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Emotionalization of Labor in Sociology and Society: Practice, Ethics and Self-Identity

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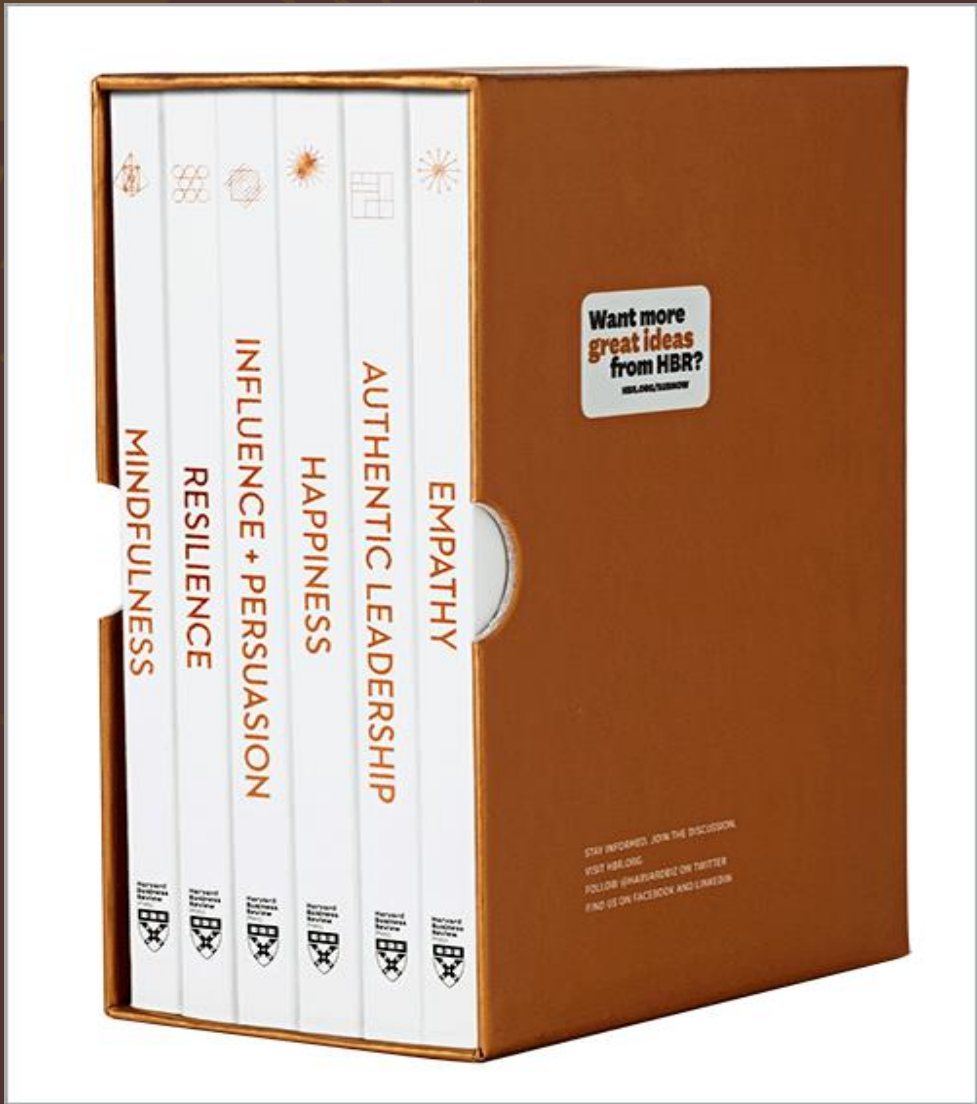
Plan

- **Emotional labor (EL) as a part of everyday life and as a subject in social sciences: some generalizations and examples.**
- **Ethic, practice and self-identity: emotional inequality, moral dilemmas, normative changes, alienation, resistance and personal autonomy.**
- **What's new with the emotional labor during pandemic? Some comparisons**
- **Conclusion: care sphere, digital services and emotional labor**

Emotional labor in post-Soviet space



- Emotion management as a revolution in post-Soviet services: new understanding of service as well as emotion management.
 - Different services and slow changes in practice, ethic and identity of workers, supervisors, and top management staff.
 - In Russian sociology, the emotion management in a workplace (as in the private sphere) has not been studied as extensively as in Western countries and around the world. Now this topic has become especially acute in Russian studies of care and health care.
 - **Before the pandemic in Russia, the representations and practices of EL were relatively similar to those found in Western societies, although limited primarily to the commercial sector**
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Books on emotions in the corporate environment

Manage Your Emotional Culture: an example

Sigal Barsade **Olivia A. O'Neill**

<https://hbr.org/2016/01/manage-your-emotional-culture>

- **Monitoring emotions and employee motivation: 'what generates feelings of belonging and joyful excitement at work'?**
- **Hire of specialists who can monitor employees' emotions over time and with special equipment.**
- **"Emotional culture needs to be managed, otherwise losses are inevitable...".**
"Emotional culture has an impact on employee satisfaction, burnout, teamwork and consequently profits..."
- **Variants of corporate culture: A culture of empathy (compassionate love): the degree of affection, care and sympathy that employees should express to each other.**
- **Fear culture: The corporate culture must also take into account negative emotions, according to which demands on employees should be strengthened or relaxed; if there is constant fear, more freedom in decision-making should be given.**

Corporations and emotion monitoring (example from the post-soviet space)



- Today, the market for emotion recognition is estimated at \$20-30 billion. Microsoft and Google showed scientific interest in this topic back in 2015-2016: based on an uploaded photo, the software tries to detect an emotion by analyzing facial micro-expressions.
- Banks JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America are also using emotion-monitoring systems to improve employee efficiency and reduce burnout.
- **Agribusiness holding company in Ukraine:** *«is expanding its employee emotion monitoring project," said the director of the Human Resources and Communications Department.*
- **"We are monitoring emotions. Everyone is under the cameras... We calibrate emotions by 70 points. We monitor the happy and the unhappy workers," said the Head of the company.**
- *He noted that studies have proven that happy people are more highly productive. According to him, psychologists work with unhappy people of his company and HR staff, trying to offer something to these people to cope with their unhappiness, but if there is no change, these people can be replaced.*



”Agribusiness holding company of happiness” has introduced employee emotion monitoring to improve productivity

<https://agroportal.ua/news/novosti-kompanii/mkhp-budet-monitorit-emotsii-sotrudnikov/>

- **So far, several dozen employees of the Agribusiness holding company have agreed to participate in experiment in emotion recognition on a voluntary basis: "We are starting to study employee satisfaction based on ... emotional computing..."**
- **"We have approached the next stage: we are waiting for the delivery and start installing the latest hardware and software. **It will help us to collect more accurate data on a larger sample of participants**".**
- **The purpose of this monitoring is to **"protect employees from stress, moral, professional and psychological burnout"**.**

The emotionalization of labor in society and social sciences



- The value of rational control over emotions is now becoming widespread and influential, changing the emotional mode of work practices.
- The emotionalization of work is taking place in businesses and companies as well as in the discourse of the social sciences, recognizing the importance of the emotional states of employees and customers.
- **Emotions are seen as an integral part of work and are included in the evaluation of its effectiveness: new requirements and practices emerge, changes in work ethics and the professional identity of the employee take place.**
- Practices of coping with burnout and emotional trainings become part of labor relations routine.
- **The need to consider the consequences emotionalization of work or labor in society and in particular in sociology.**




The emotionalization of labor in society and social sciences

- The real demands on labor markets have also changed, where at least a "qualification" in emotion management is implied as part of a good job and an advantage for the employee himself or herself.
- The need to manage emotions is part of the professional culture, the ethics of different professions and occupations, the management of emotions is being professionalized and various emotional practices are being institutionalized.
- Now both emotional labor and emotional intelligence have to be taught and are linked to the values of individual success and happiness in life.
- **"Emotional work culture" is becoming one of the most important features of late capitalism and reflects the process of cultivating the management of feelings in order to achieve profit, especially in the service sector (Warton, 2009).**

The emotion management in sociology



- **Emotional capitalism and the concept of "emotional labor"** (Hochschild, 1983) are now the important part of understanding labor process, individual and collective behavior and the part of the struggle for the autonomy and rights at the workplace.
 - An extensive field of research on emotion management in different professions and occupations has emerged in sociology (Warton, 2009; Lively, Weed, 2014).
 - **The concept of emotion management** now is an umbrella term for the concepts of emotional work, emotional labor, emotion regulation, emotional intelligence, etc.
 - With the help of this term and theory sociologists now can observe **new dimensions of inequality (emotional inequality), alienation, forms of individual and collective resistance to exploitation and really the new aspects of work ethic and personal autonomy at the workplace.**
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Discussions and challenges: what's wrong the emotional labor?

- Do labor relations really require so much emotion management?
- Are the demands of managing emotions in the workplace the part of the new exploitation of workers?
- Do workers really feel emotionally (self-) alienated?
- How to view emotion management in the workplace today: **what should be questioned in contemporary theories of emotion management in sociology?**
- By some accounts hyper-regulation of emotions in the workplace is institutionalized, i.e. excessive, exaggerated and not always justified, backed by formalized rules and pay (Burkitt, 2019; Mckenzie et al., 2019), demands on emotion management are perpetuated.

What's wrong with emotional labor?

- **The imperative of emotion management may prove to be a new form of worker exploitation.**
- **Emotion management in workplace performance measurement: mistakes in emotion monitoring.**
- **Emotion management as the control of undesirable emotions: a way for workers to agree and come to terms with company policies?**
- **Commercialized emotion management and creativity, spontaneity, resistance, collegiality.**
- **The formalization and institutionalization of the demands of individualized forms of emotion management and personal responsibility for it threatens worker solidarity and collegial relations (McKenzie et al, 2019).**
- **It is true that sometimes workers need to deal with 'difficult' emotions, but it is much more difficult to do so in an individualized form.**

"The more the heart becomes manageable, the more we appreciate the unmanageable heart"

A. R. Hochschild

- **Emotion management as a discrepancy between expressed and experienced emotions and the signaling function of emotions and emotion management in the workplace.**
- **When emotion management becomes "alienating"?**
- **Hyper-regulation of emotion and the institutionalization of this pattern: the individual/worker experiences emotions and continues to manage them, but this regulation of emotions is socially/organizationally coercive.**
- **The institutionalization of "alienating" of EL: what identity to fight for? Excessive emotion control and everyday monitoring of emotions leads to emotional experience that do not carry meaning for the individual in his/her activities, relations with others and for his/her self-determination.**
- **Are psychological services helpful in this context?**

Are there any constructive forms of emotional labor possible?

- EL as not necessarily coercive and dysfunctional.
- EL as a resource for self-actualization and as a source of alienation.
- Alienation as emotional (self-)alienation: 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' alienation, role distance and emotion hyperregulation.
- Emotional hyperregulation and emotional burnout as conditions of exploitation and resistance.
- Some research demonstrate (Bolton, 2005; Lively, 2014) that there are different types of emotion management in public and private spaces and emotional labor is only one of them.
- **Sociologists have realized that the concept of emotional should not be applied to all occupations and that each work context needs a detailed analysis** of the factors that influence EL, including clients, organizational leadership, employees, working conditions, socio-cultural and situational context of workers' interactions (Lively, 2014).

Some conclusions before the last part

- During the EL research history there were the significant changes in theory, research and in the practice of labor relations
- Ethic: there were some changes in requirements to performing of EL (e. g., after the 9/11) and then in the theory new classifications of EL appeared and new ideas about the character of EL (e.g., autonomous EL). At the same time, the new notions about the EL appeared in the ethical codes in different occupations
- Practice: the experience of EL practices were accumulated, and the new services concerned the EL appeared in the workplaces (e.g., psychological and training programs) and new forms of resistance to emotional inequality and emotional exploitation.
- Self-identity: the clear realization that EL is ambivalent practice; it can be autonomous, philanthropic and coercive and oppressive, a source of burnout and exhaustion and a source of self-realization and satisfaction; it can be individual and collective, and a source of cooperation and alienation.

What will be with emotional labor in pandemic and post-pandemic times?

Before pandemic times

1. EL as standardized techniques for frontline workers, high demands: value of sincerity, deep acting, bodywork
2. "Emotional inequality": different amounts of emotional work performed by different workers (gender, race, status parameters, ...)
3. Emotion management training in the workplace
4. An invasion of commercialized emotional work into private life

After....

1. Online EL, weakening of rules, standards, surface acting, EAI, digital bots, imitation, concerns about security of interaction
2. "Emotional inequality": a) even greater, competition and bots; b) loosening of rules makes it easier to perform EL?
3. Does learning of EL strategies make sense? Online courses? Managing your own life and the culture of self-help. Learning becomes a personal matter.
4. This trend is intensified during the pandemic: overlapping private and public spheres, digital space as a place of interaction, brief offline contacts, the diminishing of office work

What will be with emotional labor in pandemic and post-pandemic times?

Before

1. Concerns about burnout, stress, internal psychological conflicts, trainings. Issues of alienation from one's own feelings
2. Forms of resistance to exploitation of EL: personal autonomy of the worker protected by different means
3. Preparing for different kinds of emotional work or managing emotions in the workplace as part of socialization.
4. Sociology: the importance of EL research, revealing areas of professional activity

After

1. Does burnout persist? Is a pandemic burnout stronger or, on the contrary, stress relieving? How is self-care realized?
2. Is there a need to protect the worker from exploitation? In what fields? Health care? The weakening of collective forms of resistance?
3. Socialization – development of situational emotional skills, EL is left to digital apps and EAI?
4. Sociology: is EL a thing of the past? Exploring care and related professions and occupations

Care sphere, digital services and emotional labor

- **Digital revolution in action:** what will be with EL?
- **Digital services and “digital state”:** maybe we need not an interpersonal interactions in service sphere anymore, and so EL?
- **Care (and healthcare)** is the only sphere of emotion management now in nearest future?
- **Sociology:** what are the directions in EL area? New approaches and methods, new ideas about the emotions to manage (see e.g., Cottingham, Erikson, 2020: The promise of Emotion practice..., about the EL and quite new approach to research it).

Questions?
**Thank you for your
kind attention!**

