means through which I grasped the relevance and *real* practices of the emotional labor at work was *storytelling*. I asked the shop assistants to tell me about critical incidents concerning their “most awful customer”, and what I held in my hands in the end were about 40 narratives about “ugly”, “unclean”, “impatient”, “aggressive” customers who did not behave at all like good customers. For example, they did not regard organic bread production highly, or did not believe in it, calling the organic production process a “lie”, which insulted one of the shop assistants deeply. She told me about her “most ugly client” in a very annoyed tone. This incident revealed that she really believed in the officially propagated values of this organic bakery or at least was loyal to this key concept of the company.

From these violations of the interaction rules, I was able to extract the norms and feeling rules and understand them better, as well as how important emotion work was for the shop assistants’ self-esteem and self-image. This was part of the “mysterious” pride and peculiar notion of doing “independent” work in a responsible position in the company that I could not understand at the beginning of my research.

In the end, I wrote a book that tried to bring together informal and formal rules and values and the practices of different work cultures. It turned out to be a book that approached Arlie Hochschild’s theses on emotional labor.

A Remark on the Significance of Ethnographies

Ethnographic case studies in general adopt a holistic approach based on analyzing micro- and macro-contexts and revealing a range of perspectives by insiders. The examples presented by Arlie Hochschild and those from my dissertation project demonstrate that qualitative research produces deep insights into the construction of emotional labor, as well as into the different ways in which workers and customers deal with their feelings by adopting individual and collective social practices.

Moreover, fieldwork allowed the researchers to be close to the workers and customers. With their sensory apparatus and through the involvement of their own bodies, they experienced whether the workers are "deep acting" – or whether they are just "surface acting", that is, performing a feeling in the sense of Hochschild (2003: 35–48). In addition, the micro-analytical approach allows the researchers to reflect on, and judge, how emotional labor and feeling rules are embedded in (a) existing pragmatic settings at work and (b) broader social, moral and political frames that are often at odds with these settings.

Ethnographic research enables us to understand the "sentient self" (Hochschild 2003b: 78) in complex processes of interaction. In other words, ethnographic studies explore the "emotion vocabulary" with which the interactive partners themselves interpret their interactive procedures of service. They describe whether people are attached to or detached from one another and committed or uncommitted to their work – and whom they blame for their situation, or who they think is in charge. Through participant observation and individual narratives, we learn "what social situations or rules call feelings forth or tuck them under", as Arlie Hochschild had it (Hochschild 2003b: 78). Ethnographic fieldwork is able to delineate that feelings are produced, to a certain degree, by the pressures of an economized work environment.

Coming Back to the Class Issue and the Two Sides of the Service Sector

In my bakery project I covered one example of the expanding number of precarious jobs in the service sector of postindustrial societies. The example of the shop assistants was not part of the "bright" side of the service industry, that is, skilled jobs where certain forms of emotional labor are in demand and estimated highly. This "bright" side concerns the friendly yet commercialized aspects of a wealthy, aspirational society dominated by the middle class. Here, emotional labor – an essential aspect of the services provided by, for example, hairdressers, fitness trainers, personal and financial consultants, and family therapists – is regarded highly and rewarded accordingly. Here, emotional "gifts" and services constitute a resource for regeneration or an investment in the future: The clients see them as a way of improving their

“human” or financial capital and boosting their employability and career opportunities. Here, in the rhetoric class, at the family consultant’s, at the bank, emotional labor is, for both counselors and clients, a valuable tool as well as a result and a benefit of the work carried out.

However, the transformation of the “whole personality” according to feeling rules and the corresponding danger of alienation seem to be a more severe challenge for highly skilled service workers. On the whole, the precarious, often female service workers, for example in shops or fast food restaurants, have more superficial contacts with customers. Most of the time, they have to cope with feelings of anger, frustration and being oppressed. Yet they cannot easily be forced to transform their convictions or even their personality.

Post-Fordist labor markets are characterized by a climate of precariousness and insecurity; working class service workers, for example shop assistants or nurses in nursing homes for the elderly as well as flight attendants, currently have to cope with the *devaluation* of the immaterial, emotional aspects of their work and with *de-skilling*. This is one of the problems of the unskilled shop assistants working in the standardized chain stores of big, international companies selling fast food, cheap clothes and – in the IT sector – novel immaterial communication services. The flipside of these branches of the service industry are often less stylish and polished and less friendly work places. These functional, sober, and often antiseptic work environments do not have much in common with the “glamorous” offices of highly skilled consultants. Nevertheless, the staff tries to set or fulfill standards of good service or care.

The general question is: Under which conditions are emotions valued and remunerated adequately, and, conversely, what contributes to the downgrading of immaterial work? I contend that a whole range of interlinked factors play a role, such as the expected benefit of a particular service for the client’s contentment at work, career, fitness and employability; the question whether the care or the service offered can be expected to be an investment in more efficient work patterns; the social and vocational status of both the service worker and the client; the supply and demand for a certain service in this diversified sector of the economy; and the traditional down- and upgrading of work in a gendered labor market. In addition to this, body work and service work – traditional domains of women, which are often reminiscent of hard and dirty physical labor – are valued less than those forms of “clean” knowledge work that allow the worker to keep a more distant relationship to the client or patient.

Obviously, this is a class issue, and class also determines the "value" of service and care work as a capital. All these work environments, be they public or private, are, in one way or another, deeply influenced by the processes of the subjectification, deregulation and rationalization caused by the predominance of unrestricted market forces and strategies of neoliberal restructuring. The values of post-Fordism and the hegemonic practices of 'reengineering' reflect a new 'spirit of capitalism' centered on 'employability' and commodification (Boltanski and Chiapello 2006). The new economic strategies and practices have not only transformed Fordist institutions, but they have also advanced into the organization of family life¹², which becomes more and more dependent on 'outsourced' care work.

This essay intended to bring together Arlie Russell Hochschild's approach to research and work studies in European Ethnology; it aimed at pointing out the similarities, influences, and coincidences in conceptual, methodological and empirical matters. I hope to have contributed to intensifying the fruitful intellectual exchange between "us" – the next generations of cultural anthropologists exploring subjectification and commodification of emotions, knowledge and "personality" – and Arlie Hochschild, the pioneer of the sociology of emotions.¹³

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12 Another recent project at the Munich Institute for European Ethnology was a case study on urban, middle-class mothers who felt obliged to conform to the ideals of "professionalized" motherhood, following "best practice" principles of raising children. See Schmidt, Götz (2010).

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