

# Consequences of the Commercialization of Caring for Interpersonal Relationships

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Increasingly, in academic, popular, Western, and international contexts, we discuss interpersonal relationships – particularly marriage and child-rearing – from a commercialized perspective. That perspective serves to accomplish a number of things – sometimes nothing more than giving us a kind of metaphor for illustrating some particular aspect(s) of such relationships – but because it is so prevalent, now it shapes those relationships just as much as it explains them. And even as commercialization pervades seemingly every aspect of our lives, taken to extremes it can be impersonal and detrimental to emotional function. Thus the commercialization of interpersonal relationships has in a sense depersonalized them and denied the emotional aspects that have always played a role in them (even though in the past the commencement of the marriage relationship tended to have less to do with love than it usually does now). Plus, the objectification of all parties involved in such relationships, no matter their gender, class, or race, exacerbates that depersonalization and thus makes issues of race, class, and gender seem superfluous and irrelevant – thus negligible. These consequences and what they mean for interpersonal relationships and for society as a whole are worthy of consideration.

Of course, any discussion of the commercialization of human feeling brings Arlie Russell Hochschild to mind, and indeed, her work provides a foundation for mine. In *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, an ethnography on Delta flight attendants, Hochschild discusses the consequences for the individual of that commercialization in the workplace. Her studies also enable conclusions about the consequences of that workplace

commercialization of feeling for public and private interpersonal relationships, although she does not draw those conclusions herself. She does indicate in the introduction to her essay collection, *The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work*, which was published twenty years after *The Managed Heart*, that the result of both males and females now participating in capitalism “makes for a harshness of life that seems so normal to us we don’t see it. We really need, I believe, a revolution in society and in our thinking, one that rewards care as much as market success” (8).<sup>1</sup> However, just the idea that an act is only as valuable as its reward reinscribes the very harsh thinking that Hochschild wants to see change, as does her extrapolation of her ideas about the commercialization of feeling in the workplace to ideas about feelings in general in *The Managed Heart*. Further, at one point in *The Managed Heart* she even indicates that one of her purposes in writing it was to suggest “how parents can train children to do the emotional labor required by different jobs” (138).

Such implications naturalize the contemporary commercial attitude about feelings that really merit questioning first. Hochschild chooses not to do so in *The Managed Heart*, however: “Managing feeling is an art fundamental to civilized living, and I assume that in broad terms the cost is usually worth the fundamental benefit” (21). Instead, I actually seek to explore those costs and benefits in this paper.

Despite her claim to being critical of the commercialization of feeling, Hochschild’s ethnography is a perfect example of an academic source that discusses emotions in strictly

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<sup>1</sup> That passage also essentially blames the advent of women working outside the home for the pervasiveness of that harshness, which seems to buy into society’s portrayal of working women as harsh and thus “unfeminine” – a surprising attitude for a feminist academic. Nevertheless, she seems to do the same kind of thing in *The Commercialization of Intimate Life* as well:

[C]ertain prior conditions ripen the soil for the takeoff of the commercial spirit of intimate life. The preconditions now are a weakening of the family, the decline of the church, and the loss of local community—traditional shields against the harsher effects of capitalism. (23)

commercialized language. She uses extensive terminology constructing emotional interaction as commercial, such as describing the “emotion *work*” involved in the “*exchange* [of] gestures or signs of feeling with others” to “settle our *accounts*”; the “[*p*]ayment [...] made in facial expression, choice of words, and tone of voice”; the construction of honest thoughts behind displays of emotion as “*gold*” and the impersonation of honesty as “*silver*”; sincerity as “*owed*” according to a conscious “mental *ledger*” (the “very idea” of which Hochschild acknowledges is “repellent”); “guilt or worry [...] as a *promissory note*”; “pretending [as] a statement of deference to the other [and] an *offering*”; and all such exchanges as “psychological *dues*” (76-82; emphases added).

In terms of society in general, it is possible that its repulsion to these ideas may stem from a need to differentiate between marriage and prostitution, which differentiation the complete commercialization of interpersonal relationships would negate. As contemporary feminists, however, we must recognize the potential that sex workers may legitimately freely choose such work. Still, I have given significant consideration to the possibility that my own sense of the repulsion of this construction might be due to my own socialization as a mother that my love for my child should be voluntary, selfless, all-encompassing, and joyfully so; I will admit that it is possible. Indeed, society’s tendency to ask that of mothers is quite problematic. Yet problematizing the expectation of maternal selflessness does not require arguing the complete opposite, nor is creating such a binary all that constructive – let alone legitimate, as I will explain later. That, then, is my motivation for questioning Hochschild’s construction.

Hochschild further discusses the “feeling rule” of loyalty and love as “owed” to one’s parents and of love of someone undeserving as “overpayment” or constituting “emotional debt” (70). She explains:

There are many things people do for each other to maintain reciprocity[...]. Marriage, for example, usually involves some external exchange of services[...]. But marriage partners clearly exchange more latent favors. "I'll overlook your distress at large gatherings if you'll overlook my fatness; I'll help you calm your fear of adventure if you'll help me stop testing my limits." (84)

The particulars outlined in this passage basically negate the very idea of love itself. I define love as being able to take pleasure in what brings another person happiness, whether it benefits the lover as well or not. Granted, one could argue that that pleasure is what the lover gets in "exchange" for his or her love, but I doubt that the one often "equals" the other in terms of either quantity or quality; plus, that is not what Hochschild argues in the passage above. Rather, she indicates that every act of generosity toward the other requires one in return, which situation does not even allow for my idea of pleasure being able to serve as the reward. Furthermore, she suggests that lovers actually keep track of every such act, which, realistically, seems fairly impossible. When two people's lives intertwine to the extent that they usually do in marriage, their interactions become far too complex to separate and quantify in columns and numbers. In fact, even points of interaction that inherently involve quantities and numbers, such as financial matters, are so resistant to such easy distinctions that even in community property states disputes over money during a divorce can drag on for months. Thus the idea that such detailed ledger-keeping might take place only in the subconscious (to avoid that feeling of repulsion) is even more hard to believe!

Hochschild also quotes Peter Blau's comments on "[a] novice worker in a Social Security office [trying] to get advice from a more experienced worker":

The giving of advice was an exchange in which the ordinary worker paid for advice by acknowledging his inferiority to the expert, while the expert received ego-enhancing deference in return for the time he lost from his own work in helping his colleague. Both profited. But beyond a certain point, further sacrifices of the expert's time would become more costly to him than the initial sacrifices because his own work would begin to suffer, and further acknowledgments of his superiority would become less rewarding than the

initial ones. He would then become unwilling to give more advice unless the deference and gratitude became more and more extreme. In short, it would raise the price.<sup>2</sup>

In Hochschild's opinion, this quote proves that "[t]he advice seeker owes gratitude to the adviser" (77); perhaps so. However, other interpretations are certainly possible; for instance, one could easily say that it was actually the collectivist (rather than capitalist) principle of courtesy that shaped this situation, as that would entail both helping someone else when you have the ability to do so and respecting someone else's time by not asking too much of their help. The principle of responsibility could be at play too: It was probably the expert's job to educate the new worker, but the new worker had responsibilities to do *his* job as well, so once again he should not ask for too much assistance. The idea of collectivity behind these principles is such that, taken as a whole, it is likely to meet everyone's needs, but the same reciprocity may not be able to exist between individuals.

However, it is also important to recognize that Blau's example actually relates to a commercial situation, which means that our sense of the workers' best decisions probably primarily relates to how they would impact the company. The expert has to teach the newcomer how to do his job correctly so that his work can actually benefit the company, but as Blau states in the quote, spending too much time doing so would detract from the benefit to the company of the expert's work.

The distinction is that Hochschild, as quoted above, is not writing about commercial or even public situations but about personal, private ones – but she does so based upon her research into commercial, public situations. This failure to distinguish between the two reinforces the idea that there are no differences between the ways that one may demonstrate emotions in one or in

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<sup>2</sup> Hochschild indicates that she took this quote from page 2 of Richard Simpson's *Theories of Social Exchange* (General Learning P, 1972).

the other. That, in turn, brings about some of the very confusion and other consequences that I will discuss below.

First, however, it is important to indicate that Hochschild is not solely to blame on this matter; plenty of other academics do the same. For instance, Ara Wilson, in *The Intimate Economies of Bangkok: Tomboys, Tycoons, and Avon Ladies in the Global City*, also writes about the economic aspects of intimacy, as suggested by the title, in her discussions of the department store, the go-go bar, a mall, a telecommunications company, and the direct sales corporation. Like Hochschild, though, she chooses not to problematize the commercialization of intimacy, instead simply indicating that it is there. Considering the degree of theorizing that she does about many other issues relevant to her topic, the absence of evaluative comment on the commercialization of interpersonal interactions themselves conspicuously implies that it is unproblematic.

Hochschild's research obviously focuses exclusively on the United States, as my own must consequently do as well, since her work is the primary basis for mine here. However, she does mention the role of migrant caregivers in this kind of situation in *The Commercialization of Intimate Life*: "When a Thai nanny in Redwood City, California, tells me she loves the children she cares for more than her own children back in Thailand, is this an example of a rich country 'extracting' the ore of love from a poor country?" (1). Of course, Hochschild is clearly using the language of commodification again. More problematic than that, however, is the fact that she chooses that particular example, which she later reads as indicating that the mother does not feel as much toward her biological children as toward her charges, when it is very possible that she just meant that she does not get to perform her love for them as much under the circumstances. Plus, as I argue throughout this paper, emotion is not a numerically quantifiable commodity that

can therefore reach a limit, leaving a person unable to love any other people. And I would also argue that, despite the general attitude to the contrary, which both the Thai mother's and Hochschild's perspectives reflect, by being in the U.S. as a nanny, migrant mothers are caring for their children, both through commercial ways (i.e. the money that they send home) and ways for which they neither can nor do receive any kind of external financial or emotional recompense (i.e. the sacrifice of being away from their families and their homes, not to mention often being exploited as well). Not acknowledging that puts every kind of working mother at risk for the same accusations – and every working father, which in the context of the reinscription of the commercialization of care might be even worse. Society very frequently suggests that a father's most important manifestation of care toward his family is monetary; when as a result of that attitude that is the primary or only way that a father demonstrates his love, it does both fathers and their families a deep disservice.

Still, I do want to affirm the way that at least the mention of migrant caregivers does indicate that that phenomenon crosses U.S. boundaries in both directions. It flows into the U.S. with this kind of migrant worker, and it flows out of the U.S. like any other aspect of American culture widely disseminated in the world today. The commercialization of caring, then, is truly transnational in scope, as I will discuss further later.

The language of commercialization pervades popular discussions of interpersonal relationships as well. For instance, the best-selling save-your-marriage self-help book, *Fighting for Your Marriage*, utilizes the language of commercialization in its introduction to justify and legitimate itself. The first page discusses “risks” of the “business” of marriage: the “costs” of its failure, apparently. Then it explains that these risks originate with marriage, in the last half-century or so, becoming increasingly “Negotiation-Based” (3), thus requiring “skills in conflict

management and problem solving” (4). Meanwhile, the high rate of failure, the writers say, stems from the fact that, “as societies become more consumer oriented, there is an increasing emphasis on being satisfied with what we get” (6). As for the costs of that failure, it causes “workers to be distracted and poorly motivated, which leads to great losses in productivity in our society” (10-11). That, apparently, is why this book is important; meanwhile, the book is credible, the writers argue, because its basis is completely empirical (2). Finally, in the first chapter, they ask the reader to make an “investment” in his or her relationship (26), and indeed, the beginning of the book reads like a prospectus for a mutual fund. Like Hochschild, its authors recognize the increasingly commercial nature of interpersonal relationships, but rather than questioning that, they build upon it and thus reinscribe it – in this case, for their own financial gain.

An even more vivid case is that of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*, by Stephen R. Covey, who is better known for *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, the most well-known and widely-read management and leadership manual for almost two decades. And just like *Fighting for Your Marriage*, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families* reads as though Covey wrote it for businesspeople operating in a commercial environment. In fact, the 7 Habits of the title in the *Families* book are the same 7 Habits that he recommends in *People*! They include “Be Proactive,” “Begin with the End in Mind (Developing a Family Mission Statement),” “Think ‘Win-Win,’” “Synergize,” and “Sharpen the Saw,” which Covey begins by comparing family life to banking: “It requires constant deposits into the Emotional Bank Account” (277), as just one example.

Hochschild recognizes the same trend in her first essay in *The Commercialization of Intimate Life*, “The Commercial Spirit of Intimate Life and the Abduction of Feminism” (13-29). In it she characterizes many contemporary advice books as “emotional investment counseling”

(14). Some of her examples include Helen Gurley Brown's *Having it All* (Pocket Books, 1982), which "helps women advertise themselves to a diversified market. The light office affairs she recommends are those of a sexual venture capitalist, a diversified, high-risk, high-opportunity portfolio." Meanwhile, Robin Norwood's *Women Who Love Too Much* (Pocket Books, 1985) "expresses more the theme of consumption. She advises women how to 'spend' their nurturance in the relational marketplace" (Hochschild *Commercialization* 26).

My concern is not with her acknowledging the impact of commercialization on interpersonal relationships; indeed, it is certainly there, and it is important to understand it as such as well. However, acknowledging it does not require normalizing and condoning it, an act which the pervasive application of the language of commercialization performs. After all, as Hochschild herself notes, each participant in our private emotional system, by "managing" their emotions, "offers up feeling as a momentary contribution to the collective good" (18). Commercialization, with its principle of equal exchange, on the other hand, negates the idea of collectivity, thus denying the possibility of that kind of motivation to the participants; hence the problem with discussing emotions as inherently commercial. Indeed, it must seem "so normal" to her as well that she too cannot recognize it.

In consequence, if emotions do seem normally commercial in nature to the general public as well, it is only because the commercialized discourse about emotions is as incredibly pervasive as I have shown it to be. Language and ideology can be that powerful.<sup>3</sup> Thus, I argue, the conclusions about interpersonal relations that I draw from Hochschild's observations below are very likely as much a consequence of that commercialized discourse as anything else.

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<sup>3</sup> Postcolonial theory, for instance, has provided countless examples of the ways in which the colonized themselves cannot help but begin to believe the racist justifications that the colonizers give for dominating them.

Hochschild uses as the basis of her ethnographic study Marx's concern about "the human cost of becoming [a physical] 'instrument of labor'" (Hochschild 3). Even more important, then, she thinks, is C. Wright Mills's argument "that when we 'sell our personality' in the course of selling goods or services we engage in a seriously self-estranging process" (Hochschild ix). Since what she calls "*emotional labor* [...] requires one to induce or suppress feeling" as part of doing one's job, one "can become estranged or alienated from an aspect of self [...] that is *used* to do the work" (7; emphases in original); as a result, "we necessarily relinquish a sense of wholeness" (184). In other words, emotional labor in the workplace causes the worker to partition his or her self into distinct parts for inside and outside of the workplace. That might lead him or her to behave at work in ways that are inconsistent with the realities of his or her home life, whether that be neglecting his/her job, taking on too much at his/her job, and/or committing adultery. Even more than that, though, he/she may not know which is his/her true self – if either of them, since neither would truly represent the worker's entire life.

This problem is exacerbated in other ways as well, though: "From feeling," Hochschild explains, "we discover our own viewpoint on the world" (17). She bases that claim on the Freudian idea of the "signal function" – "that emotion functions as a messenger from the self" – and argues that, because "[t]o show that the [emotional labor] takes effort is to do the job poorly[...], part of the job is to disguise fatigue and irritation. [And] it is easier to disguise fatigue and irritation if they can be banished altogether" (8). Thus the worker blocks the signal's message about his or her fatigue and irritation; that is, "[i]t is this signal function that is impaired when the private management of feeling is socially engineered and transformed into emotional labor for a wage" (x). As a result, she writes, "[t]here is a cost to emotion work: it affects the degree to which we listen to feeling and sometimes our very capacity to feel. [...] we may pay a

cost in how we hear our feelings and a cost in what, for better or worse, they tell us about ourselves” (21). One consequence of the impairment of that signal function in terms of interpersonal relationships, then, is that the worker may be unable to recognize his or her own feelings toward others, thus impairing those relationships as well.

For instance, Hochschild quotes a nineteen-year-old man considering his behavior which sabotaged a friendship: “I acted selfishly, but fully consciously. I *imagine that my friendship could not have meant that much.*” She explains: “The young man reached his conclusion by *reasoning back from his absence of guilt or shame*[...] it was a clue to an underlying truth [...] a truth about the self vis-à-vis a situation” (32; emphasis in original). Losing or altering that truth, however, could lead to self-misunderstanding, whether in favor of or in opposition to a particular relationship. That loss can be dangerous: “One study on rape prevention found that victims [...] in risk situations [...] tended to disregard their feeling of fear whereas nonvictims in risk situations tended to heed the feeling and turn back” (Hochschild 29).<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, that loss can also lead to the lack of a true understanding of oneself, which, if one is aware of it, can promote distrust, of both oneself and of others.

Hochschild explains how the impairment of the signal function can inhibit self-awareness: “the clues can be dissolved by deep-acting, which from one point of view involves deceiving oneself as much as deceiving others. [...] By taking over the levers of feeling production, by pretending deeply, [one] alters [one]self” (33). The act of suppressing the reality testing that the signal function performs can become “redefined as lying to oneself so that one becomes self-stigmatized as a liar” (46). On the one hand, because we have negative associations with deception, we could also see that “deep-acting” as enabling us to change ourselves into

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<sup>4</sup> For this information Hochschild cites the Queens Bench Foundation, *Rape: Prevention and Resistance* (San Francisco, 1976).

something more positive – “we may offer a tribute so generous that it actually transforms our mood and our thoughts to match what others would like to see” (83) – but that would then translate to the inferiority of the original true self.<sup>5</sup> The only alternative to that perspective is to distrust our feelings: “We come to distrust our sense of what is true, as we know it through feeling. And if our feelings have lied to us, they cannot be part of our good, trustworthy, ‘true’ self” (47). Yet by inhibiting our true feelings, “[w]e push this ‘real self’ further inside, making it more inaccessible” (34). Combined with the uncertainty about one’s “real self” that the self-partitioning causes, as described above, it becomes practically impossible to know oneself, and thus to know one’s own wants or needs. That, in turn, can cause one to make inappropriate choices about interpersonal relationships or to be unable to make them at all.

Meanwhile, since “[w]ork is [increasingly] deskilled and the worker belittled” in post-industrial society, “emotional labor [...] becomes deskilled” as well (10). As a result, “when we enter the world of profit-and-loss statements, [...] the psychological costs of emotional labor are not acknowledged by the company,” (37) which minimizes the sense of self that is lost. Plus, “the lower our status, the more our manner of seeing and feeling is subject to being discredited, and the less believable it becomes” (173), thus minimizing our feelings as well. In that sense, it seems that one’s own wants and needs do not even matter – and that could be very dangerous

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<sup>5</sup> This awareness of the malleability of the self is essential to marriage counselors, who depend upon it to convince their clients that change – and thus hopefully improvement – is possible. In fact, that is the basis of the entire self-help industry as well. Capitalism does serve its own interests; as Hochschild writes in “The Abduction of Feminism”:

[T]he actual process of healing is subtracted from the image of normal family or communal bonds. [...] Actual healing is reserved for a separate zone of paid professionals where people have Ph.D.s, M.D.s, M.A.s, accept money, and have special therapeutic identities. (25)

At the same time, the idea of there even being a “true self” is questionable, but I note that the idea is Hochschild’s here, not mine. And yet her use of quotations at every such suggestion indicates that she acknowledges the problem as well. It seems that she needs the phrase to explain her argument, but her argument does not depend upon there actually being a “true self” to make sense.

indeed. If one realizes that danger, then he or she would very likely avoid interpersonal interaction altogether.

Ultimately, the fact that both feelings and selves are so malleable that we cannot seem to know which are the “real” ones does not only make us distrust ourselves; it leads us to distrust others as well, since we may safely assume that their situation is the same. Hochschild writes: “We mentally subtract feeling with commercial purpose to it from the total pattern of display that we sense to be sincerely felt” (34). The more that we suffer “from a sense of being ‘false’ or mechanical,” and “the more deeply a commercial system carves into the private emotional ‘gift exchange,’ the more receivers and givers alike take up the extra work of discounting what is impersonal in order to accept what is not” (x). Thus “it takes an extra effort to imagine that spontaneous warmth can exist in uniform” (5). As she writes in “The Abduction of Feminism,” advice books “recommend emotional practices—such as asking the reader to think of ‘praise’ as ‘manipulation’—to cast doubt on the sincerity of one’s own praise and to detach oneself from another person.” When the writers suggest that their readers should “*manage their [own] needs more*” (*Commercialization* 14; emphasis in original), they therefore both respond to and reinforce that detachment. Likewise, “[t]he commercial spirit of intimate life is made up of images that prepare the way for a paradigm of distrust” (24) which then prepares us “to accept the spirit of commercialism” (25).

Nevertheless, in *The Managed Heart*, Hochschild argues the positive aspects of emotional labor, albeit only by suggesting the displeasure that customers experience from “[l]apses in courtesy by those paid to be courteous” (9); later she explains:

[A] private emotional system has been subordinated to commercial logic, and it has been changed by it. [Without that change,] total strangers[...], in the absence of countermeasures and in the pursuit of short-term self-interest, might much of the time act out suspicion and anger rather than trust and good will. (186-187)

In fact, one could easily go further and recognize the importance of emotional labor to individual satisfaction in a society in which so much interpersonal interaction is commercialized: “[T]hese emotional laborers make possible a public life in which millions of people daily have fairly trusting and pleasant transactions with total or nearly total strangers,” she writes (153) – but those conclusions are inconsistent with the evidence at hand. Once again, Hochschild is reinforcing the status quo without question.

Because we learn to distrust our own manifestations of emotion and those of everyone around us, we are actually most likely to begin to suspect that everyone’s emotional displays are artificial. Those artificial, commercial displays then become very important, though, since without them we would not even have the semblance of trust. Instead, I suggest, fighting against the idea that emotion is completely commercialized would enable us to begin to consider some positive interpersonal interactions as more likely to be genuine. The other, possibly less pleasant interactions would then lose their importance, thus further enabling us to discount the commercial nature of those interpersonal interactions as well. Furthermore, as Hochschild proposes, “the harm [...] could be reduced [...] if workers could feel a greater sense of control over the conditions of their work lives” (187). Perhaps they might also feel more willing and able to display genuine positive emotions, since then they would know that they were both legitimate and their own.

A further characteristic of post-industrialism is that society idealizes science and objectivity over emotion. As Hochschild explains:

[W]e apply the belief that emotion is dangerous in the first place because it distorts perception and leads people to act irrationally – which means that all ways of reducing emotion are automatically good. [...] An emotionless person

suffers a sense of arbitrariness, which from the point of view of his or her self-interest is irrational. (30)

Of course, emotion is actually the *basis* of perception, as evidenced by the idea of the signal function described above. Nevertheless, we persist in devaluing emotions, particularly those directed at others, such as anger and love, which might be most communicative of our own desires. An instructor at Delta's Stewardess Training Center's explanation of the Center's emphasis on "anger-desensitization" illustrates society's disapproval of emotions like anger: "If you think about the *other* person and why they're so upset, you've taken the attention off of yourself and your own frustration" (25). However, as above, then you also cannot follow the signal to take care of yourself. If anyone is going to meet your needs at that time, it must be someone else. But if we cannot even understand ourselves, others can most likely not understand us either.

Unfortunately, societal expectations about relationships also do not conform to that reality. As Hochschild writes, "Deep acting comes with its social stories about what we aspire to feel" (39) – that is, romantic love. "The 'love ethic' in a free market exchange [...] places more exacting standards of experience on marriage" than is the case in arranged marriages (72).<sup>6</sup> She explains further how the situation of commercialized emotion, as discussed here, has led to this situation:

Certain social conditions have increased the cost of feeling management. One is an overall unpredictability about our social world. Ordinary people nowadays move through many social worlds and get the gist of dozens of social roles. [...] In the absence of unquestioned external guidelines, the signal function of emotion becomes more important, and the commercial distortion of the human heart becomes all the more important as a human cost. [...] We treat spontaneous feeling, for this reason, as if it were scarce and precious; we raise it up as a virtue. (21,22)

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<sup>6</sup> Once again Hochschild's construction here is problematic. Again it suggests that emotions such as love are indistinguishable from and nonexistent outside of commerciality; it also seems to unjustly critique love-based marriages as a result.

The idea that this situation is indeed a consequence of industrialization, however, gains support from the fact that L.A. Rebhun discovers the same situation since industrialization in Brazil, as she describes in *The Heart is Unknown Country: Love in the Changing Economy of Northeast Brazil*. Even more useful, perhaps, though, is Rebhun's reference to feelings about verbalization of love and how that does and does not have the kind of place in certain Brazilian communities that it seems to have in the United States (61). Apparently it is common in Brazil that actions – particularly material contributions – are sufficient to demonstrate one's emotional ties to his or her loved ones; hence one can ascertain that the use of verbalizations might appear to be an attempt to replace those essential actions with mere words, which would of course be frightening. The idea of material contributions as representative of love, however, could also be one more example of its commodification,<sup>7</sup> the danger of which is the resultant reinforcement of the notion of love as a commodity.

One very serious negative consequence of the commodification of love which I have not yet discussed is the commodification of sex. Sex workers are probably the premier examples of workers who have to feign care in commercial interactions. They must appear to be happy because that makes their customers happy, which also makes their pimps happy, and since sex workers do not usually have many other available alternatives, they might also act happy as a coping mechanism – that is, in order to convince themselves that they are happy too. Kevin Bales compares their situation to concentration camp prisoners, who exhibit the same mechanism

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<sup>7</sup> Interestingly enough, however, according to Rebhun, it is post-industrialism that seems to be bringing more words and less material contributions in demonstration of love to Brazil while bringing more material contributions and less genuine words to the United States. Either way, however, in both places the manifestations of love are seeming increasingly less trustworthy.

which, were it not for the obvious horrors of their situation, would otherwise suggest that they were truly satisfied with it (209).

At the same time, however, sex workers lose something intangible and priceless, which, incidentally, Hochschild indicates that even flight attendants do as well. She explains:

First, lacking in resources, women make a resource out of feeling and offer it to men as a gift in return for the more material resources they lack [...] so it is these capacities ["beauty, charm, and relational skills"] that they are most likely to become estranged from. [...] Melanie Matthews, a sex therapist who had treated some fifty flight attendants for "loss of sexual interest" and "preorgasmic problems," had this to say: "[...]They hold onto their orgasmic potential as one of the few parts of themselves that someone else doesn't possess."  
(162,163,182-183)

Thus sex workers, even more than flight attendants, must become unable to enjoy sex. Further, the notion of sex as work for women and pleasure for men makes it seem to both parties to be an object for barter in male-female relationships outside of the arena of prostitution. It reinforces the idea of emotionless sex or sex as a commodity, as when men feel that they must buy drinks, food, or other "gifts" for women in order to "earn" sex with them, while women feel as though they ought to demand such "compensations" beforehand and that then they "owe" sex in return. This attitude, in turn, makes sex something that can be purchased and thus owned, which then makes rape more likely as well, since the man who has bought or perceives himself as having bought it feels entitled to take it, as by capitalistic ideas of business and property, it literally belongs to him. And the idea that sex is emotionless for women perpetuates these problems even more, minimizing what the sex workers lose by selling it and what men "steal" by taking it and thus once again making the whole situation of the commodification of emotion appear to be less of a problem than it is.

As Richard Sennet and Jonathan Cobb report,<sup>8</sup> “At the bottom end of [people’s ranking] are found not factory jobs but service jobs where the individual has to perform personally for someone else” (quoted in Hochschild, 171). As more women than men hold such jobs, as Hochschild writes, “women more than men have put emotional labor on the market” (11). In consequence, generally women “are thought to *manage* expression and feeling not only better but more often than men do” (164; emphasis in original), but the assumption that women do so better may very well be a simple consequence of the fact that they “do *more* emotion managing than men” (164). And in an echo of the effects of deep-acting, as described above, “[t]he more she seems natural at it, the more her labor does not show as labor” (169). It is interesting to note that Hochschild recognizes this form of self-perpetuating situation but does not see that the discussion of emotion as inevitably commercialized perpetuates that situation as well.

One realizes that this situation is even more self-perpetuating, however, when one considers, in an echo of the effects of the de-skilling of emotional labor, above, that “[o]nce women are at work in public-contact jobs, [...] their feelings are accorded less weight than the feelings of men” (171). That situation is likely a consequence of the lower status of both women’s emotions and the women who tend to fill service jobs, which then transfers itself to the jobs, and the lower status of the jobs, which simultaneously transfers itself back to the women’s emotions and the women themselves.

Hochschild argues that “[t]his specialization of emotional labor in the marketplace rests on the different childhood training of the heart that is given to girls and to boys” (163), and that may be so. However, the commercialization of emotion negatively affects both men and women, though, as above – even if its consequences for women are markedly harsher. For instance, both men and women place personal ads and participate in online dating, but when women do it, the

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<sup>8</sup> In *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (Vintage, 1973), p.236.

societal assumption is that they are victims, as Nicole Constable discusses in *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and "Mail Order" Marriages*. Instead, the fact that truly online dating services of both types involve both parties posting "personal ads" for themselves, it is challenging to differentiate between the level of agency and/or objectification of either party involved. In fact, it is difficult to even argue that either party is objectified at all, since both participate voluntarily and actively, which in and of itself belies objectification. Still, I do acknowledge that men and women tend to be objectified in different ways, with men's value as commodities often stemming from their financial "worth" and women's from their physical and/or emotional attributes, but those characterizations are certainly not universal either, although, beyond the power differences that they bring about, it is arguable whether one type of objectification is more egregious than the other.

Hochschild makes her final self-fulfilling prophecy in a brief discussion of marriage. In a footnote, she writes:

Private gender relations have a floorboard, which is the prevailing arrangement between the sexes in the larger society. An equalitarian couple in a society that as a whole subordinates women cannot, at the basic level of emotional exchanges, be equal. (85)

By negating the possibility of a truly egalitarian relationship, Hochschild does more to victimize women and deny them agency than perhaps that subordinating society itself!

Certainly, as suggested in my introduction, the language of commercialization has its place in discussions of interpersonal relationships. As Hochschild and others use it above, it serves to illustrate – perhaps even just metaphorically – some aspects of the function of those relationships. Further, giving unpaid carework a financial value can enable recognition of its importance and contribution to society. But we must continue to problematize such approaches

as well, for care cannot become strictly a matter of exchange, and exchange cannot become strictly a matter of commodification. After all, exchange is not an aspect of interpersonal relationships only in capitalistic societies; in fact, capitalism usually entails seeking profit rather than equal exchange.<sup>9</sup> In consequence, then, as above, people begin to refuse to engage in care if it does not promise some evident benefit to themselves, as Lynne Truss laments in her latest book, *Talk to the Hand: The Utter Bloody Rudeness of the World Today, or Six Good Reasons to Stay Home and Bolt the Door*.

Likewise, it is this unquestioned contemporary commercialized discourse that may contribute just as much to the challenges of interpersonal relationships as the persistent gender inequalities that Hochschild ultimately blames (174); further, we may not be able to address those and other inequities without recognizing the potential for love without recompense. In the same way, bell hooks argues in *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* that we have to allow men to love and through love ask them to embrace feminism in order to advance it further. But when all that we have is commercialized, we cannot have real love at all.

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<sup>9</sup> For which perspective I am indebted to my professor, Florence Babb.

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