

The Managed Heart

Commercialization of
Human Feeling

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FEELING MANAGEMENT From Private to Commercial Uses

*If they could have turned every one of us into sweet quiet
Southern belles with velvet voices like Rosalyn Carter, this is
what they would want to stamp out on an assembly line.*

—Flight attendant, Delta Airlines

*On PSA our smiles are not just painted on.
So smile your way
From L.A.
To San Francisco.*

—PSA radio jingle

*When you see them receiving passengers with that big smile, I
don't think it means anything. They have to do that. It's part
of their job. But now if you get into a conversation with a
flight attendant . . . well . . . no . . . I guess they have to do
that too.*

—Airline passenger

When rules about how to feel and how to express feeling are set by management, when workers have weaker rights to courtesy than customers do, when deep and surface acting are forms of labor to be sold, and when private capacities for empathy and warmth are put to corporate uses, what happens to the way a person relates to her feelings or to her face? When worked-up warmth becomes an instrument of service work, what can a person learn about herself from her

feelings? And when a worker abandons her work smile, what kind of tie remains between her smile and her self?

Display is what is sold, but over the long run display comes to assume a certain relation to feeling. As enlightened management realizes, a separation of display and feeling is hard to keep up over long periods. A principle of *emotive dissonance*, analogous to the principle of cognitive dissonance, is at work. Maintaining a difference between feeling and feigning over the long run leads to strain. We try to reduce this strain by pulling the two closer together either by changing what we feel or by changing what we feign. When display is required by the job, it is usually feeling that has to change; and when conditions estrange us from our face, they sometimes estrange us from feeling as well.

Take the case of the flight attendant. Corporate logic in the airline industry creates a series of links between competition, market expansion, advertising, heightened passenger expectations about rights to display, and company demands for acting. When conditions allow this logic to work, the result is a successful transmutation of the private emotional system we have described. The old elements of emotional exchange—feeling rules, surface acting, and deep acting—are now arranged in a different way. Stanislavski's *if* moves from stage to airline cabin ("act as if the cabin were your own living room") as does the actor's use of emotion memory. Private use gives way to corporate use.

In the airline industry of the 1950s and 1960s, a remarkable transmutation was achieved. But certain trends, discussed later in this chapter, led this transmutation to fail in the early 1970s. An industry speed-up and a stronger union hand in limiting the company's claims weakened the transmutation. There was a service worker "slowdown." Worked-up warmth of feeling was replaced by put-on smiles. Those who sincerely wanted to make the deeper offering found they could not do so, and those who all along had resisted

company intrusions on the self came to feel some rights to freedom from it. The job lost its grip. When the transmutation succeeded, the worker was asked to take pride in making an instrument of feeling. When it collapsed, workers came to see that instrument as overused, underappreciated, and susceptible to damage.

BEHIND THE DEMAND FOR ACTING

"A market for emotional labor" is not a phrase that company employees use. Upper management talks about getting the best market share of the flying public. Advertising personnel talk about reaching that market. In-flight service supervisors talk about getting "positive attitude" and "professional service" from flight attendants, who in turn talk about "handling irates." Nevertheless, the efforts of these four groups, taken together, set up the sale of emotional labor.

The purpose of Delta Airlines is to make a profit. To make a profit, Delta has to compete for passenger markets. Throughout the postwar years, for example, Delta competed with Eastern Airlines for markets along routes they both serviced. (It now shares 80 percent of its routes with Eastern.)¹ The Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), established in 1938 in recognition of the national importance of air transport and the threat of monopoly, was granted authority to control market shares and prices. Until 1978 it established uniform prices for airline tickets and sharpened competition by offering parallel route awards. Companies competed by offering more frequent flights, more seats, faster flights (fewer stops), and—what is most important here—better service. After 1978 the airlines were deregulated and price wars were allowed.² Yet a brief price war in 1981 and another shake-out of weaker companies has been followed by a general rise in prices. As it was before deregulation, service

may again become a main area of competition. When competition in price is out, competition in service is in.*

The more important service becomes as an arena for competition between airlines, the more workers are asked to do public relations work to promote sales. Employees are continually told to represent Delta proudly. All Delta workers once received, along with their paychecks, a letter from the president and chairman of the board asking them to put Delta bumper stickers on their cars. The Delta Jogging Club (which included two vice-presidents) once ran a well-publicized 414-mile marathon from Dallas, Texas, to Jackson, Mississippi, to commemorate Delta's first commercial flight. Virtually every employee is asked to be "in sales."

But of all workers in an airline, the flight attendant has the most contact with passengers, and she sells the company the most. When passengers think of service they are unlikely to think of the baggage check-in agent, the ramp attendant, the cabin clean-up crew, the lost and found personnel, or the man down in commissary pouring gravy on a long line of chicken entrées. They think of the flight attendant. As one Delta official explained: "For each hour's work by a flight attendant, there are 10.5 hours of support time from cabin service, the billing department, maintenance, and so on. Altogether we spend 100 hours per passenger per flight. But the passenger really has prolonged contact only with the flight attendant."

As competition grew from the 1930s through the early 1970s, the airlines expanded that visible role. Through the 1950s and 1960s the flight attendant became a main subject

* Despite fierce competition in some arenas, airlines cooperate with each other. According to the airlines, flying is safe but, in fact, airplanes occasionally crash. When they do, the efforts of their public relations offices call for surface acting and sometimes border on illusion making. For example, the head of Delta's public relations office received a call during my office visit. "A crash in Mexico City? Seventy-three died? It was a DC-10, too?" He turned to me after hanging up. "After that last Eastern crash, I was getting 150 calls a day. We don't have any DC-10's, thank God. But I try to keep the press off of Eastern's back. I say, 'Don't mention those planes.' Eastern does the same for us when we're in trouble."

of airline advertising, the spearhead of market expansion.* The image they chose, among many possible ones, was that of a beautiful and smartly dressed Southern white woman, the supposed epitome of gracious manners and warm personal service.†

Because airline ads raise expectations, they subtly rewrite job descriptions and redefine roles. They promise on-time service, even though planes are late from 10 to 50 percent of the time, industrywide. Their pictures of half-empty planes promise space and leisurely service, which are seldom available (and certainly not desired by the company). They promise service from happy workers, even though the industry speedup has reduced job satisfaction. By creating a discrepancy between promise and fact, they force workers in all capacities to cope with the disappointed expectations of customers.

The ads promise service that is "human" and personal. The omnipresent smile suggests, first of all, that the flight attendant is friendly, helpful, and open to requests. But when words are added, the smile can be sexualized, as in "We really move our tails for you to make your every wish come true" (Continental), or "Fly me, you'll like it" (National). Such innuendos lend strength to the conventional fantasy that in the air, anything can happen. As one flight attendant put it: "You have married men with three kids getting on the plane and suddenly they feel anything goes. It's like they leave that reality on the ground, and you fit into their fantasy as some geisha girl. It happens over and over again."

* When an airline commands a market monopoly, as it is likely to do when it is owned by a government, it does not need to compete for passengers by advertising friendly flight attendants. Many flight attendants told me that their counterparts on Lufthansa (the German national airlines) and even more on El Al and Aeroflot (the Israeli and Russian national airlines) were notably lacking in assertive friendliness.

† A black female flight attendant, who had been hired in the early 1970s when Delta faced an affirmative action suit, wondered aloud why blacks were not pictured in local Georgia advertising. She concluded: "They want that market, and that market doesn't include blacks. They go along with that." Although Delta's central offices are in Atlanta, which is predominantly black, few blacks worked for Delta in any capacity.

So the sexualized ad burdens the flight attendant with another task, beyond being unfailingly helpful and open to requests: she must respond to the sexual fantasies of passengers. She must try to feel and act as if flirting and propositioning are “a sign of my attractiveness and your sexiness,” and she must work to suppress her feelings that such behavior is intrusive or demeaning. Some have come to see this extra psychological task as a company contrivance. A flight attendant once active in Flight Attendants for Women’s Rights commented: “The company wants to sexualize the cabin atmosphere. They want men to be thinking that way because they think what men really want is to avoid *fear of flying*. So they figure mild sexual arousal will be helpful in getting people’s minds off of flying. It’s a question of dollars and cents. . . . Most of our passengers are male, and all of the big corporate contract business is male.*

The advertising promises of one airline tend to redefine work on other airlines as well. So although Delta’s advertising has assiduously avoided explicit sexualization of the role, Delta’s flight attendants must cope with the inflated image of the flight attendant put out by other companies. There may well be an economic pattern to sexual innuendo in these ads: the economically marginal companies seem to aim a sexual pitch at the richest segment of the market, male businessmen. United Airlines, which was ranked first in revenues in 1979, has not attached suggestive words to the female smile; but Continental, ranked tenth, and National, ranked eleventh, certainly have. But in any case, when what Doris Lessing has called a fantasy of “easily available and guiltless sex” is encouraged by one airline, it is finally attached to air travel in general.

As the industry speed-up and union pressure have reduced the deep acting promised and delivered in American-

* Many workers divided male passengers into two types: the serious businessman who wants quiet, efficient, and unobtrusive service; and the “sport” who wants a Playboy Club atmosphere.

based companies, there are signs that the same corporate logic that reached its nadir in the 1950s in the United States is now emerging abroad. *Fortune*, in an article about Singapore International Airlines entitled “An Airline Powered by Charm” (June 18, 1979), notes:

[SIA’s] advertising campaign glamorizes the cabin hostess as “the Singapore girl.” . . . To convey the idea of in-flight pleasure with a lyrical quality, most SIA ads are essentially large, soft-focus color photographs of various hostesses. In a broadcast commercial a crooner sings: “Singapore girl, you look so good I want to stay up here with you forever.” [The chairman of SIA has said] “We’re fortunate in having young people who get a Western education, speak English, and still take an Asian attitude toward service.”

This may be the service-sector version of a “runaway shop,” including not only runaway-shop labor (“with an Asian attitude toward service”) but “runaway” imagery to advertise it.

We might add that the first, and nonsexual, significance of the advertised smile—special friendliness and empathy—can also inflate the expectations of passengers, and therefore increase their right to feel disappointed. Ordinary niceness is no longer enough; after all, hasn’t the passenger paid for extra civility? As every flight attendant knows well, she can expect to face surprisingly deep indignation when her expressive machine is idling or, worse yet, backfiring.

BEHIND THE SUPPLY OF ACTING: SELECTION

Even before an applicant for a flight attendant’s job is interviewed, she is introduced to the rules of the game. Success will depend in part on whether she has a knack for perceiving the rules and taking them seriously. Applicants are urged to read a preinterview pamphlet before coming in. In the 1979–1980 *Airline Guide to Stewardess and Steward Careers*, there is a section called “The Interview.” Under the

subheading "Appearance," the manual suggests that facial expressions should be "sincere" and "unaffected." One should have a "modest but friendly smile" and be "generally alert, attentive, not overly aggressive, but not reticent either." Under "Mannerisms," subheading "Friendliness," it is suggested that a successful candidate must be "outgoing but not effusive," "enthusiastic with calm and poise," and "vivacious but not effervescent." As the manual continues: "Maintaining eye contact with the interviewer demonstrates sincerity and confidence, but don't overdo it. Avoid cold or continuous staring." Training, it seems, begins even before recruitment.

Like company manuals, recruiters sometimes offer advice on how to appear. Usually they presume that an applicant is planning to put on a front; the question is which one. In offering tips for success, recruiters often talked in a matter-of-fact way about acting, as though assuming that it is permissible if not quite honorable to feign. As one recruiter put it "I had to advise a lot of people who were looking for jobs, and not just at Pan Am. . . . And I'd tell them the secret to getting a job is to imagine the kind of person the company wants to hire and then become that person during the interview. The hell with your theories of what you believe in, and what your integrity is, and all that other stuff. You can project all that when you've got the job."

In most companies, after the applicant passes the initial screening (for weight, figure, straight teeth, complexion, facial regularity, age) he or she is invited to a group interview where an "animation test" takes place.

At one interview session at Pan American, the recruiter (a woman) called in a group of six applicants, three men and three women. She smiled at all of them and then said: "While I'm looking over your files here, I'd like to ask you to turn to your neighbor and get to know him or her. We'll take about three or four minutes, and then I'll get back to you." Immediately there was bubbly conversation, nodding of

heads, expansions of posture, and overlapping ripples of laughter. ("Is that right? My sister-in-law lives in Des Moines, too!" "Oh wow, how did you get into scuba diving?") Although the recruiter had simply asked each applicant to turn to a neighbor, in fact each woman turned to her nearest man "to bring him out." (Here, what would be an advantage at other times—being the object of conversational attention—became a disadvantage for the men because the task was to show skill in "bringing out" others.) After three minutes, the recruiter put down her files and called the group to order. There was immediate total silence. All six looked expectantly at the recruiter: how had they done on their animation test?

The recruits are screened for a certain type of outgoing middle-class sociability. Sometimes the recruitment literature explicitly addresses friendliness as an *act*. Allegheny Airlines, for example, says that applicants are expected to "*project a warm personality* during their interview in order to be eligible for employment." Continental Airlines, in its own words, is "seeking people who convey a spirit of enthusiasm." Delta Airlines calls simply for applicants who "*have a friendly personality and high moral character*."

Different companies favor different variations of the ideal type of sociability. Veteran employees talk about differences in company personality as matter-of-factly as they talk about differences in uniform or shoe style. United Airlines, the consensus has it, is "the girl-next-door," the neighborhood babysitter grown up. Pan Am is upper class, sophisticated, and slightly reserved in its graciousness. PSA is brassy, fun-loving, and sexy. Some flight attendants could see a connection between the personality they were supposed to project and the market segment the company wants to attract. One United worker explained: "United wants to appeal to Ma and Pa Kettle. So it wants Caucasian girls—not so beautiful that Ma feels fat, and not so plain that Pa feels unsatisfied. It's the Ma and Pa Kettle market that's growing, so that's why

they use the girl-next-door image to appeal to that market. You know, the Friendly Skies. They offer reduced rates for wives and kids. They weed out busty women because they don't fit the image, as they see it."

Recruiters understood that they were looking for "a certain Delta personality," or "a Pan Am type." The general prerequisites were a capacity to work with a team ("we don't look for chiefs, we want Indians"), interest in people, sensitivity, and emotional stamina. Trainers spoke somewhat remotely of studies that indicate that successful applicants often come from large families, had a father who enjoyed his work, and had done social volunteer work in school. Basically, however, recruiters look for someone who is smart but can also cope with being considered dumb, someone who is capable of giving emergency safety commands but can also handle people who can't take orders from a woman, and someone who is naturally empathetic but can also resist the numbing effect of having that empathy engineered and continuously used by a company for its own purposes. The trainees, on the other hand, thought they had been selected because they were adventurous and ambitious. ("We're not satisfied with just being secretaries," as one fairly typical trainee said. "All my girlfriends back in Memphis are married and having babies. They think I'm real liberated to be here.")

The trainees, it seemed to me, were also chosen for their ability to take stage directions about how to "project" an image. They were selected for being able to act well—that is, without showing the effort involved. They had to be able to appear at home on stage.

The training at Delta was arduous, to a degree that surprised the trainees and inspired their respect. Most days they sat at desks from 8:30 to 4:30 listening to lectures. They studied for daily exams in the evenings and went on practice flights on weekends. There were also morning speakers to be heard before classes began. One morning at 7:45 I was with 123 trainees in the Delta Stewardess Training Center to

hear a talk from the Employee Representative, a flight attendant whose regular job was to communicate rank-and-file grievances to management and report back. Her role in the training process was different, however, and her talk concerned responsibilities to the company:

Delta does not believe in meddling in the flight attendant's personal life. But it does want the flight attendant to uphold certain Delta standards of conduct. It asks of you first that you keep your finances in order. Don't let your checks bounce. Don't spend more than you have. Second, don't drink while in uniform or enter a bar. No drinking twenty-four hours before flight time. [If you break this rule] appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, will be taken. While on line we don't want you to engage in personal pastimes such as knitting, reading, or sleeping. Do not accept gifts. Smoking is allowed if it is done while you are seated.

The speaker paused and an expectant hush fell across the room. Then, as if in reply to it, she concluded, looking around, "That's all." There was a general ripple of relieved laughter from the trainees: so that was *all* the company was going to say about their private lives.

Of course, it was by no means all the company was going to say. The training would soon stake out a series of company claims on private territories of self. First, however, the training prepared the trainees to accept these claims. It established their vulnerability to being fired and their dependence on the company. Recruits were reminded day after day that eager competitors could easily replace them. I heard trainers refer to their "someone-else-can-fill-your-seat" talk. As one trainee put it, "They stress that there are 5,000 girls out there wanting *your* job. If you don't measure up, you're out."

Adding to the sense of dispensability was a sense of fragile placement vis-à-vis the outside world. Recruits were housed at the airport, and during the four-week training period they were not allowed to go home or to sleep anywhere but

in the dormitory. At the same time they were asked to adjust to the fact that for them, home was an idea without an immediate referent. Where would the recruit be living during the next months and years? Houston? Dallas? New Orleans? Chicago? New York? As one pilot advised: "Don't put down roots. You may be moved and then moved again until your seniority is established. Make sure you get along with your roommates in your apartment."

Somewhat humbled and displaced, the worker was now prepared to identify with Delta. Delta was described as a brilliant financial success (which it is), an airline known for fine treatment of its personnel (also true, for the most part), a company with a history of the "personal touch." Orientation talks described the company's beginnings as a family enterprise in the 1920s, when the founder, Collett Woolman, personally pinned an orchid on each new flight attendant. It was the flight attendant's job to represent the company proudly, and actually identifying with the company would make that easier to do.

Training seemed to foster the sense that it was safe to feel dependent on the company. Temporarily rootless, the worker was encouraged to believe that this company of 36,000 employees operated as a "family." The head of the training center, a gentle, wise, authoritative figure in her fifties, appeared each morning in the auditorium; she was "mommy," the real authority on day-to-day problems. Her company superior, a slightly younger man, seemed to be "daddy." Other supervisors were introduced as concerned extensions of these initial training parents. (The vast majority of trainees were between nineteen and twenty-two years old.) As one speaker told the recruits: "Your supervisor is your friend. You can go to her and talk about anything, and I mean *anything*." The trainees were divided up into small groups; one class of 123 students (which included three males and nine blacks) was divided into four subgroups,

each yielding the more intimate ties of solidarity that were to be the prototype of later bonds at work.

The imagery of family, with mommies and daddies and sisters and brothers, did not obscure for most trainees the reminders that Delta was a business. It suggested, rather, that despite its size Delta aspired to maintain itself in the spirit of an old-fashioned family business, in which hierarchy was never oppressive and one could always air a gripe. And so the recruit, feeling dispensable and rootless, was taken in by this kindly new family. Gratitude lays the foundation for loyalty.

The purpose of training is to instill acceptance of the company's claims, and recruits naturally wonder what parts of their feeling and behavior will be subject to company control. The head of in-flight training answered their implicit question in this way:

Well, we have some very firm rules. Excessive use of alcohol, use of drugs of any kind, and you're asked to leave. We have a dormitory rule, and that is that you'll spend the night in the dormitory. There's no curfew, but you will spend the night in the dormitory. If you're out all night, you're asked to leave. We have weight standards for our flight attendants. Break those weight standards, and the individual is asked to resign. We have a required test average of 90 percent; if you don't attain that average, you're asked to resign. And then we get into the intangibles. That's where the judgment comes in.

From the recruit's point of view, this answer simply established what the *company* conceived of as "company control." In fact, this degree of control presupposed many other unmentioned acts of obedience—such as the weigh-in. Near the scales in the training office one could hear laughter at "oh-my-god-what-I-ate-for-dinner" jokes. But the weigh-in itself was conducted as a matter of routine, just something one did. The need for it was not explained, and there was no

mention of the history of heated court battles over the weight requirement (most of them so far lost by the unions). One flight attendant commented, "Passengers aren't weighed, pilots aren't weighed, in-flight service supervisors aren't weighed. We're the only ones they weigh. You can't tell me it's not because most of us are women." Obviously, discussions of this issue might weaken the company's claim to control over a worker's weight. The trainers offered only matter-of-fact explanations of what happens to the weight gainer. If a flight attendant is one pound over the maximum allowable weight, the fact is "written up" in her personnel file. Three months later, if the offender is still one pound over, there is a letter of reprimand; if another three months pass without change, there is suspension without pay. People may in fact be fired for being one pound overweight. Outside the classroom, of course, there was a rich underground lore about starving oneself before flights, angrily overeating after flights, deliberately staying a fraction over the weight limit to test the system, or claiming "big bones" or "big breasts" as an excuse for overweight. (One wit, legend has it, suggested that breasts be weighed separately.) Officially, however, the weigh-in was only a company routine.

The company's presumption was supported by several circumstances. It was difficult to find *any* good job in 1981, let alone a job as a flight attendant. There was also the fact that Delta's grooming regulations did not seem particularly rigid compared with those of other airlines, past and present. Flight attendants were not required to wear a girdle and submit to the "girdle check" that Pan American flight attendants recall. There was no mention of a rule, once established at United, that one had to wear white underwear. There was a rule about the length of hair, but no mention of "wig checks" (to determine whether a worker had regulation hair under her wig), which were used by several companies in the 1960s. There was no regulation, such as Pan Am had, that required wearing eyeshadow the same shade of blue as

the uniform. There were no periodic thigh measurements, which PSA flight attendants still undergo, and no bust-waist-hips-thighs measurements that formed part of an earlier PSA routine. In an occupation known for its standardization of personal appearance, Delta's claims could seem reasonable. The company could say, in effect, "You're lucky our appearance code isn't a lot tighter." Under a more stringent code, those who could be judged a little too fat or a little too short, a little too tall or a little too plain, could feel pressured to make up for their physical deviations by working harder and being nicer than others. Some veteran workers ventured a thought (not generally shared) that companies deliberately tried to recruit women who were decidedly plainer than the official ideal so as to encourage workers to "make up for" not being prettier.

The claim to control over a worker's physical appearance was backed by continuous reference to the need to be "professional." In its original sense, a profession is an occupational grouping that has sole authority to recruit, train, and supervise its own members. Historically, only medicine, law, and the academic disciplines have fit this description. Certainly flight attendants do not yet fit it. Like workers in many other occupations, they call themselves "professional" because they have mastered a body of knowledge and want respect for that. Companies also use "professional" to refer to this knowledge, but they refer to something else as well. For them a "professional" flight attendant is one who has completely accepted the rules of standardization. The flight attendant who most nearly meets the appearance code ideal is therefore "the most professional" in this regard. By linking standardization to honor and the suggestion of autonomy, the company can seem to say to the public, we control *this* much of the appearance and personality of *that* many people—which is a selling point that most companies strive for.

At the other extreme, workers were free of claims over their religious or political beliefs. As one Delta veteran put

it: "They want me to look like Rosalyn Carter at age twenty, but they don't care if I think like she does. I'm not going to have power over anyone in the company, so they lay off my philosophy of life. I like that."*

Between physical looks and deeply held belief lies an intermediate zone — the zone of emotion management. It was particularly here, as the head of in-flight training put it, that "we get into the intangibles." The company claim to emotion work was mainly insinuated by example. As living illustrations of the right kind of spirit for the job, trainers maintained a steady level of enthusiasm despite the long hours and arduous schedule. On Halloween, some teachers drew laughs by parading through the classroom dressed as pregnant, greedy, and drunk passengers. All the trainers were well liked. Through their continuous cheer they kept up a high morale for those whose job it would soon be to do the same for passengers. It worked all the better for seeming to be genuine.

Trainees must learn literally hundreds of regulations, memorize the location of safety equipment on four different airplanes, and receive instruction on passenger handling.† In all their courses, they were constantly reminded that their own job security and the company's profit rode on a smiling face. A seat in a plane, they were told, "is our most perishable product — we have to keep winning our passengers back." How you do it is as important as what you do. There were many direct appeals to smile: "Really work on

* Delta does officially emphasize "good moral character," and several workers spoke in lowered voices about facts they would not want known. They agreed that any report of living with a man outside marriage would be dangerous, and some said they would never risk paying for an abortion through the company's medical insurance.

† Most of the training in passenger handling concerned what to do in a variety of situations. What do you do if an obese passenger doesn't fit into his seat? Make him pay for half the fare of another seat. What do you do if the seat belt doesn't fit around him? Get him a seat-belt extension. What do you do if you accidentally spill coffee on his trousers? Give him a pink slip that he can take to the ticket agent, but don't commit the company to responsibility through word or action. What do you do if you're one meal short? Issue a meal voucher that can be redeemed at the next airport.

your smiles." "Your smile is your biggest asset — use it." In demonstrating how to deal with insistent smokers, with persons boarding the wrong plane, and with passengers who are sick or flirtatious or otherwise troublesome, a trainer held up a card that said "Relax and smile." By standing aside and laughing at the "relax and smile" training, trainers parried student resistance to it. They said, in effect, "It's incredible how much we have to smile, but there it is. We know that, but we're still doing it, and you should too."

Beyond this, there were actual appeals to modify feeling states. The deepest appeal in the Delta training program was to the trainee's capacity to act as if the airplane cabin (where she works) were her home (where she doesn't work). Trainees were asked to think of a passenger *as if* he were a "personal guest in your living room." The workers' emotional memories of offering personal hospitality were called up and put to use, as Stanislavski would recommend. As one recent graduate put it:

You think how the new person resembles someone you know. *You see your sister's eyes in someone sitting at that seat.* That makes you want to put out for them. I like to think of the cabin as the living room of my own home. When someone drops in [at home], you may not know them, but you get something for them. You put that on a grand scale — thirty-six passengers per flight attendant — but *it's the same feeling.*

On the face of it, the analogy between home and airplane cabin unites different kinds of experiences and obscures what is different about them. It can unite the empathy of friend for friend with the empathy of worker for customer, because it assumes that empathy is the *same sort of feeling* in either case. Trainees wrote in their notebooks, "Adopt the passenger's point of view," and the understanding was that this could be done in the same way one adopts a friend's point of view. The analogy between home and cabin also joins the worker to her company; just as she naturally pro-

fects members of her own family, she will naturally defend the company. Impersonal relations are to be seen *as if* they were personal. Relations based on getting and giving money are to be seen *as if* they were relations free of money. The company brilliantly extends and uses its workers' basic human empathy, all the while maintaining that it is not interfering in their "personal" lives.

As at home, the guest is protected from ridicule. A flight attendant must suppress laughter, for example, at seeing a passenger try to climb into the overhead storage rack, imagining it to be a bunk bed. Nor will she exhibit any idiosyncratic habits of her own, which might make the guest feel uncomfortable. Also, trainees were asked to express sincere endorsement of the company's advertising. In one classroom session, an instructor said: "We have Flying Colonel and Flying Orchid passengers, who over the years have always flown Delta. This is an association they're invited to join. It has no special privileges, but it does hold meetings from time to time." The students laughed, and one said, "That's absurd." The trainer answered, "Don't say that. You're supposed to make them think it's a real big thing." Thus, the sense of absurdity was expanded: the trainees were let in on the secret and asked to help the company create the illusion it wanted the passengers to accept.

By the same token, the injunction to act "as if it were my home" obscured crucial differences between home and airplane cabin. Home is safe. Home does not crash. It is the flight attendant's task to convey a sense of relaxed, homey coziness while at the same time, at take-off and landing, mentally rehearsing the emergency announcement, "Cigarettes out! Grab ankles! Heads down!" in the appropriate languages. Before takeoff, safety equipment is checked. At boarding, each attendant secretly picks out a passenger she can call on for help in an emergency evacuation. Yet in order to sustain the *if*, the flight attendant must shield guests from

this unhomelike feature of the party. As one flight attendant mused:

Even though I'm a very honest person, I have learned not to allow my face to mirror my alarm or my fright. I feel very protective of my passengers. Above all, I don't want them to be frightened. If we were going down, if we were going to make a ditching in water, the chances of our surviving are slim, even though we [the flight attendants] know exactly what to do. *But I think I would probably*—and I think I can say this for most of my fellow flight attendants—*be able to keep them from being too worried about it.* I mean my voice might quiver a little during the announcements, but somehow I feel we could get them to believe . . . the best.

Her brave defense of the "safe homey atmosphere" of the plane might keep order, but at the price of concealing the facts from passengers who might feel it their right to know what was coming.

Many flight attendants spoke of enjoying "work with people" and adopted the living room analogy as an aid in being as friendly as they wanted to be. Many could point to gestures that kept the analogy tension-free:

I had been asked for seconds on liquor by three different people just as I was pushing the liquor cart forward for firsts. The fourth time that happened, I just laughed this spontaneous absurd laugh. [Author: Could you tell me more about that?] Part of being professional is to make people on board feel comfortable. They're in a strange place. It's my second home. They aren't as comfortable as I am. I'm the hostess. My job is really to make them enjoy the flight. The absurd laughter did it, that time.

Others spoke of being frustrated when the analogy broke down, sometimes as the result of passenger impassivity. One flight attendant described a category of unresponsive passengers who kill the analogy unwittingly. She called them "teenage execs."

Teenage execs are in their early to middle thirties. Up and coming people in large companies, computer people. They are very dehumanizing to flight attendants. You'll get to their row. You'll have a full cart of food. They will look up and then look down and keep on talking, so you have to interrupt them. They are demeaning . . . you could be R2 - D2 [the robot in the film *Star Wars*]. They would like that better.

This attendant said she sometimes switched aisles with her partner in order to avoid passengers who would not receive what the company and she herself wanted to offer. Like many others, she wanted a human response so that she could be sincerely friendly herself. Sincerity is taken seriously, and there was widespread criticism of attendants who did not act "from the heart." For example: "I worked with one flight attendant who put on a fake voice. On the plane she raised her voice about four octaves and put a lot of sugar and spice into it [gives a falsetto imitation of 'More coffee for you, sir?']. I watched the passengers wince. What the passengers want is real people. They're tired of that empty pretty young face."

Despite the generous efforts of trainers and workers themselves to protect it, the living room analogy remains vulnerable on several sides. For one thing, trainees were urged to "*think sales*," not simply to act in such a way as to induce sales. Promoting sales was offered to the keepers of the living room analogy as a rationale for dozens of acts, down to apologizing for mistakes caused by passengers: "Even if it's their fault, it's very important that you don't blame the passengers. That can have a lot of impact. Imagine a businessman who rides Delta many times a year. Hundreds, maybe thousands of dollars ride on your courtesy. Don't get into a verbal war. It's not worth it. They are our lifeblood. As we say, the passenger isn't always right, but he's never wrong."

Outside of training, "thinking sales" was often the rationale for doing something. One male flight attendant, who was

kind enough to show me all around the Pan American San Francisco base, took me into the Clipper Club and explained: "This club is for our important customers, our million-mile customers. Jan, the receptionist, usually introduces me to some passengers here at the Clipper Club. They go in the SIL [Special Information Log] because we know they mean a lot of money for the company. If I'm the first-class purser for one leg of the journey, I note what drink they order in the Clipper Club and then offer them that when they're seated in the plane. They like that." The uses of courtesy are apparently greater in the case of a million-mile customer—who is likely to be white, male, and middle-aged—than in the case of women, children, and the elderly. In any case, lower-income passengers are served in segregated "living rooms."

"Think sales" had another aspect to it. One trainer, who affected the style of a good-humored drill sergeant, barked out: "What are we always doing?" When a student finally answered, "Selling Delta," she replied: "No! You're selling yourself. Aren't you selling yourself, too? You're on your own commission. We're in the business of selling ourselves, right? Isn't that what it's all about?"

In this way, Delta sells Southern womanhood, not "over their heads," but by encouraging trainees to think of themselves as *self*-sellers. This required them to imagine themselves as self-employed. But Delta flight attendants are not making an independent profit from their emotional labor; they are working for a fixed wage. They are not selling themselves, they are selling the company. The *idea* of selling themselves helps them only in selling the company they work for.

The cabin-to-home analogy is vulnerable from another side too. The flight attendant is asked to see the passenger as a potential friend, or as like one, and to be as understanding as one would be with a good friend. The *if* personalizes an impersonal relation. On the other hand, the student is

warned, the reciprocity of real friendship is not part of the if friendship. The passenger has no obligation to return empathy or even courtesy. As one trainer commented: "If a passenger snaps at you and you didn't do anything wrong, just remember it's not you he is snapping at. It's your uniform, it's your role as a Delta flight attendant. Don't take it personally." The passenger, unlike a real friend or guest in a home, assumes a right to unsuppressed anger at irritations, having purchased that tacit right with the ticket.

Flight attendants are reminded of this one-way personalization whenever passengers confuse one flight attendant with another ("You look so much alike") or ask questions that reveal that they never thought of the attendants as real people. "Passengers are surprised when they discover that we eat, too. They think we can go for twenty hours without being allowed to eat. Or they will get off the plane in Hong Kong after a fifteen-hour flight—which is a sixteen- or seventeen-hour duty day for us—and say, 'Are you going on to Bangkok?' 'Are you going on to Delhi?' Yes, right, sure—we go round the world and get sent back with the airplane for repairs." Just as the flight attendant's empathy is stretched thin into a commercial offering, the passenger's try at empathy is usually pinched into the narrow grooves of public manners.

It is when the going gets rough—when flights are crowded and planes are late, when babies bawl and smokers bicker noisily with nonsmokers, when the meals run out and the air conditioning fails—that maintaining the analogy to home, amid the Muzak and the drinks, becomes truly a monument to our human capacity to suppress feeling.

Under such conditions some passengers exercise the privilege of not suppressing their irritation; they become "irates." When that happens, back-up analogies are brought into service. In training, the recruit was told: "Basically, the passengers are just like children. They need attention. Sometimes first-time riders are real nervous. And some of the troublemakers really just want your attention." The pas-

senger-as-child analogy was extended to cover sibling rivalry: "You can't play cards with just one passenger because the other passengers will get jealous." To think of unruly passengers as "just like children" is to widen tolerance of them. If their needs are like those of a child, those needs are supposed to come first. The worker's right to anger is correspondingly reduced; as an adult he must work to inhibit and suppress anger at children.

Should the analogy to children fail to induce the necessary deep acting, surface-acting strategies for handling the "irate" can be brought into play. Attendants were urged to "work" the passenger's name, as in "Yes, Mr. Jones, it's true the flight is delayed." This reminds the passenger that he is not anonymous, that there is at least some pretension to a personal relation and that some emotion management is owed. Again, workers were told to use terms of empathy. As one flight attendant, a veteran of fifteen years with United, recalled from her training: "Whatever happens, you're supposed to say, I know just how you feel. Lost your luggage? I know just how you feel. Late for a connection? I know just how you feel. Didn't get that steak you were counting on? I know just how you feel." Flight attendants report that such expressions of empathy are useful in convincing passengers that they have misplaced the blame and misaimed their anger.

Perspectives elicit feeling. In deep acting, perspectives are evoked and suppressed in part through a way of speaking. One way of keeping the living room analogy alive is to speak in company language. In a near-Orwellian Newspeak, the company seems to have officially eliminated the very idea of getting angry at the passenger, the source of revenue. Supervisors never speak officially of an *obnoxious* or *outrageous* passenger, only of an *uncontrolled* passenger. The term suggests that a fact has somehow attached itself to this passenger—not that the passenger has lost control or even had any control to lose. Again, the common phrase "mishandled passenger" suggests a bungle somewhere up the line, by someone des-

tinued to remain lost in the web of workers that stretches from curbside to airplane cabin. By linguistically avoiding any attribution of blame, the idea of a right to be angry at the passenger is smuggled out of discourse. Linguistically speaking, the passenger never *does* anything wrong, so he can't be blamed or made the object of anger.

In passenger-handling classes, one trainer described how she passed a dinner tray to a man in a window seat. To do this, she had to pass it across a woman sitting on the aisle seat. As the tray went by, the woman snatched the man's dessert. The flight attendant politely responded, "I notice this man's dessert is on your tray." The dirty deed was done, but, the implication was, by no one in particular. Such implicit reframing dulls a sense of cause and effect. It separates object from verb and verb from subject. The passenger does not feel accused, and the flight attendant does not feel as if she is accusing. Emotion work has been accomplished, but it has hidden its tracks with words.

Company language is aimed not only at diffusing anger but at minimizing fear. As one Pan Am veteran recalled:

We almost turned upside down leaving Hong Kong. They call it an "incident." Not an accident, just an incident. We went nose up and almost flipped over. The pilot caught the plane just before it went over on its back and made a big loop and dropped about 3,000 feet straight down and then corrected what happened. They pulled out at 1,500 feet over the harbor. We knew we were going to die because we were going nose down and you could see that water coming. I was never really afraid of flying before, but turbulence does shake me up now. I'm not as bad as some people, though.

The very term *incident* calms the nerves. How could we be terrified at an "incident"? Thus the words that workers use and don't use help them avoid emotions inappropriate to a living room full of guests.

Finally, the living room analogy is upheld by admitting

that it sometimes falls down. In the Recurrent Training classes held each year for experienced flight attendants, most of the talk was about times when it feels like the party is over, or never began. In Initial Training, the focus was on the passenger's feeling; in Recurrent Training, it was on the flight attendant's feeling. In Initial Training, the focus was on the smile and the living room analogy; in Recurrent Training, it was on avoiding anger. As a Recurrent Training instructor explained: "Dealing with difficult passengers is part of the job. It makes us angry sometimes. And anger is part of stress. So that's why I'd like to talk to you about being angry. I'm not saying you should do this [work on your anger] for Delta Airlines. I'm not saying you should do it for the passengers. I'm saying do it for *yourselves*."

From the beginning of training, managing feeling was taken as the problem. The causes of anger were not acknowledged as part of the problem. Nor were the overall conditions of work—the crew size, the virtual exclusion of blacks and men, the required accommodation to sexism, the lack of investigation into the considerable medical problems of flight attendants, and the company's rigid antiunion position. These were treated as unalterable facts of life. The only question to be seriously discussed was "How do you rid yourself of anger?"

The first recommended strategy (discussed in Chapter Two) is to focus on what the *other* person might be thinking and feeling: imagine a reason that excuses his or her behavior. If this fails, fall back on the thought "I can escape." One instructor suggested, "You can say to yourself, it's half an hour to go, now it's twenty-nine minutes, now it's twenty-eight." And when anger could not be completely dispelled by any means, workers and instructors traded tips on the least offensive ways of expressing it: "I chew on ice, just crunch my anger away." "I flush the toilet repeatedly." "I think about doing something mean, like pouring Ex-Lax

into his coffee.”* In this way a semiprivate “we-girls” right to anger and frustration was shared, in the understanding that the official axe would fall on anyone who expressed her anger in a more consequential way.

Yet for those who must live under a taboo on anger, covert ways of expressing it will be found. One flight attendant recalled with a grin:

There was one time when I finally decided that somebody had it coming. It was a woman who complained about absolutely everything. I told her in my prettiest voice, “We’re doing our best for you. I’m sorry you aren’t happy with the flight time. I’m sorry you aren’t happy with our service.” She went on and on about how terrible the food was, how bad the flight attendants were, how bad her seat was. Then she began yelling at me and my co-worker friend, who happened to be black. “You nigger bitch!” she said. Well, that did it. I told my friend not to waste her pain. This lady asked for one more Bloody Mary. I fixed the drink, put it on a tray, and when I got to her seat, my toe somehow found a piece of carpet and I tripped—and that Bloody Mary hit that white pants suit!

Despite the company’s valiant efforts to help its public-service workers offer an atmosphere perfumed with cheer, there is the occasional escapee who launders her anger, disguises it in mock courtesy, and serves it up with flair. There remains the possibility of sweet revenge.

COLLECTIVE EMOTIONAL LABOR

To thwart cynicism about the living room analogy, to catch it as it collapses in the face of other realizations, the company eye shifts to another field of emotion work—the field in which flight attendants interact with each other. This is a

* Most anger fantasies seemed to have a strong oral component, such as befouling the troublemaker’s food and watching him eat it. These fantasies inverted the service motif but did not step outside it. No one, for instance, reported a fantasy about hitting a passenger.

strategic point of entry for the company because if the company can influence how flight attendants deal with each other’s feelings on the job, it can assure proper support for private emotion management.

As trainers well know, flight attendants typically work in teams of two and must work on fairly intimate terms with all others on the crew. In fact, workers commonly say the work simply cannot be done well unless they work well together. The reason for this is that the job is partly an “emotional tone” road show, and the proper tone is kept up in large part by friendly conversation, banter, and joking, as ice cubes, trays, and plastic cups are passed from aisle to aisle to the galley, down to the kitchen, and up again. Indeed, starting with the bus ride to the plane, by bantering back and forth the flight attendant does important relational work: she checks on people’s moods, relaxes tension, and warms up ties so that each pair of individuals becomes a team. She also banters to keep herself in the right frame of mind. As one worker put it, “Oh, we banter a lot. It keeps you going. You last longer.”

It is not that collective talk determines the mood of the workers. Rather, the reverse is true: the needed mood determines the nature of the worker’s talk. To keep the collective mood stripped of any painful feelings, serious talk of death, divorce, politics, and religion is usually avoided. On the other hand, when there is time for it, mutual morale raising is common. As one said: “When one flight attendant is depressed, thinking, ‘I’m ugly, what am I doing as a flight attendant?’ other flight attendants, even without quite knowing what they are doing, try to cheer her up. They straighten her collar for her, to get her up and smiling again. I’ve done it too, and needed it done.”

Once established, team solidarity can have two effects. It can improve morale and thus improve service. But it can also become the basis for sharing grudges against the passengers or the company. Perhaps it is the second possibility

that trainers meant to avoid when in Recurrent Training they offered examples of “bad” social emotion management. One teacher cautioned her students: “When you’re angry with a passenger, don’t head for the galley to blow off steam with another flight attendant.” In the galley, the second flight attendant, instead of calming the angry worker down, may further rile her up; she may become an accomplice to the aggrieved worker. Then, as the instructor put it, “There’ll be *two* of you hot to trot.”

The message was, when you’re angry, go to a teammate who will calm you down. Support for anger or a sense of grievance—regardless of what inspires it—is bad for service and bad for the company. Thus, the informal ways in which workers check on the legitimacy of a grievance or look for support in blowing off steam become points of entry for company “suggestions.”

BEHIND THE SUPPLY: SUPERVISION

The lines of company control determine who fears whom. For flight attendants, the fear hierarchy works indirectly through passengers and back again through their own immediate supervisors.* As someone put it, “Whoever invented the system of passenger letter writing must be a vice-president by now.” Any letter from a passenger—whether an “onion” letter complaining about the temperature of the coffee, the size of a potato, the look of an attendant, or an “orchid” letter praising an attendant for good service—is put into the personnel files. These letters are translated by base supervisors into rewards and punishments. Delta flight attendants talked about them as much as they talked about the reports of those in the official line of authority—the senior attendant on the crew, the base supervisor, and the plainclothes company supervisors who occasionally ghost-ride a flight.

* At Delta in 1980, there were twenty-nine supervisors in charge of the 2,000 flight attendants based in Atlanta.

In addition to the informal channels by which passenger opinion passes to management and then worker, there are more formal ones; company-elicited passenger opinion polls. The passenger is asked to fill out a questionnaire, and the results of that are presented by letter to the workers. As one male flight attendant, seven years with United, describes it:

We get told how we’re doing. Twice a year we get sent passenger evaluations. They show how United, American, Continental, and TWA are competing. Oh, passengers are asked to rank flight attendants: “genuinely concerned, made me feel welcome. Spoke to me more than required. Wide awake, energetic, eager to help. Seemed sincere when talking to passengers. Helped establish a relaxed cabin atmosphere. Enjoying their jobs. Treated passengers as individuals.” We see how United is doing in the competition. We’re supposed to really get into it.

Supervision is thus more indirect than direct. It relies on the flight attendant’s sense of what passengers will communicate to management who will, in turn, communicate to workers. (For the indirect “bureaucratic” control more common to the modern workplace, see Edwards 1979, ch. 6.)

Supervisors do more than oversee workers. At this juncture in Delta’s history, the fear hierarchy bends, and supervisors must also pose as big sisters in the Delta family—bigger but not by much. These largely female, immobile, and nonunionized workers are not greatly feared by underlings, nor much envied, as the comment of one flight attendant suggests:

It’s not a job people want very much. Some girls go into it and then bounce right back on the line. The pay is an inch better and the hours are a whole lot worse. And you have to talk oatmeal. My supervisor called me into her office the other day. I’ve used seven out of my twenty-one days of available sick leave. She says, ‘I don’t want to have to tell you this. It’s what I have to tell you. You’ve used up too much of your sick leave.’ She has to take it from her boss and then take it from me—from both ends. What kind of a job is that?

Supervisors monitor the supply of emotional labor. They patch leaks and report breakdowns to the company. They must also cope with the frustrations that workers suppress while on the job. As one Delta base manager explained: "I tell my supervisors to let the girls ventilate. It's very important that they get that out. Otherwise they'll take it out on the passengers." So the supervisor who grades the flight attendant on maintaining a "positive" and "professional" attitude is also exposed to its underside. For example, one flight attendant recalled coming off a long and taxing flight only to discover that her paycheck had been "mishandled." She said she told her supervisor, "I can't take this all day and then come back here and take it from *you*! You know I get paid to take it from passengers, but I don't get paid to take it from you. I want my money. I just got my teeth cleaned three months ago. Where's my check? *You* find it!" What is offstage for the flight attendant is on stage for the supervisor. Managing someone else's formerly managed frustration and anger is itself a job that takes emotional labor.

ACHIEVING THE TRANSMUTATION

To the extent that emotion management actually works—so that Bloody Marys do not spill "by accident" on white pants suits, and blowups occur in backstage offices instead of in airplane aisles—something like alchemy occurs. Civility and a general sense of well-being have been enhanced and emotional "pollution" controlled. Even when people are paid to be nice, it is hard for them to be nice at all times, and when their efforts succeed, it is a remarkable accomplishment.

What makes this accomplishment possible is a transmutation of three basic elements of emotional life: emotion work, feeling rules, and social exchange.

First, emotion work is no longer a private act but a public act, bought on the one hand and sold on the other. Those who direct emotion work are no longer the individuals

themselves but are instead paid stage managers who select, train, and supervise others.

Second, feeling rules are no longer simply matters of personal discretion, negotiated with another person in private but are spelled out publicly—in the *Airline Guide to Stewardess and Steward Careers*, in the *World Airways Flight Manual*, in training programs, and in the discourse of supervisors at all levels.

Third, social exchange is forced into narrow channels; there may be hiding places along shore, but there is much less room for individual navigation of the emotional waters.

The whole system of emotional exchange in private life has as its ostensible purpose the welfare and pleasure of the people involved. When this emotional system is thrust into a commercial setting, it is transmuted. A profit motive is slipped in under acts of emotion management, under the rules that govern them, under the gift exchange. Who benefits now, and who pays?

The transmutation is a delicate achievement and potentially an important and beneficial one. But even when it works—when "service ratings" are high and customers are writing "orchid" letters—there is a cost to be paid: the worker must give up control over *how* the work is to be done. In *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974), Harry Braverman argues that this has been a general trend in the twentieth century. The "mind" of the work process moves up the company hierarchy, leaving jobs deskilled and workers devalued.³ Braverman applies this thesis to physical and mental labor, but it applies to emotional labor as well. At Delta Airlines, for example, twenty-four men work as "method analysts" in the Standard Practices Division of the company. Their job is to update the forty-three manuals that codify work procedure for a series of public-contact jobs. There were no such men in the 1920s when the flight engineer handed out coffee to passengers; or in the 1930s when Delta hired nurses to do the same; or in the 1940s when the first flight attendants swatted flies in the

cabin, hauled luggage, and even helped with wing repairs. The flight attendant's job grew along with marketing, becoming increasingly specialized and standardized.

The lessons in deep acting—acting “as if the cabin is your home” and “as if this unruly passenger has a traumatic past”—are themselves a new development in deskilling. The “mind” of the emotion worker, the source of the ideas about what mental moves are needed to settle down an “irate,” has moved upstairs in the hierarchy so that the worker is restricted to implementing standard procedures. In the course of offering skills, trainers unwittingly contribute to a system of deskilling. The skills they offer do not subtract from the worker's autonomous control over *when* and *how* to apply them; as the point is made in training, “It will be up to you to decide how to handle any given problem on line.” But the overall definition of the task is more rigid than it once was, and the worker's field of choice about what to do is greatly narrowed. Within the boundaries of the job, more and more actual subtasks are specified. Did the flight attendant hand out magazines? How many times? By the same token, the task to be accomplished is more clearly spelled out by superiors. How were the magazines handed out? With a smile? With a *sincere* smile? The fact that trainers work hard at making a tough job easier and at making travel generally more pleasant only makes this element of deskilling harder to see. The fact that their training manuals are prepared for them and that they are not themselves entirely free to “tell it like it is” only illustrates again how deskilling is the outcome of specialization and standardization.

Sensing this, most of the flight attendants I observed were concerned to establish that theirs was an honorable profession requiring a mastery of “real” skills. I was told repeatedly that there was a law school graduate in the incoming class at the Training Center and that a dentist, a librarian, and a botanist were serving on line. At the same time, they generally expressed frustration at the fact that their skills in rescue

and safety procedures were given soft play (how many tickets can you sell by reminding passengers of death and danger?) whereas their function as meal servers was highlighted. As one flight attendant put it eloquently:

I have a little bit of pride in what I do. Of course I'm going to haul ass and try to do everything I conceivably can to get that breakfast for 135 people completed in forty minutes. That means that 135 people get meal trays, 135 people are supposed to have at least two beverages, 135 trays are collected and restowed. You can imagine how many seconds we have left to give to each passenger. But what kind of condition does that put me in when I finally reach the jump seat at the end of the flight, the time when a crash is relatively more likely? And do I even notice that man slumped over in his seat? *That's* really my job.

Thus because passengers see them—and are encouraged by company advertising to see them—as no more than glamorous waitresses, flight attendants usually resented the *appearance* of working at a low level of skills, and had to cope with this resentment. But the ways in which these two functions—managing rescue operations and serving food—are combined, and the relative priority given to each, cannot be influenced by the workers or even the trainers. Such things are determined by management.

THE TRANSMUTATION THAT FAILED

When an industry speed-up drastically shortens the time available for contact between flight attendants and passengers, it can become virtually impossible to deliver emotional labor. In that event, the transmutation of emotion work, feeling rules, and social exchange will fail. Company claims about offering a smile “from the inside out” (Delta) will become untenable. The living room analogy will collapse into a flat slogan. The mosaic of “as if” techniques will fall to pieces, and deep acting will be replaced by surface displays that lack conviction.

This is approximately what has happened in the U.S. airline industry. Flight attendants who had worked during the 1960s spoke, sometimes nostalgically, sometimes bitterly, of a “before” and an “after” period. In the “before” period they were able to do what they were asked to do, what they often came to *want* to do. As one twenty-two-year veteran of Pan American reminisced:

On those old piston-engine Stratocruisers we had ten hours to Honolulu. We had three flight attendants for seventy-five passengers. We had a social director who introduced each of the flight attendants personally and asked the passengers to introduce themselves to each other. . . . We didn't even use the PA system, and we had a vocal lifeboat demonstration. There was more of the personal touch. The plane had only one aisle, and we had berths for the passengers to sleep in. We used to tuck people into bed.

There was time to talk to passengers. Layovers between flights were longer. Flights were less crowded, the passengers more experienced and generally richer, the work more pleasant. Descriptions of flying today are much different:

Now we have these huge planes that can go forever. I mean, we have twelve-hour duty days, with 375 people to tend [on the Boeing 747]. The SP [Special Performance plane] is smaller, but it can go fifteen or sixteen hours without refueling. We used to fly with the same people, and there were fewer of us. We would just informally rotate positions. Now you come to work all set to argue for *not* working tourist class.

When we go down the rows, we avoid eye contact and focus on the aisle, on the plates. People usually wait for eye contact before they make a request, and if you have two and a quarter hours to do a cocktail and meal service, and it takes five minutes to answer an extra request, those requests add up and you can't do the service in time.

The golden age ended sometime after the recession of the early 1970s when the airlines, losing passengers and profits,

began their campaigns to achieve “cost-efficient” flying.⁴ They began using planes that could hold more people and fly longer hours without fuel stops. This created longer workdays, and more workdays bunched together.* There was less time to adjust to time-zone changes on layovers, and less time to relax and enjoy a central advantage of the work—personal travel. Like the airplane, the flight attendant was now kept in use as long as possible. Pan American shortened its port time (the time before and after flights) from one and a half to one and a quarter hours. One American Airlines union official described the result of the speed-up:

They rush us through the emergency briefing. . . . They're even briefing us on the buses getting out there. When you get on the plane, you just start counting all the food and everything and start loading passengers. They'll shut the door and pull away and we'll find we're twenty meals short.

Now if we worked in an auto assembly line and the cars started to come down the line faster and faster we'd call it a speed-up. But on the airplane they give more passengers to the same crew. They ask us to do a liquor service and a dinner service in an hour, when it used to be an hour and a half . . . and we do it. Now why is it we don't call that a speed-up?

With deregulation of the airlines, the price of tickets dropped, and the “discount people” boarded in even larger numbers.† Aboard came more mothers with small children who leave behind nests of toys, gum wrappers, and food scraps, more elderly “white-knuckle flyers,” more people who don't know where the restrooms, the pillow, and the call button are, more people who wander around wanting to go

* Companies are trying to eliminate “soft-time trips” and increase “hard-time trips.” A hard-time trip is one on which the flight attendant puts in more than her projected daily quota of flying hours. On a soft-time trip she works below that quota. In cases where a flight attendants' union—as at American Airlines—has won the right to per diem pay for nonflying time, the company is correspondingly eager to eliminate occasions on which the workers can use it.

† In 1979, discount fares accounted for 37 percent of Delta's total domestic revenue from passenger service.

“downstairs.” Experienced business commuters complain to flight attendants about the reduced standard of living in the air; or worse, they complain about less-experienced “discount” passengers, who in turn appeal to the flight attendant. The cruise ship has become a Greyhound bus.

The companies could increase the number of flight attendants, as the unions have asked, to maintain the old ratio of workers to passengers. One union official for Pan American calculated that “if we had the same ratio now that we had ten years ago we would need twenty flight attendants on board, but we get by with twelve or fourteen now.” One reason the companies have not done this is that flight attendants cost more than they used to. With regulations that assured their removal at age thirty-one or at marriage, flight attendants used to be a reliable source of cheap labor. But since the unions have successfully challenged these regulations and also secured higher wages, the companies have chosen to work a smaller number of flight attendants much harder. While some flight attendants find it hard to refute the corporate logic, others continue to question why this female labor was so cheap to begin with.

In the early 1980s there has been a super speed-up. The vice-president for In-Flight Service at United Airlines explained the economic background of this: “United has to compete for the travel market with low-cost, nonunion planes, with companies with lower overhead, who only lease planes—companies like PSA, Pacific Express, Air California.” In response to this greater competition, United instituted its Friendship Express flights. After only a year and a half, such flights accounted for 23 percent of all United flights.

On Friendship Express, the fares are lower, the service is minimal, and the seating is “high density.” It is not unusual for a flight attendant to handle a thousand passengers a day. The ground time is limited to a maximum of twenty minutes. (One United flight attendant said, “We don’t send Friendship Express flights to St. Petersburg, Florida, be-

cause with the number of wheelchair passengers there, we couldn’t make our twenty minutes deboarding time.”) With such limited groundtime, four segments of travel can be squeezed into the time of three. There is no time to clean the cabin or replace supplies between trips: “If you’re ten lunches short on the Friendship Express, well you’re just out ten lunches. You have to live with the complaints.” But the old ways of handling complaints are no longer available. Faced with disappointed passengers, the flight attendant can no longer give out free decks of cards or drinks. The main compensation for mishaps must be personal service—for which there is virtually no time.

The recession has required United, like many airlines, to lay off baggage checkers, gate personnel, ticket personnel, and managers. Lines are longer. Mishaps multiply. There are more ruffled feathers to soothe, more emotion work to be done, but fewer workers to do it. The super speed-up has made it virtually impossible to deliver personal service. Even those who have long since abandoned that ideal—passengers as well as airline workers—find the system stressful.

Management, however, sees no escape from the contradictory policy of trying to meet the demand for emotional labor while promoting conditions that cut off the supply. The companies worry that competitors may produce more personal service than they do, and so they continue to press for “genuinely friendly” service. But they feel compelled to keep the conveyor belt moving ever faster. For workers, the job of “enjoying the job” becomes harder and harder. Rewards seem less intrinsic to the work, more a compensation for the arduousness of it. As one veteran of thirteen years with Pan Am put it:

The company did, after all, pay relatively good salaries and give us free or reduced rates for air travel. There was a seniority system, so the longer you flew, the better most things got—vacations and layovers got longer and more pleasant. The fact that

none of us was really happy on the job didn't matter—that wasn't why we were flying. We were flying for money, men, adventure, travel. But the job, the work on the plane, was the most strenuous, unrewarding, alienating concentration of housework and waitress-type drudgery to be found anywhere.

Before the speed-up, most workers sustained the cheerful good will that good service requires. They did so for the most part proudly; they supported the transmutation. After the speed-up, when asked to make personal human contact at an inhuman speed, they cut back on their emotion work and grew detached.

RESPONSES TO THE CONTRADICTION

The slowdown is a venerable tactic in the wars between industrial labor and management. Those whose work is to offer “personalized service” may also stage a slowdown, but in a necessarily different way. Since their job is to act upon a commercial stage, under managerial directors, their protest may take the form of rebelling against the costumes, the script, and the general choreography. This sort of protest occurred in many airlines throughout the 1970s as flight attendants set up independent unions to name and give voice to their accumulated resentment and discontent.*

For a decade now, flight attendants have quietly lodged a counterclaim to control over their own bodily appearance. Some crews, for example, staged “shoe-ins.” (“Five of us at American just walked on the job in Famolares and the supervisor didn't say anything. After that we kept wearing them.”) Others, individually or in groups, came to work wearing an extra piece of jewelry, a beard a trifle shaggier, a new permanent, or lighter make-up. Sometimes the struggle went

* These unions have fought for many things: higher wages, more soft-time trips, better health and safety regulations, and larger crews. What is directly relevant here is that they have challenged company regulations affecting whole territories of the body and its adornment, regulations on facial make-up, hairstyles, undergarments, jewelry, and shoe styles.

through the official machinery—a company “write up” of the offending worker, the filing of a grievance, and a negotiation between the company and the union. Sometimes, as in the case of body-weight regulations, the issue was taken to court. At other times a series of quietly received worker victories was followed by a company crackdown.

Workers have also—in varying degrees—reclaimed control of their own smiles, and their facial expressions in general. According to Webster's Dictionary, “to smile” is “to have or take on a facial expression showing pleasure, amusement, affection, friendliness, irony, derision, etc., and characterized by an upward curving of the corners of the mouth and a sparkling of the eyes.” But in the flight attendant's work, smiling is separated from its usual function, which is to express a personal feeling, and attached to another one—expressing a company feeling. The company exhorts them to smile more, and “more sincerely,” at an increasing number of passengers. The workers respond to the speed-up with a slowdown: they smile less broadly, with a quick release and no sparkle in the eyes, thus dimming the company's message to the people. It is a war of smiles.

During a slowdown, it becomes possible to mention the personal cost of smiling too much. Workers worry about their “smile-lines.” These lines are seen not as the accumulated evidence of personal character but as an occupational hazard, an undesirable sign of age incurred in the line of duty on a job that devalues age.

The smile war has its veterans and its lore. I was told repeatedly, and with great relish, the story of one smile-fighter's victory, which goes like this. A young businessman said to a flight attendant, “Why aren't you smiling?” She put her tray back on the food cart, looked him in the eye, and said, “I'll tell you what. You smile first, then I'll smile.” The businessman smiled at her. “Good,” she replied. “Now freeze, and hold that for fifteen hours.” Then she walked away. In one stroke, the heroine not only asserted a personal right to her facial ex-

pressions but also reversed the roles in the company script by placing the mask on a member of the audience. She challenged the company's right to imply, in its advertising, that passengers have a right to her smile. This passenger, of course, got more: an expression of her genuine feeling.

The slowdown has met resistance from all quarters and not least from passengers who "misunderstand." Because nonstop smiling had become customary before the speed-up occurred, the absence of a smile is now cause for concern.* Some passengers simply feel cheated and consider unsmiling workers facial "loafers." Other passengers interpret the absence of a smile to indicate anger. As one worker put it: "When I don't smile, passengers assume I'm angry. But I'm not angry when I don't smile. I'm just not smiling." Such workers face the extra task, if they care to take it up, of convincing passengers that they are not angry. This may mean working extra hard at doing thoughtful *deeds*, as if to say, "I'm as nice as they come, but you won't get what you expect from my face. Look for it in other ways."

The friction between company speed-up and worker slowdown extends beyond display to emotional labor. Many flight attendants recalled a personal breaking point. Here are three examples:

I guess it was on a flight when a lady spat at me that I decided I'd had enough. I tried. God knows, I tried my damndest. I went along with the program, I was being genuinely nice to people. But it didn't work. I reject what the company wants from me emotionally. The company wants me to bring the emotional part of me to work. I won't.

...

The time I snapped was on a New York to Miami flight. On those flights, passengers want everything yesterday. There's a constant demand for free decks of cards. One woman fought

* Even in normal times, less frequent smilers had to work at reassuring others that they were not cold or unkind just because they didn't smile more often.

for a free deck and groused when I told her we were all out. Finally I happened to see a deck under a seat, so I picked it up and brought it to her. She opened her purse and there were fifteen decks inside.

...

I thought I'd heard them all. I had a lady tell me her doctor gave her a prescription for playing cards. I had a man ask me to tell the pilot to use the cockpit radio to reserve his Hertz car. I had a lady ask me if we gave enemas on board. But the time I finally cracked was when a lady just took her tea and threw it right on my arm. That was it.

Workers who refuse to perform emotional labor are said to "go into robot." They withhold deep acting and retreat to surface acting. They pretend to be showing feeling. Some who take this stance openly protest the need to conduct themselves in this way. "I'm not a robot," they say, meaning "I'll pretend, but I won't try to hide the fact that I'm pretending." Under the conditions of speed-up and slowdown, covering up a lack of genuine feeling is no longer considered necessary. Half-heartedness has gone public.

The new flight attendants' union at American, Pan American, and United has apparently decided that their best strategy is to emphasize the crucial safety and rescue skills of their members and to give a lower priority to the issue of emotion work and personal service. The companies, on the other hand, continue to emphasize service as the key to beating out their competitors. Yet what the workers are withholding and what the companies are demanding are seldom talked about in clear or precise terms. As one flight attendant put it:

I don't think anybody ever comes right out and says to her superior, "I won't put my emotions into this job." The superiors know that you don't want to, and you know what they want. And so we say a lot of things to each other that really don't convey what we're talking about at all. They talk about a "more positive atti-

tude" and say you could have acted more positively. You say, "Well, I'll do better next time," but you think to yourself, "I'll do it the same way next time."

Periodically, the companies tighten their service regulations. As one veteran put it: "The more the company sees the battle, the tougher they get with their regulations. They define them more precisely. They come up with more categories and more definitions. And more emotionalizing. And then, in time, we reject them even more."

Inevitably, a few workers will not close ranks and will insist on working even harder to serve passengers with genuinely sincere feeling. Some want to please in order to compensate for a "flaw"—such as age, fatness, or homosexuality—that they have been made to feel guilt about.* Some want revenge on certain co-workers. Some are professional "angels" to whom the company eagerly points as good examples. Under slowdown conditions, they become the "rate-busters" who are resented by other workers.

One response to the slowdown, it is said, has been that companies have considered seeking cheaper labor by lowering the minimum age and educational requirements for new recruits. In another response, Pan American has shown interest in recruiting more Asian-American women. According to company officials, Pan Am wants them "for their language skills." According to union members, it wants them for their reputed submissiveness, their willingness to perform emotional labor: "They would love nothing better than to get rid of us and fill the plane with loving, submissive Japanese women. But for one thing, regulations prevent them

* By some accounts, the company's play on our culture's devaluation of age in women made older female workers feel obliged to "make up" for their age by working harder. There were some stories of direct harassment of older female flight attendants. One supervisor was reported to have asked a woman to take off her jacket and hold out her arms; he then remarked on the "unsightliness" of the flesh on the under side of her upper arms. Although the woman was personally distressed by this, another flight attendant and union official remarked: "They make us think age is a personal flaw. Actually, they just don't want to pay our pensions."

from going to Japan, so they go for Japanese-American women. And there the joke's on Pan Am. Those women are so used to being browbeaten that they are a lot tougher than we are."

What is distinctive in the airline industry slowdown is the manner of protest and its locus. If a stage company were to protest against the director, the costume designer, and the author of a play, the protest would almost certainly take the form of a strike—a total refusal to act. In the airline industry the play goes on, but the costumes are gradually altered, the script is shortened little by little, and the style of acting itself is changed—at the edge of the lips, in the cheek muscles, and in the mental activities that regulate what a smile means.

The general effect of the speed-up on workers is stress. As one base manager at Delta frankly explained: "The job is getting harder, there's no question about it. We see more sick forms. We see more cases of situational depression. We see more alcoholism and drugs, more trouble sleeping and relaxing." The San Francisco base manager for United Airlines commented:

I'd say it's since 1978, when we got the Greyhound passengers, that we've had more problems with drug and alcohol abuse, more absenteeism, more complaints generally.

It's mainly our junior flight attendants and those on reserve—who never know when they will be called up—who have the most problems. The senior flight attendants can arrange to work with a friend in first class and avoid the Friendship Express altogether.

There are many specific sources of stress—notably, long shifts, disturbance in bodily rhythms, exposure to ozone, and continual social contact with a fairly high element of predictability. But there is also a general source of stress, a thread woven through the whole work experience: the task of managing an estrangement between self and feeling and between self and display.

EMOTIONAL LABOR AND THE REDEFINED SELF

A person who does emotional labor for a living must face three hard questions that do not confront others, the answers to which will determine how she defines her "self."

The first one is this: How can I feel really identified with my work role and with the company without being fused with them? This question is especially salient for younger or less experienced workers (since their identities are less formed) and for women (since a woman is more often asked to identify with a man than vice versa). For these groups, the risk of identity confusion is generally greater.

To address this issue successfully, the worker has to develop a working criterion for distinguishing between situations that call on her to identify her self and situations that call on her to identify her role and its relation to the company she works for. To resolve the issue, a worker has to develop the ability to "depersonalize" situations. For example, when a passenger complains about the deprivations of the Friendship Express, a flight attendant who cannot yet depersonalize takes it as a criticism of her own private shortcomings. Or when a passenger is delighted with the flight, such a worker takes the compliments as a reflection on her own special qualities. She would not, for example, take such a compliment as a sign that a strong union stand has improved the ratio of workers to passengers. She interprets events so that they easily reflect on her "true" self. Her self is large, and many events reflect on it.

All companies, but especially paternalistic, nonunion ones, try as a matter of policy to fuse a sense of personal satisfaction with a sense of company well-being and identity. This often works well for awhile. Company emphasis on the sale of "natural niceness" makes it hard for new workers to separate the private from the public self, the "at-ease me" from the "worked-up me," and hard to define their job as one of acting. In a sense, the two selves are not estranged enough. Such workers do not have the wide repertoire of

deep acting techniques that would enable them to personalize or depersonalize an encounter at will. Without this adaptability, when things go wrong (as they frequently do), they are more often hurt, angered, or distressed.

At some point the fusion of "real" and "acted" self will be tested by a crucial event. A continual series of situations batter an unprotected ego as it gives to and receives from an assembly line of strangers. Often the test comes when a company speed-up makes personal service impossible to deliver because the individual's personal self is too thinly parceled out to meet the demands made on it. At this point, it becomes harder and harder to keep the public and private selves fused. As a matter of self-protection, they are forced to divide. The worker wonders whether her smile and the emotional labor that keeps it sincere are really hers. Do they really express a part of her? Or are they deliberately worked up and delivered on behalf of the company? Where inside *her* is the part that acts "on behalf of the company"?

In resolving this issue, some workers conclude that only one self (usually the nonwork self) is the "real" self. Others, and they are in the majority, will decide that each self is meaningful and real in its own different way and time. Those who see their identity in this way are more likely to be older, experienced, and married, and they tend to work for a company that draws less on the sense of fusion. Such workers are generally more adept at deep acting, and the idea of a separation between the two selves is not only acceptable but welcome to them. They speak more matter-of-factly about their emotional labor in clearly defined and sometimes mechanistic ways: "I get in gear, I get revved up, I get plugged in." They talk of their feelings not as spontaneous, natural occurrences but as objects they have learned to govern and control. As one flight attendant, who had come to her own terms with this issue, explained: "If I wake up in a sunny mood, I spread it around to the crew and passengers. But if I wake up on the wrong side of the bed, all depressed, I

keep to myself on the flight until I'm out of it. The way I think of it, when I'm on, I'm out; when I'm down, I'm in."

Yet workers who resolve the first issue often find themselves brought up more sharply against a second one. While they *have* the skills of deep acting, they can't always bring themselves to use them. "How," the second question goes, "can I use my capacities when I'm disconnected from those I am acting *for*?" Many flight attendants can't bring themselves to think of the airplane cabin as their living room full of personal guests; it seems too much like a cabin full of 300 demanding strangers. The closest they can come to a bow from the heart is to disguise their feelings through surface acting. Many of them want to do deep acting but cannot pull it off under speed-up conditions, and so they fall back on surface acting.

For this reason, a new issue becomes central for them: whether one is "being phony." If a worker wants to put her heart into the work but can only lend her face to it, the risk for her lies in thinking of herself as "phony." Among flight attendants, this word came up with surprising frequency. It was common to hear one worker disparage another for being phony (for example, "She just laid it on in plastic"). But workers also seemed to fear that disparagement themselves; it was common to hear a sentence begin, "I'm not a phony, but. . ." Talk about phoniness was serious because it was usually seen not merely as an instance of poor acting but as evidence of a personal moral flaw, almost a stigma.⁵

Thus the third issue arises: "If I'm doing deep acting for an audience from whom I'm disconnected, how can I *maintain* my self-esteem without becoming cynical?" There were those for whom the issue of phoniness—and self-esteem—was resolved by redefining the job. Although some blamed themselves for phoniness, others saw it as surface acting necessary and desirable in a job that positively calls for the creation of an illusion. The editors of an unofficial flight attendants' newsletter, the *Pan Am Quipper*, described this stance

succinctly: "We deal in the illusion of good service. We want to make passengers think they are having a good time. It is dangerous to take any of the abuse seriously; it is dangerous to take the job too seriously. *Quipper* is about laughing it off."

To keep on working with a sense of honor a person has to stop taking the job seriously. On one side, hard experience forces the worker to associate less and less of herself with the job, while on the other side the job is whittled down to "maintaining an illusion." It is no longer the sincere smile or the person that is now "phony." What is phony is the "good time." And it is the work it takes to bring off the illusion of a "good time" that becomes the problem. It is as if the *Quipper's* editors, like the workers they speak for, are forced to say, appropriately enough, "the job is the problem, not us." Then, for extra protection, there is the added message, "it's not serious not attached to *us*."

When a worker is asked to do deep acting for a great many people who are totally out of her control, she is put on the defensive. The only way to salvage a sense of self-esteem, in this situation, is to define the job as "illusion making" and to remove the self from the job, to take it lightly, unseriously. Less of the job reflects on the self; the self is "smaller." But then so is the job. Neither the passenger nor the worker is really having "a good time."

While some workers distance themselves from the job by defining it as "not serious," others distance themselves from it in another way. For them, the job remains serious; but they are not seriously in it. When they cannot bring themselves to define phoniness (or surface acting) as either a necessary virtue or a feature of the job, they may "go into robot." They use their faces as masks against the world; they refuse to act. Most of those who "go into robot" describe it as a defense, but they acknowledge that it is inadequate: their withdrawal often irritates passengers, and when it does they are forced to withdraw even further in order to defend themselves against that irritation. In either case—whether she with-

draws by performing the work as if it were unserious or withdraws by not doing the emotional job at all—the worker is on the defensive.

In relation to each issue, emotional labor poses a challenge to a person's sense of self. In each case, the problem was not one that would cause much concern among those who do not do emotional labor—the assembly line worker or the wallpaper machine operator, for example. In each case, the issue of estrangement between what a person senses as her “true self” and her inner and outer acting becomes something to work out, to take a position on.

When a flight attendant feels that her smile is “not an indication of how she really feels,” or when she feels that her deep or surface acting is not meaningful, it is a sign that she is straining to disguise the failure of a more general transmutation. It indicates that emotion work now performed on a commercial stage, with commercial directors and standardized props, is failing to involve the actors or convince the audience in a way that it once did.

When feelings are successfully commercialized, the worker does not feel phony or alien; she feels somehow satisfied in how personal her service actually was. Deep acting is a help in doing this, not a source of estrangement. But when commercialization of feeling as a general process collapses into its separate elements, display becomes hollow and emotional labor is withdrawn. The task becomes one of disguising the failed transmutation. In either case, whether proudly or resentfully, face and feelings have been used as instruments. An American Airlines worker said: “Do you know what they call us when we get sick? *Breakage*. How's that for a ‘positive attitude’? Breakage is what they call people that go to the complaint service to cancel for illness.” Or again, as a San Francisco base manager at United remarked ruefully: “And we call them bodies. Do we have enough ‘bodies’ for the flight?” Feeling can become an instrument, but whose instrument?

7

BETWEEN THE TOE AND THE HEEL

Jobs and Emotional Labor

“Know Your Prices. Keep Smiling.”

— Sign in back hall, Italian restaurant

“Create Alarm.”

— Sign in back room, collection agency

The corporate world has a toe and a heel, and each performs a different function: one delivers a service, the other collects payment for it. When an organization seeks to create demand for a service and then deliver it, it uses the smile and the soft questioning voice. Behind this delivery display, the organization's worker is asked to feel sympathy, trust, and good will. On the other hand, when the organization seeks to collect money for what it has sold, its worker may be asked to use a grimace and the raised voice of command. Behind this collection display the worker is asked to feel distrust and sometimes positive bad will.* In each kind of dis-

* Some companies assign the function of debt collecting to outside agencies in order to preserve pleasant and morally satisfying associations with the company name. As the head of Delta's billing department explained: “We use eight or nine collection agencies around the country. No one initiates action in this office. We prefer that the agency be the bad guy and Delta the nice guy.” Just over 1 percent of Delta's customers do not pay their bills. After solicitation, some 40 percent pay, and a third of that goes to the collection agency.

play, the problem for the worker becomes how to create and sustain the appropriate feeling.

The reason for describing the polar extremes of emotional labor, as represented by the flight attendant and the bill collector, is that it can give us a better sense of the great variety of emotional tasks required by jobs that fall in between. It can help us see how emotional labor distributes itself up and down the social classes and how parents can train children to do the emotional labor required by different jobs. And so, having examined the work of the flight attendant, we now take a look at the work of the bill collector.

THE BILL COLLECTOR

In some ways the jobs of the bill collector and the flight attendant are similar. Each represents an opposite pole of emotional labor. In a work-a-day sense, each job expands and contracts in response to economic conditions, though inversely: when times are bad the flight attendant has fewer passengers to cope with, but the bill collector has more debtors to pursue. Furthermore, in each job the worker must be attuned to the economic status of the customer. The flight attendant is asked to pay special attention to those who bring in the most money—businessmen whose companies carry contracts for first-class travel with the airline. The bill collector deals, of necessity, with those who bring in the least: “We can tell by the addresses that our debtors live in lower-income areas; they are poorer and younger” (Delta billing department chief).

One striking difference between the two jobs lies in the area of training. Flight attendants are carefully recruited and given two to five weeks of intensive training (Delta requires four). In the particular collection agency I visited, the training was as follows: a young man with no experience was handed four albums of recorded “model” collection calls, briefed on the company’s system of recording information,

asked to fill out a form to receive a state license, handed his job card to punch in, and seated with a bundle of accounts at a telephone—all in the space of an hour. Since little effort was made, through training or otherwise, to retain workers, the turnover was high. Those who had stayed with the work had probably learned skills in escalating aggression much earlier in life. And they had come to understand their own preferences. As one collector said, “I’d rather do eight hours of collecting than four hours of telephone sales. In telephone sales you’ve got to be nice no matter what, and lots of times I don’t feel like being nice. To act enthusiastic is hard work for me.”

The project of the flight attendant is to *enhance* the customer’s status, to heighten his or her importance. “The passenger may not always be right, but he’s never wrong.” Every act of service is an advertisement. In contrast, the final stages of bill collecting typically *deflate* the customer’s status, as the collector works at wearing down the customer’s presumed resistance to paying. The collector may choose to expand the *act* of nonpayment into evidence of the humiliating *status* of debtor by hinting that the customer is lazy and of low moral character. Conversations with bill collectors are notorious for such status deflation, which is why they often provoke hostility—usually legal on one side and often physical on the other.

In the collection business, the stage setting and the relations between actors are depersonalized and guarded from the very start. In contrast to flight attendants, who are generally required to wear name tags on their uniforms, the collectors in the agency I studied were not allowed to use their real names. As one of them explained, “The agency worries that some of these debtors are hot-headed. They don’t want them finding you.” Unlike the passenger on board a plane, the debtor cannot—in the case of telephone collecting—see the collector’s stage. Of course, the collector cannot see the debtor’s stage either. As one collector noted wryly: “A

woman might say, 'My husband handles these matters and he's at work.' He might be sitting right there on the couch drinking a beer. How do I know? I wish they'd get that tele-thing [visual phone]. But that would be just one more thing to collect on."

Debtors who came to the office I studied—to deliver payment checks by hand or to pick up personal belongings from secretly repossessed cars—found it guarded by two Great Danes, one tied by a chain downstairs and one in the office itself. ("When I first went to work," said one collector, "I asked if the dog bites. They said, 'Yeah, but you don't have to worry—it's just black people it bites.'") Offstage, and visible only to the collectors, was a sign in the window, a prompting card that read: "Catch your customer off guard. Control the conversation."

Often the collector's first task is to trap the debtor into acknowledging his or her identity. The collector, who may give a false name, assumes that the debtor may try to avoid offering any name at all. By using the debtor's name in the opening sentence, especially in early morning calls when people may be off guard, the debtor may be trapped into admitting who he or she is.*

This sours the encounter from the beginning, for the debtor quickly realizes the ground he has lost. "Occasionally the guy will just be nasty right from the start. He's just mad that he has acknowledged who he is before he knows who you are." It is easier if the collector talks fast. As one collector explained: "You identify the person, then identify yourself to them. Then you get right to the point, and make it real fast, like you've got to have the money tomorrow. Then you pause for a second. You try to catch them off guard. If you're too nice, believe me, they give you a hard time."

* One woman collector said, "This works especially well for me because they don't expect a woman to be a bill collector." A male collector reported a dilemma: "The boss tells us we have to make long-distance calls collect. Now why is someone going to accept a collect call from someone they don't know? When the phone bill comes up, I'll probably get fired."

The collector's next task is to adjust the degree of threat to the debtor's resistance. He or she learns how to do this largely by observing how others do it. For one collector, the other person was his employer: "He came out and screamed at the top of his lungs, 'I don't care if it's Christmas or what goddamn holiday! You tell those people to get that money in!'" Although this employer favored a rapid escalation of the threat to get a smaller amount of money sooner and move on to new accounts, his workers generally preferred the "soft collect." By taking more time to get to the point, they felt they could offer the debtor an opening gift—the benefit of the doubt, and a hint that matters of time and amount might be negotiable—in return for which the debtor could offer compliance in good faith. At this stage, and especially with new debtors, the collector often spoke in the collaborative *we*, as in "Let's see how we can clear this up." Sometimes the agency collector verbally set himself apart from the company seeking payment, as in "Look, let's see what *we* can settle now. Otherwise *they* will be writing you again in a week."

Like the flight attendant, the bill collector observes feeling rules. For the flight attendant, trust must not give way too easily to suspicion, and so she is encouraged to think of passengers as guests or as children. The collector, on the other hand, must not let suspicion give way too easily to trust, and so signs of truth-telling, small clues to veracity, become important. One experienced collector said, "I come down faster [on debtors] than a rookie would because I see the signs faster." He continued:

Now a guy who takes time to write letters to the company is probably telling you the truth. But the guy who doesn't ever say anything until I finally find him and then all of a sudden he starts bitching about the merchandise—him I wonder about. Or he says, "I lost my money order receipt." That's always a good one. Or "I didn't keep my canceled check."

Another sign of truth-telling is the debtor's outright admission of a debt owed:

I give a lot of people a break. People tell you right out, "I haven't been working. I don't have the money. What do you want me to do?" And I say, "Okay, here's what I'll do for you." Say they owe five hundred dollars. I say, "Okay, send it in twenties and that will give you some time. If you don't send in anything, they're going to send you a letter in a week."

Sometimes in the course of deciding whether to trust the debtor, the bill collector may develop doubt about the truth of the creditor's claims. Thus a person who tried to collect money for ABC Diapers reported:

ABC would say they got back a load that was forty-four diapers short, so they'd charge the customer 75 cents per missing diaper. But all the customers say they didn't keep any diapers. The world would be filled with diapers if they could find all those missing ones. ABC must have got people thinking that they're counting out the diapers. But they don't deliver the right number to start with. When every account with ABC Diapers has a problem, I side with the customers. But I don't dare say that to the boss.

The bill collector, unlike the flight attendant, is not asked to believe the claims of the agency or the corporate client on whose behalf money is collected, even though such belief makes the work easier. One woman recalled:

I worked for one of those matchbook schools—you know, the schools advertised on the back of matchbooks. It was called Career Academy. They had eleven schools throughout the United States, but they were on their way down the tubes and for that reason took me with no experience and made me assistant manager [a job that included billing]. They taught things like how to run a charge card through a machine, and gave degrees for it. They said they were going to make famous radio broadcasters out of guys from the boondocks that stuttered. . . . It was mainly poor blacks who borrowed money to take the course.

The delinquency rate [among borrowers] was 50 percent. No one who graduated from the school could get a job in radio broadcasting. So how's a guy going to pay his debt?

This collector was not asked to "believe in the company." Her task was to maintain a cynical distance from it while still working on its behalf.

Even if a collector trusts the debtor, there remains the question of how sympathetic to be. In the training of flight attendants, the analogies to guest and child are used to amplify feelings of empathy and sympathy. In the work of bill collectors, the analogies to "loafer" and "cheat" are invoked to curtail those feelings when they would interfere with collecting. As one collector confessed: "It's mostly poor people we go after. In this business I believe most people are honest, and unless they have a serious complaint about the service or something, they'll try and pay. Now if my boss heard me say that, he'd fire me for sure because *I'm supposed to assume that all these people are out to get us.*"

If payment is not securely arranged after two or three calls, the collector may get rough. The debtor's "excuse for not paying" may now be called "a lie," a deception that the collector had known about all along but had pretended not to see out of politeness. As one collector described the process:

You look at the card on this guy. You see that he's promised things and promised things, and once said he lost your address when you know it's right in the phone book. So you say, "This is So and So with the Collection Center, Mr. Smith," and maybe he'll start off real nice. So you say, "Well, what about this?" And he'll say, "You mean you haven't gotten that yet? I can't understand it. Maybe my wife didn't mail it—I gave it to her to mail." Then you start getting tough. You say, "Well, it's getting just a little bit tiresome to keep hearing this stuff. I don't want you to take a chance with these risky mails anymore. I want you in this office today with the money." Then he'll really let you have it.

Whereas a flight attendant is encouraged to elevate the passenger's status by lowering her own, a bill collector is

given permission to puff himself up, to take the upper hand and exercise a certain license in dealing with others. One collector who disavowed such posturing himself claimed that it was common in other agencies he had worked for: "A lot of these collectors just yell at people like they're taking something out on them. A lot of them get to feel like they're big shots."

Some California bill collectors complained bitterly that they are forbidden by the State Civil Code to swear at debtors (Article 2, sec. 1788.11). As one put it, "I can hang up. I just can't swear. It's hard sometimes when they're calling you every name in the book." Yet they spoke of finding other effective ways to insult and coerce debtors.

The debtors, on the other hand, sometimes reacted by defensively withholding their names from the collector in order to protect at least their names from indignity:

COLLECTOR: Your name is what?

DEBTOR: V. Miller.

COLLECTOR: How do you spell that first name?

DEBTOR: Just V. You may call me V.

Efforts like this may incite the collector to work even harder at downgrading the debtor's status.

A bill collector may accuse the debtor of being a liar, a cheat, or a "welfare bum." When he does, the debtor may become upset and agitated and may vigorously assert his or her own dignity. But such a defense, in the midst of what is after all a commercial and not a personal transaction, may be discounted, as it was by this collector:

Yesterday I had a good case; some people owe Kahn's Piano Rental \$370. The woman says the company delivered the piano but forgot to deliver the stool. [She withheld full payment because of this.] The second time I called I got the woman. The first thing she insists is, "I'll have you know I'm a schoolteacher and a principal." These are black people. I don't really care. I care about the piano, and the stool. . . . She tells me, "We're rent-

ing the piano for our daughter who takes piano lessons." And I said, "Well then, I imagine you'd need a piano." She got herself all worked up and I couldn't get in. She tells me, "We paid \$60 to get a custom-made stool." [Looking at my records] I said, "What's the name of this attorney of yours? I'll call him." She says, "Most of our friends are attorneys." So she really read me the riot act, and I said I'd better hang up. She said, "You started with me, you finish this with me." I said, "I started with your husband," and she said, "You're going to start it and end it with me." I said, "Lady, this is an absolutely ridiculous conversation. You have your husband call. Good day!" And I just slammed the phone down on the hook.

Beneath the argument over what was owed to Kahn's Piano Rental, another dialogue was going on. The debtor was asking, in effect: "Will you accept my version of myself as an honest and generally middle-class sort of person, the sort of person who heads a school, has lawyer friends, and offers her daughter cultural advantages like piano lessons? Accepting that, won't you listen to and believe my story instead of Kahn's?" What maddens the debtor, when the answer to these implied questions is No, is the assumption that she has lied and also the rejection of her class and family credentials for being a truthful and well-intentioned customer who has been treated unfairly. By sticking to the piano and the stool but ignoring the social story, and thus *withholding empathy*, the collector forces the debtor to pay not only in cash but in moral standing.

Even collectors who avoid rudeness or aggression know that such behavior is approved of in others. Indeed, what would be a dreaded "onion letter" for the flight attendant wins a congratulatory slap on the back in many collection agencies. As the collector in the piano rental case remarked: "So today I came in and the boss was laughing and said, 'We had a complaint on you today.' I guess that woman called the piano company and screamed about me for twenty minutes. That's what's nice about this business. They'll just laugh and

pat me on the back. Now in what other business would I have it like that?"

The rule in this agency was to be aggressive. One novice said: "My boss comes into my office and says, 'Can't you get madder than *that*?' 'Create alarm!'—that's what my boss says." Like an army sergeant, the boss sometimes said his employees were "not men" unless they mustered up a proper degree of open outrage: "My boss, he hollers at me. He says, 'Can't you be a *man*?' Today I told him, 'Can't you give me some credit for just being a human being?'"

Debtors who are pushed hard by collectors who are under this sort of pressure sometimes threaten violence. The task of the collectors then becomes distinguishing genuine threat from bluff. As one of them recalled: "They say they're going to come down here and blow your head off. I don't think that kind of threat is real. It's just that they're so angry. You know, these black men can get real angry. But I know one woman who went outside to talk to some guy; he had a friend with him and they roughed her up. She wasn't hurt, just scared." Agencies vary in how much aggression on anyone's part they tolerate. More reputable agencies focus on helping the debtor "clear up" a situation and characterize abusive collectors as simply "overaggressive." In the agency I studied, however, open aggression was the official policy for wringing money out of debtors.

Both flight attendants and bill collectors are probably attracted to their jobs because they already have the personal qualities required to do the job. Among flight attendants the presence of these qualities is largely assured by careful company screening, and among bill collectors it is assured by the high turnover rate—those who dislike the work soon quit. In both jobs, workers often speak of having to curb their feelings in order to perform. In both, supervisors enforce and monitor that curbing, and the curbing is often a personal strain.

Like the flight attendant, the bill collector handles customers but from a totally different viewpoint, for a different

purpose, and with a very different form of display and emotional labor. The flight attendant sells and delivers a service, enhances the customer's status, and induces liking and trust in the customer, who is seen as a guest in a home. Here, at the toe of the corporate system, sincere warmth is the product, and surliness and indifference are the problem. At the heel, however, money is owing, and it must be extracted even if the customer must be wrung dry of self-respect. In the later stages of the collection game, sincere suspicion is appropriate, and warmth and friendliness are the problem. Misfits in each job might do magnificently in the other. In each case the display is backed up by emotional labor, which is supported by imaginary stories—of guests in a personal living room or of lazy imposters lounging amid stolen goods.

Workers in both jobs are vulnerable to a company speed-up. The boss who wants more collections per hour makes it harder for the bill collector to slip behind the occupational front lines and work out a private deal on good faith. When he presses the principle that "time is money," he robs the collector of the only thing he or she can offer in return for cooperation—time. He reduces opportunities for choosing between the "hard" and the "soft" approach. For both the flight attendant and the bill collector, a speed-up makes it harder to handle people personally.

JOBS AND EMOTIONAL LABOR

Between the extremes of flight attendant and bill collector lie many jobs that call for emotional labor. Jobs of this type have three characteristics in common. First, they require face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with the public. Second, they require the worker to produce an emotional state in another person—gratitude or fear, for example. Third, they allow the employer, through training and supervision, to exercise a degree of control over the emotional activities of employees.

Within a given occupational category, these characteristics will be found in some jobs but not in others.* For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics puts both “diplomat” and “mathematician” in the “professional” category, yet the emotional labor of a diplomat is crucial to his work whereas that of a mathematician is not. Within the category of “clerical workers” we find some who display their emotional dispositions as company emblems and do so by face-to-face contact, producing a desired emotional state in others in ways that superiors legitimately monitor. But we also find others whose only contact is with envelopes, letters, and manila folders. Certain waiters in certain restaurants perform emotional labor, but others do not. In some hospitals and some nursing homes, some nurses do emotional labor and some do not.

Many secretaries, of course, perform emotional labor, and even those who do not perform it understand very well that it is “job relevant.” A manual for the legal secretarial profession advised recruits in 1974: “You are pleasant even under strain. More executives hire secretaries for pleasant dispositions than for good looks. As one of them put it: ‘I need a secretary who can stay cheerful even when I get grouchy, work piles up, and everything else goes wrong.’”¹ There is only one listing for “secretary” in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. But there are many different office atmospheres in which secretaries work, and some are more demanding of emotional labor than others. Even the same office workers, when placed under a new boss with a different philosophy of office management, can see changes in the amount of emotional labor required of them. Between the “what” and the “how” of typing a letter lies the line between technical and emotional labor.

* Certain features of work not mentioned in job descriptions—such as incentive systems that join self-interest to worked-on display and feeling—may be especially successful in promoting emotional labor. Salespersons working on commission are a prime example. In the absence of clear self-interest, close supervision probably helps foster emotional labor most of all.

Sometimes companies devise ways of making sure that workers do their emotional labor properly. A striking example was reported in the *St. Petersburg Times* of April 17, 1982, under the column head “A Grumpy Winn-Dixie Clerk Could Make You a Dollar Richer”: “The cashiers at six St. Petersburg and Pinellas Park Winn-Dixie stores are wearing dollar bills pinned to their uniforms these days. It’s all part of a company courtesy campaign. If the cashier doesn’t come up with a friendly greeting and a sincere thank you, the customer is supposed to get a dollar. And a cashier who gives away too many of the store’s dollars may wind up with a lecture from the boss.”

Winn-Dixie promised a free dollar to all cashiers who finished the two-week experiment with a perfect record and announced that recognition pins would be awarded to the most courteous cashier at each of its six stores. In addition, all Winn-Dixie stores gave customers leaflets bearing the following message:

TO OUR CUSTOMERS

To insure that you as a valued customer receive proper courtesy and service we have reviewed our courtesy and service programs with all employees. Some of the basic courtesy and service elements you should expect to receive on each visit to a Winn-Dixie store are:

1. Sincere greeting when you are being checked out.
2. Fast, efficient check-out of your order with the cashier giving you, the customer, complete attention.
3. Proper bagging of your purchases.
4. Efficient and proper handling of your cash, checks, coupons, food stamps, etc.
5. Sincere “Thank You for Shopping Winn-Dixie.”

If for some unknown reason we might have employed a discourteous or rude employee, we ask that you report the incident to the front-end manager in charge or write to the Division

Manager, Winn-Dixie Stores, P.O. Box 440, Tampa, Florida 33601.

An investigation will be made and proper corrective action will be taken to insure that you receive courteous service in the future.

Thank you for being a most valued customer of Winn-Dixie.

It would be hard to make a more explicit statement of the customer's right to a sincere greeting and a sincere thank you, and hard to find a clearer expression of the view that display work and emotion work are part of a job.

By talking to customers about this promotion being a commercial gimmick, the cashiers laid claim to a personal sincerity. As one cashier said to a customer, "I don't know why [the company] did this. They didn't have to. I'm really friendly anyway." By distinguishing her own sincerity from the variety being advertised as for sale, she seems to offer in-spite-of-the-job sincerity. But of course, we may think, it's her job to do *that*, too.

Cashiers and salespeople may have to produce short bursts of niceness many times a day. They seldom get a chance to know any one customer very well for very long. But there are other jobs that call for longer and deeper relations with clients. Psychiatrists, social workers, and ministers, for example, are expected to feel concern, to empathize, and yet to avoid "too much" liking or disliking. As Sandy, a drop-out social worker in the film *A Thousand Clowns*, commented: "I spent a long time understanding Raymond. And once I understood him, I hated him, and he's only nine years old. Some cases I love and some cases I hate, and that's all wrong for my work."

Parents have different expectations about what a day-care provider should feel. Some want sympathetic interest in "educational experiences." Others want warmth and physical nurturing for their children. Still others want full emotional substitutes for themselves and therefore place deeper demands on the day-care provider. In this case, especially, of-

ferings and expectations may not match: "After Timmy's mother told me she'd made another day-care arrangement, closer to her house, I had a long talk with her, and I began to realize that she expected me to be real upset that Timmy was leaving. I miss him, you know, but I wasn't that upset about it. They picked him up at my house at 5:30 every day. It's a job, after all."

Doctors, in treating bodies, also treat feelings about bodies, and even patients who are used to impersonal treatment often feel disappointed if the doctor doesn't seem to care enough. It is sometimes the doctor's job to present alarming information to the patient and to help the patient manage feelings about that. In general, the doctor is trained to show a kindly, trusting concern for the patient. Ideally, he is both trusted and trusting, but sometimes trust may break down on both sides, as this doctor's story indicates:

I worked for a company for twenty years. Some employees would come in to see me and swear that they'd developed a backache on the job when I couldn't be sure they hadn't got it at home. I didn't want to seem suspicious, but a lot of the time I was. Then patients that had really injured themselves on the job would want to go off and have their own doctor take care of them and have it paid for by the company. You're not supposed to see patients as swindlers and cheats, but I had a hard time with that sometimes, because they didn't treat me like a doctor.

Lawyers, like doctors, have face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with clients in whom they try to produce an emotional state. Divorce lawyers, for instance, must try to induce calmness in angry and despairing clients, who may want to escalate instead of conclude a battle over money, property, and children. Other lawyers, like those who specialize in wills, may find themselves drawn into becoming the client's mouthpiece in family intrigues, with uncomfortable results:

When you do inheritance work, you're often dealing with wealthy people who want to keep their kids in line. They want to

pass the money on, but at the same time they want to keep control. Often I'll be asked things like, "Jim, I think you'd be the best person to talk to my daughter. She'd listen to you." Then I'll have to lay down some line even when I think it's grossly unfair. And then the kid gets upset with me.

In the process of being insinuated into family relations, the lawyer risks becoming the butt of someone's anger, while at the same time he must maintain the trust of everyone involved.

Although a salesman is not as likely to be drawn into family matters, he or she very much shares the task of establishing trust among clients, and this may call for either deep or surface acting. In a Communication Style Workshop, Corning Glass salesmen were asked to distinguish between such styles of communication as "Advocating" and "Analyzing." (Advocating styles are assertive and responsive, while those with an analyzing style are reserved and nonassertive.) In a section entitled "Trust," the workshop manual treats the problem of how salespeople can prevent such things as a person with an "analyzing style" from distrusting a person with an "advocating style":

Advocating style people may come across to others—especially analyzing style people—as being unreliable. This is because they tend to deal with life more light heartedly than other styles. They are busy, active people who make promises easily. Others wonder if they will really come through. To neutralize this evaluative perception, one must try to be more patient and serious. It will help to listen more carefully and take notes. . . . (Communication Style Workshop)

The end is to get the client to trust the salesman, to "neutralize" the client's suspicion. This can be done either by surface acting—seeming to be more patient and serious—or by the deep act of becoming more patient and serious, which makes the act of "seeming" unnecessary. In either case, the worker faces an emotional requirement of the job (winning trust) and presumes he can work on himself so as to meet it.

It should be noted that although the social worker, the day-care provider, the doctor, and the lawyer have personal contact and try to affect the emotional states of others, they do not work with an emotion supervisor immediately on hand. Rather, they supervise their own emotional labor by considering informal professional norms and client expectations. So their jobs, like many others, fill only two of our three criteria.

How many workers, in all, have jobs that require emotional labor? Only by asking workers what they actually do, and asking employers what they actually expect from a worker, could we possibly begin to answer with any specificity; after all, the sort of work that really attaches to a specific job becomes apparent only in the shaping of expectations on the spot. But a reasonable estimate, based on the data in Appendix C, is that jobs involving emotional labor are held by over one-third of all workers in the United States.

This means that one-third of all workers experience a dimension of work that is seldom recognized, rarely honored, and almost never taken into account by employers as a source of on-the-job stress. For these workers, emotion work, feeling rules, and social exchange have been removed from the private domain and placed in a public one, where they are processed, standardized, and subjected to hierarchical control. Taken as a whole, these 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. Were our good will strictly confined to persons we know in private life, were our offerings of civility or empathy not so widely spread out and our feelings not professionalized, surely public life would be profoundly different.

SOCIAL CLASS AND EMOTIONAL LABOR

There are jobs at every socioeconomic level that place emotional *burdens* on the worker, but these burdens may have little to do with the *performance* of emotional labor. Among the

lower classes, where work is often deskilled and boring and the work process beyond the worker's control, the emotional task is often to suppress feelings of frustration, anger, or fear—and often to suppress feelings of any sort. This can be a terrible burden, but it is not in itself emotional labor. Factory workers, truck drivers, farmers and fishermen, forklift operators, plumbers and bricklayers, chambermaids in transient hotels, and backroom laundry workers do not on the whole have their personalities *as* engaged, their sociability *as* used, and their emotion work *as* closely subjected to occupational strictures as the flight attendant and the bill collector.

A steelworker describes his work: "I put on my hard hat, change into my safety shoes, put on my safety glasses, go to the bonderizer. It's the thing I work on. They rake the metal, they wash it, they dip it in a paint solution, and we take it off. Put it on, take it off, put it on, take it off."² In such work there is little face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact, no premium on producing an emotional state in another, and no company concern over details of how the worker manages his feelings. He may repress his feelings in order to focus steadily on the task at hand, and at his lunch break he may observe his buddies' rules about what sort of sexual jokes are funny, but what he produces is washed and dipped metal, not processed feelings. Again, the steelworker who "walks the irons" hundreds of feet in the air, the parachutist, the race driver, and the truck driver who handles explosive cargo all have the work of suppressing fear. But their emotion work is a consequence of practical, not emotional, demands on their time and energy. It is not directed toward other people, nor can the result of it be judged by the state of other people's feelings.

Similarly, in the hinterlands of the middle class, the land of the flight attendant and the bill collector, the question of how work affects the worker's feelings is far broader than the question of whether that work calls for emotional labor. At this socioeconomic level, there are many workers who, in promoting a product or a company, transform their show of personality into a symbol of the company, a clue to the na-

ture of its product. These workers are seldom important decision-makers, but in one way or another they *represent* the decision-makers—not simply in how they look or what they say but in how, emotionally speaking, they seem. The advertising maxim "Never sell what you don't believe in" calls for an act of faith. But since middle-level workers who service, sell, and persuade don't earn as much as their bosses do, they are less likely to be, in a sense, really sold. They are more likely to see emotional labor as no more than work and to be better at counting its costs.

Still higher up are the big corporate decision-makers. For them, political, religious, and philosophic beliefs become more "job relevant," and the ties between self and work are many and diffuse.³ Here years of training and experience, mixed with a daily carrot-and-stick discipline, conspire to push corporate feeling rules further and further away from self-awareness. Eventually, these rules about how to see things and how to feel about them come to seem "natural," a part of one's personality. The longer the employment and the more rewarding the work in terms of interest, power, and pay, the truer this becomes.

At the very top of the upper class are the tycoons, the imperial decision-makers. They assume the privilege of personally setting the informal rules to which underlings eagerly attune themselves, rules designed to suit their own personal dispositions. Their notions of what is funny, what to beware of, how grateful to feel, and how hostile one should be to outsiders will become an official culture for their top employees. This is more than the license to indulge emotional idiosyncrasy, for the idiosyncrasies of the powerless can be happily ignored. It is a subtle and pervasive way of dominating through the enforcement of latent feeling rules for subordinates. Interestingly enough, at the other extreme of the class ladder employees may enjoy almost complete freedom from feeling rules, although they have no right to set them for others. They enjoy the license of the dispossessed.

To sum up, jobs that place a burden on feelings are com-

mon in all classes, which is one reason why work is defined as work and not play. But emotional labor occurs only in jobs that require personal contact with the public, the production of a state of mind in others, and (except in the true professions) the monitoring of emotional labor by supervisors.* There are probably fewer jobs of this sort—which call for a real transmutation of emotional life—in the lower and working classes. (The Park Avenue hotel doorman, the chambermaid in an upper-class hotel that serves a stable clientele, and the prostitute would be among the few exceptions.) The great majority of emotional laborers have jobs that place them in the middle class.

THE FAMILY: TRAINING GROUND FOR THE TRANSMUTATION

What a person does at work may bear an uncanny resemblance to the “job description” of being the child of such a worker at home. Big emotion workers tend to raise little ones. Mothers and fathers teach children letters and numbers and manners and a world view, but they also teach them which zone of the self will later be addressed by rules of work. As research on this topic suggests, working-class parents prepare the child to be controlled more by rules that apply to overt behavior whereas middle-class parents prepare them to be governed more by rules that apply to feelings.⁴

From his study of British middle-class and working-class families, the sociolinguist Basil Bernstein draws a distinction between two types of “family control system,” the *positional* and the *personal*.

In the positional control system, clear and formal rules determine who gets to decide what and who gets to do what. The right to make rules is based on formal attributes, such as age, sex, and parenthood. A “positional family” is not nec-

* It is mainly in these jobs, where deep and surface acting form an important part of the work, that hating the job can prevent one from doing the job well.

essarily authoritarian or emotionally cold; it simply bases authority on impersonally assigned status and not on personal feelings. Positional appeals, therefore, are appeals to impersonally assigned status. For example, to her son who keeps saying he wants to play with a doll, a mother might appeal to sex status: “Little boys don’t play with dolls, dolls are for your sister; here, take the drum instead.”

In the personal control system, what matters far more than formal status is the feelings of parent and child. Parents back up their appeals by such statements as “because it would mean a lot to me” or “because I’m very tired.” Appeals are also aimed at the *child’s* feelings. A mother using personal control in the situation above might say: “Why do you want to play with the doll? They’re so boring. Why not play with the drum?” In positional families, control works against the child’s will. In personal families, control works *through* that will. Thus a child who says “I don’t want to kiss grandpa—why must I kiss him always?” will be answered in different ways. Positional: “Children kiss their grandpa,” and “He’s not well—I don’t want any of your nonsense.” Personal: “I know you don’t like kissing Grandpa, but he’s unwell and he’s very fond of you.”⁵

In the personal family, Bernstein notes, the child *appears* to have a choice. If the child questions a rule invoked by the parent, the situation is further explained and the alternatives more clearly elaborated. Given the situation and the explanation, the child chooses to observe the rule. But in the positional family, the child is told to act according to a rule, and any questioning of it is answered by an appeal to immutable status: “Why? Because I’m your mother, and I say so.” The personal child is *persuaded* to choose the right course of action and persuaded to see and feel about it in the right way.⁶ The positional child is *told* what to do and asked to accept the legitimacy of the order.

Working-class families are generally more positional, Bernstein says, and middle-class families more personal.

Similarly, Melvin Kohn in his *Class and Conformity* (1977) finds middle-class parents more likely to sanction what they later infer to be a child's feeling and intent whereas working-class parents are more likely to sanction behavior itself.* A middle-class mother is far more likely to punish her son for losing his temper than for engaging in wild and disruptive physical play. His loss of temper, not his wild play, is what is intolerable.⁷

The middle-class child seems to be especially subject to three messages. The first is that the feelings of superiors are important. Feeling is tied to power and authority because it is the reason adults often give for the decisions they make. The child grows sensitive to feeling and learns to read it well. The second is that a child's *own* feelings are important. Feelings are worth paying attention to and can be honored as reasons for doing or not doing something. The middle-class child's *own* sense of power is tied more closely to feeling than to external display.[†] The third is that feelings are meant to be managed—monitored, sanctioned, and controlled. Thus when Timmy spills ink on the new rug, he will be punished less for damaging the rug than for doing it in anger. His transgression lies in *not managing his anger*.

It seems, then, that middle-class children are more likely to be asked to shape their feelings according to the rules they are made aware of. At the very least, they learn that it is important to know how to manage feeling. In a sense, the

* A child asked to "love Aunt Hilda" might rebel by refusing to love Aunt Hilda. The child asked to feel ambitious and "love school" might rebel by hating school and disdaining success. R. D. Laing in his *Politics of the Family* (1971) draws attention to this middle-class "internal" mode of control by showing how parents and psychiatrists set feeling rules and how children and patients rebel against them. If authority in the middle class is more expressed through feeling rules and emotion management—if it is more through these than through rules of outer behavior that we are governed—then we would do well to examine, as Laing does, rebellion as rebellion against dictates in this realm.

† One latent message in the free-school education of the 1960s, designed almost exclusively for middle-class students, was that personal feelings are near-sacred objects of attention and deserve frequent and detailed discussion. See Swidler (1979).

true middle-class lesson may be set forth not in Benjamin Spock's *Baby and Child Care* but in Constantin Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares* (1948)—for it is through the art of deep acting that we make feelings into instruments we can use.

In reviewing this research on the family, I have frequently used the terms "middle-class child" and "working-class child," but I do not mean to suggest that one is trained to do emotional labor and the other is not. Middle-class parents whose jobs do not involve public contact may train their children to accept positional authority, and lower-class parents whose jobs do involve public contact may train their children to accept personal authority.⁸ More precisely, the *class* messages that parents pass on to their children may be roughly as follows. Middle class: "Your feelings count because you are (or will be) considered important by others." Lower class: "Your feelings don't count because you aren't (or won't be) considered important by others."

Cutting across the class messages may be other messages about emotional labor. The two main ones would be as follows. "Learn to manage your feelings, and learn to attune yourself to feeling rules because doing this well will get you places" (emotional-labor occupations). And "Learn to manage your behavior because that is all the company will ask of you" (nonemotional-labor occupations). Upper-class parents doing emotional labor may combine the messages "Your feelings are important" and "Learn to manage them well" whereas lower-class emotional laborers may stress only the "Manage them well." Conversely, upper-class parents who do not specialize in emotional labor may emphasize "Your feelings matter" without stressing "Manage them well." And lower-class parents doing physical or technical work may see no relevance in either message.

How feelings are dealt with in families may be determined not so much by social class as by the overall design of emotional labor, which is itself only loosely related to social class. Further, in our society the personal control system ex-

tends far beyond the family; it operates, for example, in schools that stress the development of autonomy and emotional control and in jobs that call for a capacity to forge useful relationships.*

If jobs that call for emotional labor grow and expand with the spread of automation and the decline of unskilled labor—as some analysts believe they will—this general social track may spread much further across other social classes. If this happens, the emotional system itself—emotion work, feeling rules, and social exchange, as they come into play in a “personal control system”—will grow in importance as a way through which people are persuaded and controlled both on the job and off. If, on the other hand, automation and the decline of unskilled labor leads to a decline in emotional labor, as machines replace the personal delivery of services, then this general social track may come to be replaced by another that trains people to be controlled in more impersonal ways.

The transmutation of emotional life—the move from the *private* realm to the *public* realm, the trend toward standardization and commercialization of emotive offerings—already fans out across the whole class system. Commercial conventions of feeling are being recycled back into individual private lives; emotional life now appears under new management. Talking at dinner about encounters with an irate customer or watching the moves of host and participant on television giveaway programs opens the family home to a larger world of feeling rules. We learn what to expect outside, and we prepare.

In the United States, this public culture is not simply public; it is commercial. Thus the relation between private emotion work and public emotional labor is a link between non-

* Similarly, the social guardians of the positional control system are found not only in working-class families but in the traditional churches to which they go, and to some extent in the schools, where they learn to manage their behavior in ways that will be useful on the job.

commercial and commercial spheres. The home is no longer a sanctuary from abuses of the profit motive. Yet the marketplace is not without images of the home. The atmosphere of the private living room, which a young flight attendant is asked to recall as she works in the airplane cabin, has *already borrowed* some of the elements of that cabin. The principles of commerce that govern exchanges in the cabin are supposed to be softened by the analogy to a private home, a home remote from commerce. But for a quarter of a century now, private relations between friends and kin have been the basis for living room “parties” at which kitchenware, cosmetics, or (more recently) “sex-aids” are sold.⁹ Similarly, to build a market for air travel, the airlines use the idea of a private family and the feelings one would have there. Airline training strategists borrow from the home the idea of a place where that sort of borrowing doesn’t go on. Yet in a culture like ours, it does.

Thus it is in the family that we assess our ties to the public culture and search out ways in which we may be monitored there. It is in the family—that private refuge, that haven in a heartless world—that some children first see commercial purposes at close hand and prepare for the call from central casting that will let them display their skills on a larger stage.

8

GENDER, STATUS, AND FEELING

Emotional. 2. *subject to or easily affected by emotion:* **She** is an emotional woman, easily upset by any disturbance.

Cogitation. 1. *meditation, contemplation:* After hours of cogitation **he** came up with a new proposal.
2. *the faculty of thinking:* **She** was not a serious student and seemed to lack the power of cogitation.

— *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*

More emotion management goes on in the families and jobs of the upper classes than in those of the lower classes. That is, in the class system, social conditions conspire to make it more prevalent at the top. In the gender system, on the other hand, the reverse is true: social conditions make it more prevalent, and prevalent in different ways, for those at the bottom—women. In what sense is this so? And why?

Both men and women do emotion work, in private life and at work. In all kinds of ways, men as well as women get into the spirit of the party, try to escape the grip of hopeless love, try to pull themselves out of depression, try to allow grief. But in the whole realm of emotional experience, is emotion work as important for men as it is for women? And is it important in the same ways? I believe that the answer to

both questions is No. The reason, at bottom, is the fact that women in general have far less independent access to money, power, authority, or status in society. They are a subordinate social stratum, and this has four consequences.

First, lacking other 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. (For example, in 1980 only 6 percent of women but 50 percent of men earned over \$15,000 a year.) Thus their capacity to manage feeling and to do “relational” work is for them a more important resource.

Second, emotion work is important in different ways for men and for women. This is because each gender tends to be called on to do different kinds of this work. On the whole, women tend to specialize in the flight attendant side of emotional labor, men in the bill collection side of it. This specialization of emotional labor in the marketplace rests on the different childhood training of the heart that is given to girls and to boys. (“What are little girls made of? Sugar and spice and everything nice. What are little boys made of? Snips and snails and puppy dog tails.”) Moreover, each specialization presents men and women with different emotional tasks. Women are more likely to be presented with the task of mastering anger and aggression in the service of “being nice.” To men, the socially assigned task of aggressing against those that break rules of various sorts creates the private task of mastering fear and vulnerability.

Third, and less noticed, the general subordination of women leaves every individual woman with a weaker “status shield” against the displaced feelings of others. For example, female flight attendants found themselves easier targets for verbal abuse from passengers so that male attendants often found themselves called upon to handle unwarranted aggression against them.

The fourth consequence of the power difference between the sexes is that for each gender a different portion of the

managed heart is enlisted for commercial use. Women more often react to subordination by making defensive use of sexual beauty, charm, and relational skills. For them, it is these capacities that become most vulnerable to commercial exploitation, and so it is these capacities that they are most likely to become estranged from. For male workers in "male" jobs, it is more often the capacity to wield anger and make threats that is delivered over to the company, and so it is this sort of capacity that they are more likely to feel estranged from.

After the great transmutation, then, men and women come to experience emotion work in different ways. In the previous chapter we focused on the social stratum in which emotion work is most prominent—the middle class. Here we shall focus on the gender for which it has the greatest importance—women.

WOMEN AS EMOTION MANAGERS

Middle-class American women, tradition suggests, feel emotion more than men do. The definitions of "emotional" and "cogitation" in the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* reflect a deeply rooted cultural idea. Yet women are also thought to command "feminine wiles," to have the capacity to premeditate a sigh, an outburst of tears, or a flight of joy. In general, they are thought to *manage* expression and feeling not only better but more often than men do. How much the conscious feelings of women and men may differ is an issue I leave aside here.* However, the evidence seems clear that women do *more* emotion managing than men. And because the well-managed feeling has an outside resem-

* Nancy Chodorow, a neo-Freudian theorist, suggests that women are, in fact, more likely to have access to their emotions. With Freud, she argues that in early childhood boys but not girls must relinquish their primary identification with the mother. To achieve this difficult task, the boy (but not the girl) must repress feelings associated with the mother in the difficult effort to establish himself as "not like mother," as a boy. The consequence is a repression of feeling generally. The girl, on the other hand, because she enters a social and sexual category the same as that of her mother, does not have to relinquish identification with her or sacrifice her access to feelings through repression. If this interpretation is valid (and I find it plau-

blance to spontaneous feeling, it is possible to confuse the condition of being more "easily affected by emotion" with the action of willfully managing emotion when the occasion calls for it.

Especially in the American middle class, women tend to manage feeling more because in general they depend on men for money, and one of the various ways of repaying their debt is to do extra emotion work—*especially emotion work that affirms, enhances, and celebrates the well-being and status of others*. When the emotional skills that children learn and practice at home move into the marketplace, the emotional labor of women becomes more prominent because men in general have not been trained to make their emotions a resource and are therefore less likely to develop their capacity for managing feeling.

There is also a difference in the kind of emotion work that men and women tend to do. Many studies have told us that women adapt more to the needs of others and cooperate more than men do.¹ These studies often imply the existence of gender-specific characteristics that are inevitable if not innate.² But do these characteristics simply exist passively in women? Or are they signs of a social work that women *do*—the work of affirming, enhancing, and celebrating the well-being and status of others? I believe that much of the time, the adaptive, cooperative woman is actively working at showing deference. This deference requires her to make an outward display of what Leslie Fiedler has called the "seriously" good girl in her and to support this effort by evoking feelings that make the "nice" display seem natural.* Women who want to put their own feelings less at the service of others must still

sible), we might expect women to be more in touch with their feelings, which are, as a consequence, more available for conscious management. See Chodorow (1980). Men may manage feelings more by subconscious repressing, women more by conscious suppressing.

* Fiedler (1960) suggests that girls are trained to be "seriously" good and to be ashamed of being bad whereas boys are asked to be good in formalistic ways but covertly invited to be ashamed of being "too" good. Oversocialization into "sugar-and-spice" demeanor produces feminine skills in delivering deference.

confront the idea that if they do so, they will be considered less "feminine."

What it takes to be more "adaptive" is suggested in a study of college students by William Kephart (1967). Students were asked: "If a boy or girl had all the other qualities you desire, would you marry this person if you were not in love with him/her?" In response, 64 percent of the men but only 24 percent of the women said No. Most of the women answered that they "did not know." As one put it: "I don't know, if he were that good, maybe I could *bring myself around* to loving him."* In my own study (1975), women more often than men described themselves as "trying to make myself love," "talking myself into not caring," or "trying to convince myself." A content analysis of 260 protocols showed that more women than men (33 percent versus 18 percent) spontaneously used the language of emotion work to describe their emotions. The image of women as "more emotional," more subject to uncontrolled feelings, has also been challenged by a study of 250 students at UCLA, in which only 20 percent of the men but 45 percent of the women said that they deliberately show emotion to get their way.† As one woman put it: "I pout, frown, and say something to make the other person feel bad, such as 'You don't love me, you don't care what happens to me.' I'm not the type to come right out with what I want; I'll usually hint around. It's all hope and a lot of beating around the bush."³

The emotional arts that women have cultivated are analogous to the art of feigning that Lionel Trilling has noted

* Other researchers have found men to have a more "romantic" orientation to love, women a more "realistic" orientation. That is, males may find cultural support for a passive construction of love, for seeing themselves as "falling head over heels," or "walking on air." According to Kephart, "the female is not pushed hither and yon by her romantic compulsions. On the contrary, she seems to have a greater measure of rational control over her romantic inclinations than the male" (1967, p. 473).

† This pattern is also socially reinforced. When women sent direct messages (persuading by logic, reason, or an onslaught of information), they were later rated as *more* aggressive than men who did the same thing (Johnson and Goodchilds 1976, p. 70).

among those whose wishes outdistance their opportunities for class advancement. As for many others of lower status, it has been in the woman's interest to be the better actor.* As the psychologists would say, the techniques of deep acting have unusually high "secondary gains." Yet these skills have long been mislabeled "natural," a part of woman's "being" rather than something of her own making.

Sensitivity to nonverbal communication and to the micro-political significance of feeling gives women something like an ethnic language, which men can speak too, but on the whole less well. It is a language women share offstage in their talk "about feelings." This talk is not, as it is for men offstage, the score-keeping of conquistadors. It is the talk of the artful prey, the language of tips on how to make him want her, how to psyche him out, how to put him on or turn him off. Within the traditional female subculture, subordination at close quarters is understood, especially in adolescence, as a "fact of life." Women accommodate, then, but not passively. They actively adapt feeling to a need or a purpose at hand, and they do it so that it *seems* to express a passive state of agreement, the chance occurrence of coinciding needs. Being becomes a way of doing. Acting is the needed art, and emotion work is the tool.

The emotion work of enhancing the status and well-being of others is a form of what Ivan Illich has called "shadow labor," an unseen effort, which, like housework, does not quite count as labor but is nevertheless crucial to getting other things done. As with doing housework well, the trick is to erase any evidence of effort, to offer only the clean house and the welcoming smile.

We have a simple word for the product of this shadow labor: "nice." Niceness is a necessary and important lubricant to any civil exchange, and men make themselves nice, too. It

* The use of feminine wiles (including flattery) is felt to be a psychopolitical style of the subordinate; it is therefore disapproved of by women who have gained a foothold in the man's world and can afford to disparage what they do not need to use.

keeps the social wheels turning. As one flight attendant said, "I'll make comments like 'Nice jacket you have on'—that sort of thing, something to make them feel good. Or I'll laugh at their jokes. It makes them feel relaxed and amusing." Beyond the smaller niceties are the larger ones of doing a favor, offering a service. Finally, there is the moral or spiritual sense of being seriously nice, in which we embrace the needs of another person as more important than our own.

Each way of being "nice" adds a dimension to deference. Deference is more than the offering of cold respect, the formal bow of submission, the distant smile of politeness; it can also have a warm face and offer gestures small and large that show support for the well-being and status of others.⁴

Almost everyone does the emotion work that produces what we might, broadly speaking, call deference. But women are expected to do more of it. A study by Wikler (1976) comparing male with female university professors found that students expected women professors to be warmer and more supportive than male professors; given these expectations, proportionally more women professors were perceived as cold. In another study, Broverman, Broverman, and Clarkson (1970) asked clinically trained psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers to match various characteristics with "normal adult men" and "normal adult women"; they more often associated "very tactful, very gentle, and very aware of feelings of others" with their ideas of the normal adult woman. In being adaptive, cooperative, and helpful, the woman is on a private stage behind the public stage, and as a consequence she is often seen as less good at arguing, telling jokes, and teaching than she is at expressing appreciation of these activities.* She is the conversational cheerleader. She actively enhances other people—usually

* Celebrating male humor or enhancing male status often involves the use of what Suzanne Langer has called nondiscursive symbols, "symbols which are not verifiable, do not have dictionary meanings or socially defined syntax and order" (Langer 1951, 1967).

men, but also other women to whom she plays woman. The more she seems natural at it, the more her labor does not show as labor, the more successfully it is disguised as the *absence* of other, more prized qualities. As a *woman* she may be praised for out-enhancing the best enhancer, but as a *person* in comparison with comics, teachers, and argument-builders, she usually lives outside the climate of enhancement that men tend to inhabit. Men, of course, pay court to certain other men and women and thus also do the emotion work that keeps deference sincere. The difference between men and women is a difference in the psychological effects of having or not having power.⁵

Racism and sexism share this general pattern, but the two systems differ in the avenues available for the translation of economic inequality into private terms. The white manager and the black factory worker leave work and go home, one to a generally white neighborhood and family and the other to a generally black neighborhood and family. But in the case of women and men, the larger economic inequality is filtered into the intimate daily exchanges between wife and husband. Unlike other subordinates, women seek *primary* ties with a supplier. In marriage, the principle of reciprocity applies to wider arenas of each self: there is more to choose from in how we pay and are paid, and the paying between economically unequal parties goes on morning, noon, and night. The larger inequities find intimate expression.

Wherever it goes, the bargain of wages-for-other-things travels in disguise. Marriage both bridges and obscures the gap between the resources available to men and those available to women.⁶ Because men and women do try to love one another—to cooperate in making love, making babies, and making a life together—the very closeness of the bond they accept calls for some disguise of subordination. There will be talk in the "we" mode, joint bank accounts and joint decisions, and the idea among women that they are equal in the ways that "really count." But underlying this pattern will be *different*

potential futures outside the marriage and the effect of that on the patterning of life.* The woman may thus become especially assertive about certain secondary decisions, or especially active in certain limited domains, in order to experience a sense of equality that is missing from the overall relationship.

Women who understand their ultimate disadvantage and feel that their position cannot change may jealously guard the covertness of their traditional emotional resources, in the understandable fear that if the secret were told, their immediate situation would get worse. For to confess that their social charms are the product of secret work might make them less valuable, just as the sexual revolution has made sexual contact less "valuable" by lowering its bargaining power without promoting the advance of women into better-paying jobs. In fact, of course, when we redefine "adaptability" and "cooperativeness" as a form of shadow labor, we are pointing to a hidden cost for which some recompense is due and suggesting that a general reordering of female-male relationships is desirable.

There is one further reason why women may offer more emotion work of this sort than men: more women at all class levels do unpaid labor of a highly interpersonal sort. They nurture, manage, and befriend children. More "adaptive" and "cooperative," they address themselves better to the needs of those who are not yet able to adapt and cooperate much themselves. Then, according to Jourard (1968), because they are seen as members of the category from which mothers come, women in general are asked to look out for psychological needs more than men are. The world turns to women for mothering, and this fact silently attaches itself to many a job description.

* Zick Rubin's study of young men and women in love relationships (generally middle-class persons of about the same age) found that the women tended to admire their male loved ones more than they were, in turn, admired by them. The women also felt "more like" their loved ones than the men did. (See Rubin 1970; Reiss 1960.)

WOMEN AT WORK

With the growth of large organizations calling for skills in personal relations, the womanly art of status enhancement and the emotion work that it requires has been made more public, more systematized, and more standardized. It is performed by largely middle-class women in largely public-contact jobs. As indicated in Chapter Seven (and Appendix C), jobs involving emotional labor comprise over a third of all jobs. But they form only a *quarter* of all jobs that men do, and over *half* of all jobs that women do.

Many of the jobs that call for public contact also call for giving service to the public. Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, in *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, comment on how people tend to rank service jobs in relation to other kinds of jobs: "At the bottom end of the scale are found not factory jobs but service jobs where the individual has to perform personally for someone else. A bartender is listed below a coal miner, a taxi driver below a truck driver; we believe this occurs because their functions *are felt to be more dependent on and more at the mercy of others*" [my emphasis].⁷ Because there are more women than men in service jobs (21 percent compared with 9 percent), there are "hidden injuries" of gender attached to those of class.

Once women are at work in public-contact jobs, a new pattern unfolds: they receive less basic deference. That is, although some women are still elbow-guided through doors, chauffeured in cars, and protected from rain puddles, they are not shielded from one fundamental consequence of their lower status: their feelings are accorded less weight than the feelings of men.

As a result of this status effect, flight attending is one sort of job for a woman and another sort of job for a man. For a man the principal hidden task is to maintain his identity as a man in a "woman's occupation" and occasionally to cope with tough passengers "for" female flight attendants. For a woman, the principal hidden task is to deal with the status

effect: the absence of a social shield against the displaced anger and frustration of passengers.

How, then, does a woman's lower status influence how she is treated by others? More basically, what is the prior link between status and the treatment of feeling? High-status people tend to enjoy the privilege of having their feelings noticed and considered important. The lower one's status, the more one's feelings are not noticed or treated as inconsequential. H. E. Dale, in *The Higher Civil Service of Great Britain*, reports the existence of a "doctrine of feelings":

The doctrine of feelings was expounded to me many years ago by a very eminent civil servant. . . . He explained that the importance of feelings varies in close correspondence with the importance of the person who feels. If the public interest requires that a junior clerk should be removed from his post, no regard need be paid to his feelings; if it is the case of an assistant secretary, they must be carefully considered, within reason; if it is a permanent secretary, feelings are a principal element in the situation, and only imperative public interest can override their requirements.⁸

Working women are to working men as junior clerks are to permanent secretaries. Between executive and secretary, doctor and nurse, psychiatrist and social worker, dentist and dental assistant, a power difference is reflected as a gender difference. The "doctrine of feelings" is another double standard between the two sexes.*

The feelings of the lower-status party may be discounted in two ways: by considering them rational but unimportant or by considering them irrational and hence dismissable. An article entitled "On Aggression in Politics: Are Women Judged by a Double Standard?" presented the results of a survey of fe-

* The code of chivalry is said to require protection of the weaker by the stronger. Yet a boss may bring flowers to his secretary or open the door for her only to make up for the fact that he gets openly angry at her more often than he does at a male equal or superior, and more often than she does at him. The flowers symbolize redress, even as they obscure the basic maldistribution of respect and its psychic cost.

male politicians. All those surveyed said they believed there was an affective double standard. As Frances Farenthold, the president of Wells College in Aurora, New York, put it: "You certainly see to it that you don't throw any tantrums. Henry Kissinger can have his scenes—remember the way he acted in Salzburg? But for women, we're still in the stage that if you don't hold in your emotions, you're pegged as emotional, unstable, and all those terms that have always been used to describe women."⁹ These women in public life were agreed on the following points. When a man expresses anger, it is deemed "rational" or understandable anger, anger that indicates not weakness of character but deeply held conviction. When women express an equivalent degree of anger, it is more likely to be interpreted as a sign of personal instability. It is believed that women are more emotional, and this very belief is used to invalidate their feelings. That is, the women's feelings are seen not as a response to real events but as reflections of themselves as "emotional" women.

Here we discover a corollary of the "doctrine of feelings": the lower our status, the more our manner of seeing and feeling is subject to being discredited, and the less believable it becomes.¹⁰ An "irrational" feeling is the twin of an invalidated perception. A person of lower status has a weaker claim to the right to define what is going on; less trust is placed in her judgments; and less respect is accorded to what she feels. Relatively speaking, it more often becomes the burden of women, as with other lower-status persons, to uphold a minority viewpoint, a discredited opinion.

Medical responses to male and female illness provide a case in point. One study of how doctors respond to the physical complaints of back pain, headache, dizziness, chest pain, and fatigue—symptoms for which a doctor must take the patient's word—showed that among fifty-two married couples, the complaints of the husbands elicited more medical response than those of the wives. The authors conclude: "The data may bear out . . . that the physicians . . . tend to

take illness more seriously in men than in women.”* Another study of physician interactions with 184 male and 130 female patients concluded that “doctors were more likely to consider the psychological component of the patient’s illness important when the patient was a woman.”¹¹ The female’s assertion that she was physically sick was more likely to be invalidated as something “she just imagined,” something “subjective,” not a response to anything real.

To make up for either way of weighing the feelings of the two sexes unequally, many women urge their feelings forward, trying to express them with more force, so as to get them treated with seriousness. But from there the spiral moves down. For the harder women try to oppose the “doctrine of feeling” by expressing their feelings more, the more they come to fit the image awaiting them as “emotional.” Their efforts are discounted as one more example of emotionalism. The only way to counter the doctrine of feelings is to eliminate the more fundamental tie between gender and status.¹²

THE STATUS SHIELD AT WORK

Given this relation between status and the treatment of feeling, it follows that persons in low-status categories—women, people of color, children—lack a status shield against poorer treatment of their feelings. This simple fact has the power to utterly transform the content of a job. The job of flight attendant, for example, is not the *same job* for a woman as it is for a man. A day’s accumulation of passenger abuse for a woman differs from a day’s accumulation of it for a man. Women tend to be more exposed than men to rude or surly speech, to tirades against the service, the airline, and airplanes in general.

* More women than men go to doctors, and this might seem to explain why doctors take them less seriously. But here it is hard to tell cause from effect, for if a woman’s complaints are not taken seriously, she may have to make several visits to doctors before a remedy is found (Armitage et al. 1979).

As the company’s main shock absorbers against “mishandled” passengers, their own feelings are more frequently subjected to rough treatment. In addition, a day’s exposure to people who resist authority in women is a different experience for a woman than it is for a man. Because her gender is accorded lower status, a woman’s shield against abuse is weaker, and the importance of what she herself might be feeling—when faced with blame for an airline delay, for example—is correspondingly reduced. Thus the job for a man differs in essential ways from the same job for a woman.

In this respect, it is a disadvantage to be a woman—as 85 percent of all flight attendants are. And in this case, they are not simply women in the biological sense. They are also a highly visible distillation of middle-class American notions of femininity. They symbolize Woman. Insofar as the category “female” is mentally associated with having less status and authority, female flight attendants are more readily classified as “really” female than other females are. And as a result their emotional lives are even less protected by the status shield.

More than female accountants, bus drivers, or gardeners, female flight attendants mingle with people who expect them to *enact* two leading roles of Womanhood: the loving wife and mother (serving food, tending the needs of others) and the glamorous “career woman” (dressed to be seen, in contact with strange men, professional and controlled in manner, and literally very far from home). They do the job of symbolizing the transfer of homespun femininity into the impersonal marketplace, announcing, in effect, “I work in the public eye, but I’m still a woman at heart.”

Passengers borrow their expectations about gender biographies from home and from the wider culture and then base their demands on this borrowing. The different fictive biographies they attribute to male and female workers make sense out of what they expect to receive in the currency of caretaking and authority. One male flight attendant noted:

They always ask about my work plans. "Why are you doing this?" That's one question we get all the time from passengers. "Are you planning to go into management?" Most guys come in expecting to do it for a year or so and see how they like it, but we keep getting asked about the management training program. I don't know any guy that's gone into management from here.*

In contrast, a female flight attendant said:

Men ask me why I'm not married. They don't ask the guys that. Or else passengers will say, "Oh, when you have kids, you'll quit this job. I know you will." And I say, "Well, no, I'm not going to have kids." "Oh yes you will," they say. "No I'm not," I say, and I don't want to get more personal than that. They may expect me to have kids because of my gender, but I'm not, no matter what they say.

If a female flight attendant is seen as a protomother, then it is natural that the work of nurturing should fall to her. As one female attendant said: "The guys bow out of it more and we pick up the slack. I mean the handling of babies, the handling of children, the coddling of the old folks. The guys don't get involved in that quite as much." Confirming this, one male flight attendant noted casually, "Nine times out of ten, when I go out of my way to talk, it will be to attractive gal passengers." In this regard, females generally appreciated gay male flight attendants who, while trying deftly to sidestep the biography test, still gravitate more toward nurturing work than straight males are reputed to do.

Gender makes two jobs out of one in yet another sense. Females are asked more often than males to appreciate

* With the influx of more working-class male passengers during the recessionary period of lower prices, the questions addressed to male flight attendants changed. As one of them said, "Now they don't ask me why I'm doing this. They ask, 'How did you get the job?'" Ironically, more males than females have come to this work with the attitude of "jobbers," interested primarily in the leisure time and good pay, and willing to try it for a few years before moving on. They report a more traditionally "female" job motivation than the women, for whom flight attending has been an honorable and high-paying career.

jokes, listen to stories, and give psychological advice. Female specialization in these offerings takes on meaning only in light of the fact that flight attendants of both sexes are required to be both deferential and authoritative; they have to be able to appreciate a joke nicely, but they must also be firm in enforcing the rules about oversized luggage. But because more deference is generally expected from a woman, she has a weaker grasp on passenger respect for her authority and a harder time enforcing rules.

In fact, passengers generally assume that men have *more* authority than women and that men exercise authority *over* women. For males in the corporate world to whom air travel is a way of life, this assumption has more than a distant relation to fact. As one flight attendant put it: "Say you've got a businessman sitting over there in aisle five. He's got a wife who takes his suit to the cleaners and makes the hors d'oeuvres for his business guests. He's got an executive secretary with horn-rimmed glasses who types 140 million words a minute and knows more about his airline ticket than he does. There's no woman in his life over him." This assumption of male authority allows ordinary twenty-year-old male flight attendants to be mistaken for the "managers" or "superintendents" of older female flight attendants. A uniformed male among women, passengers assume, must have authority over women. In fact, because males were excluded from this job until after a long "discrimination" suit in the mid-1960s and few were hired until the early 1970s, most male flight attendants are younger and have less seniority than most female attendants.

The assumption of male authority has two results. First, authority, like status, acts as a shield against scapegoating. Since the women workers on the plane were thought to have less authority and therefore less status, they were more susceptible to scapegoating. When the plane was late, the steaks gone, or the ice out, frustrations were vented more openly

toward female workers. Females were expected to “take it” better, it being more their role to absorb an expression of displeasure and less their role to put a stop to it.

In addition, both male and female workers adapted to this fictional redistribution of authority. Both, in different ways, made it more real. Male flight attendants tended to react to passengers *as if they had more authority* than they really did.* This made them less tolerant of abuse and firmer in handling it. They conveyed the message that *as authorities* they expected compliance without loud complaint. Passengers sensing this message were discouraged from pursuing complaints and stopped sooner. Female flight attendants, on the other hand, assuming that passengers would honor their authority less, used more tactful and deferential means of handling abuse. They were more deferential toward male passengers (from whom they expected less respect) than toward female passengers (whose own fund of respect was expected to be lower). And they were less successful in preventing the escalation of abuse. As one male flight attendant observed: “I think the gals tend to get more intimidated if a man is crabby at them than if a woman is.”

Some workers understood this as merely a difference of style. As one woman reflected:

The guys have a low level of tolerance and their own male way of asserting themselves with the passenger that I'm not able to use. I told a guy who had a piece of luggage in front of him that wouldn't fit under the seat, I told him, “It won't fit, we'll have to do something with it.” He came back with, “Oh, but it's been here the whole trip, I've had it with me all the time, blah, blah, blah.” He gave me some guff. I thought to myself, I'll finish this later, I'll walk away right now. I intended to come back to him. A

* The management of American Airlines objected to a union request that men be allowed to wear short-sleeved shirts on warm days, arguing that such shirts “lacked authority.” As one female union representative quipped at a union meeting, “But since only male flight attendants have authority anyway, why should it matter?”

flying partner of mine, a young man, came by this passenger, without knowing about our conversation, and said to him, “Sir, that bag is too big for your seat. We're going to have to take it away.” “Oh, here you are,” the guy says, and he hands it over to him. . . . You don't see the male flight attendants being physically abused or verbally abused nearly as much as we are.

The females' supposed “higher tolerance for abuse” amounted to a combination of higher exposure to it and less ammunition—in the currency of respect—to use against it.

This pattern set in motion another one: female workers often went to their male co-workers to get them to “cast a heavier glance.” As one woman who had resigned herself to this explained wearily: “I used to fight it and assert myself. Now I'm just too overworked. It's simpler to just go get the male purser. One look at him and the troublemaker shuts up. Ultimately it comes down to the fact that I don't have time for a big confrontation. The job is so stressful these days, you don't go out of your way to make it more stressful. A look from a male carries more weight.” Thus the greater the respect males could command, the more they were called on to claim it.

This only increased the amount of deference that male workers felt their female co-workers owed them, and women found it harder to supervise junior males than females.* One young male attendant said that certain conditions had to be met—and deference offered—before he would obey a woman's orders: “If it's an order without a human element to it, then I'll balk. I think sometimes it's a little easier for a man

* Gay males apparently did not fit this general pattern. Although they were treated by the public as males and thus commanded more respect, they did not use this fact in the same way in their relations with female co-workers. Perhaps their anticipation of company and public prejudice against homosexuality led them to adjust the value of their respect currency to that of their female co-workers. This considerably eased relations between them and female workers. One woman worker said: “The gay stewards are great. If Pan Am had any sense, it would *prefer* to hire them.”

to be an authority figure and command respect and cooperation. I think it depends on how the gal handles herself. If she doesn't have much confidence or if she goes the other way and gets puffed out of shape, then in that case I think she could have more trouble with the stewards *than with the gals*" [my emphasis]. Workers tended to agree that females took orders better than males, no matter how "puffed out of shape" the attendant in charge might be, and that women in charge had to be nicer in exercising their authority than men did.

This attitude toward status and authority inspired compensatory reactions among some female workers. One response was to adopt the crisply cheerful but no-nonsense style of a Cub Scout den mother—a model of female authority borrowed from domestic life and used here to make it acceptable for women to tell adult men what to do. In this way a woman might avoid being criticized as "bossy" or "puffed out of shape" by placing her behavior within the boundaries of the gender expectations of passengers and co-workers.

Another response to displaced anger and challenged authority was to make small tokens of respect a matter of great concern. Terms of address, for example, were seen as an indicator of status, a promise of the right to politeness which those deprived of status unfortunately lack. The term, "girl," for example, was recognized by female workers as the moral equivalent of calling black men "boys." Although in private and among themselves, the women flight attendants I knew usually called themselves "girls," many were opposed to the use of the term in principle.* They saw it not only as a question of social or moral importance but as a *practical matter*. To

* The other side of being called a "girl" was not being allowed, socially speaking, to age. Even women in their thirties were occasionally called "granny" or subjected to within-earshot remarks such as "Isn't she about ready for retirement?" As one woman in her mid-thirties noted: "There is definitely a difference, oh yes. The men take it for granted that they can work until sixty or sixty-five. The women work like dogs just to prove they can still do the job. And then they have to fight the granny remarks."

be addressed as a "girl" was to be subjected to more on-the-job stress. The order, "Girl, get me some cream" has a different effect than the request "Oh miss, could I please have some cream?" And if the cream has run out because the commissary didn't provide enough, it will be the "girls" who get the direct expressions of disappointment, exasperation, and blame. Tokens of respect can be exchanged to make a bargain: "I'll manage my unpleasant feelings for you if you'll manage yours for me." When outrageously rude people occasionally enter a plane, it reminds all concerned why the flimsy status shield against abuse is worth struggling over.

Schooled in emotion management at home, women have entered in disproportionate numbers those jobs that call for emotional labor outside the home. Once they enter the marketplace, a certain social logic unfolds. Because of the division of labor in the society at large, women *in any particular job* are assigned lower status and less authority than men. As a result, they lack a shield against the "doctrine of feelings." Much more often than men, they become the complaint department, the ones to whom dissatisfaction is fearlessly expressed. Their own feelings tend to be treated as less important. In ways that the advertising smiles obscure, the job has different contents for women and men.¹³

ESTRANGEMENT FROM SEXUAL IDENTITY

Regardless of gender, the job poses problems of identity. What is my work role and what is "me"? How can I do deep acting without "feeling phony" and losing self-esteem? How can I redefine the job as "illusion making" without becoming cynical? (See Chapter Six.)

But there are other psychological issues a flight attendant faces if she is a woman. In response to her relative lack of power and her exposure to the "doctrine of feelings," she may seek to improve her position by making use of two traditionally "feminine" qualities—those of the supportive

mother and those of the sexually desirable mate. Thus, some women *are* motherly; they support and enhance the well-being and status of others. But in *being* motherly, they may also *act* motherly and may sometimes experience themselves using the motherly act to win regard from others. In the same way, some women are sexually attractive and may act in ways that are sexually alluring. For example, one flight attendant who played the sexual queen—swaying slowly down the aisle with exquisitely understated suggestiveness—described herself as using her sexual attractiveness to secure interest and favors from male passengers. In each case, the woman is using a feminine quality for private purposes. But it is also true, for the flight attendant, that both “motherly” behavior and a “sexy” look and manner are partly an achievement of corporate engineering—a result of the company’s emphasis on the weight and (former) age requirements, grooming classes, and letters from passengers regarding the looks and demeanor of flight attendants. In its training and supervisory roles, the company may play the part of the protective duenna. But in its commercial role as an advertiser of sexy and glamorous service, it acts more like a backstage matchmaker. Some early United Airlines ads said, “And she might even make a good wife.” The company, of course, has always maintained that it does not meddle in personal affairs.

Thus the two ways in which women traditionally try to improve their lot—by using their motherly capacity to enhance the status and well-being of others, and by using their sexual attractiveness—have come under company management. Most flight attendants I spoke with agreed that companies used and attached profit to these qualities.

What is the result? On the status-enhancement side, some women feel estranged from the role of woman they play for the company. On the sexual side, Melanie Matthews, a sex therapist who had treated some fifty flight attendants for

“loss of sexual interest” and “preorgasmic problems,” had this to say:

The patients I have treated who have been flight attendants tend to fit a certain pattern. They tend to have been “good” girls when they were young—nurturing and considerate to others. Then the company gets them while they are young and uses those qualities further. These women don’t ever get the chance to decide who they are, and this shows up in their sexual life. They play the part of the ultra-female, of someone who takes an interest in others, and they don’t get the chance to explore the other sides of their character and to discover their own needs, sexual or otherwise. Some of them have been so fixed on pleasing others that while they don’t dislike men, they don’t actively like them either. It’s not so much that they are preorgasmic as that they are prerelational in this one sense. They hold onto their orgasmic potential as one of the few parts of themselves that someone else doesn’t possess.

Freud generally found sexual stories beneath social ones, but there are also social stories beneath sexual ones. The social story here concerns young women who want to please (and who work for companies that capitalize on this characteristic) while they also want to keep a part of themselves independent of this desire. Their sexual problems could be considered a prepolitical form of protest against the overextension and overuse of their traditional femininity. This form of protest, this holding onto something so intimate as “mine,” suggests that vast territories of the self may have been relinquished as “not mine.” The self we define as “real” is pushed further and further into a corner as more and more of its expressions are sensed as artifice.

Estrangement from aspects of oneself are, in one light, a means of defense. On the job, the acceptance of a division between the “real” self and the self in a company uniform is often a way to avoid stress, a wise realization, a saving grace. But this solution also poses serious problems. For in dividing

up our sense of self, in order to save the “real” self from unwelcome intrusions, we necessarily relinquish a healthy sense of wholeness. We come to accept as normal the tension we feel between our “real” and our “on-stage” selves.

More women than men go into public-contact work and especially into work in which status enhancement is the essential social-psychological task. In some jobs, such as that of the flight attendant, women may perform this task by playing the Woman. Such women are more vulnerable, on this account, to feeling estranged from their capacity to perform and enjoy two traditional feminine roles—offering status enhancement and sexual attractiveness to others. These capacities are now under corporate as well as personal management.

Perhaps this realization accounts for the laughter at a joke I heard surreptitiously passed around the Delta Training Office, as if for an audience of insiders. It went like this: A male passenger came across a woman flight attendant seated in the galley, legs apart, elbows on knees, her chin resting in one hand and a lighted cigarette in the other—held between thumb and forefinger. “Why are you holding your cigarette like that?” the man asked. Without looking up or smiling, the woman took another puff and said, “If I had balls, I’d be driving this plane.” Inside the feminine uniform and feminine “act” was a would-be man. It was an estrangement joke, a poignant behind-the-scenes protest at a commercial logic that standardizes and trivializes the dignity of women.

9

THE SEARCH
FOR AUTHENTICITY

In a social system animated by competition for property, the human personality was metamorphosed into a form of capital. Here it was rational to invest oneself only in properties that would produce the highest return. Personal feeling was a handicap since it distracted the individual from calculating his best interest and might pull him along economically counterproductive paths.

—Rousseau (Berman’s paraphrase)

When Jean-Jacques Rousseau observed that personality was becoming a form of capital he was writing about eighteenth-century Paris, long before there were stewardess training schools and long before the arts of bill collecting were standardized and mass produced.¹ If Rousseau could sign on as a flight attendant for Delta Airlines in the second half of the twentieth century, he would doubtless be interested in learning just *whose* capital a worker’s feelings are and just *who* is putting this capital to work. He would certainly see that although the individual personality remains a “medium of competition,” the competition is no longer confined to individuals. Institutional purposes are now tied to the workers’ psychological arts. It is not simply individuals who manage their feelings in order to do a job; whole organizations have entered the game. The emotion management that sustains the smile on Delta Airlines competes with the emotion man-