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Privileged Emotion Managers: The Case of Actors*

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Theatre¹ provides a unique set of conditions for the management of emotions. Drawing on participant observation from one repertory theater, three university productions, and interviews with stage actors, directors, and acting instructors, I conceptualize actors as privileged emotion managers. Actors access structural resources that enable their ability to manage feelings onstage. Theatre's division of labor, the rehearsal process, and formal training give actors important advantages in managing emotions compared to many other social settings, and demonstrate structural recognition of and support for feeling management. These structures outsource some of an actor's emotion management and provide a set of institutionally prescribed strategies that actors use to manage feelings during a production.

The attempts people make to shape how they feel is by now a well-known and well-studied topic in sociology. Scholars have looked at feeling management in many social roles and contexts: flight attendants (Hochschild 1983; Bolton and Boyd 2003), rescue workers (Lois 2001), and wheel-chair users (Cahill and Eggleston 1994); law firms (Pierce 1995) and support groups (Francis 1997). Sociologists have revealed how social structure constrains management. This important theoretical contribution uncovers the depths of social control. Yet in focusing on constraint, we fail to consider how social structure facilitates feeling management.

My goal is to broaden how sociologists of emotions conceptualize the relationship between social structure and feeling management through a case study of novice and semi-professional stage actors. Emotion management is a critical aspect of the work actors do in rehearsal and onstage, be it the suppression of pre-performance anxiety and other feelings

not associated with a role, or the evocation of emotion in a particular scene. This management is not done in a system of rigid constraint, but in a highly resourced and supported setting. I conceptualize actors as members of a particular type of emotion manager, what I will refer to as *privileged emotion managers*. I argue that the structural resources and institutional support available to actors in my field sites are defining characteristics of this privileged status.

BACKGROUND

The theoretical framework for understanding the manipulation of emotion and the substantive interest in structural constraint are rooted in Arlie Hochschild's early work (1979, 1983). Hochschild uses the terms *feeling management* and *emotion management* to refer broadly to those attempts to regulate how we feel, regardless of context ([1983] 2003).² Management is guided by *feeling rules*, social norms embedded in everyday life that specify how we should feel (1983). Often we only

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¹ In this paper, I use *theater* to refer to the physical space in which stage performances occur, and *theatre* as an umbrella term to refer to the artistic activity and art worlds associated with the production of a stage performance.

² While Hochschild states that emotion work and emotion management are synonymous in *The Managed Heart* (1983: 7f), she uses the latter term to describe the management of feeling in both private and public contexts. She further distinguishes between public emotional labor and private emotion work, a distinction I do not make in this paper. The feeling management done by Bay Rep and the University Players demonstrated qualities associated with both work and labor, and a discussion of the blurring of these categories is beyond the scope of this paper.

become aware of these rules when: 1) we experience a disjuncture between what we feel and what we think we should feel; or 2) someone or something—a friend, our boss, a commercial—indicates how we should feel in a particular situation.

Actors and Feeling Management

Surprisingly, actors' feeling management and the conditions under which this work occurs have not been studied by sociologists, even though acting theorist Constantine Stanislavsky's (1948) early work played an important role in Hochschild's formulation of the managed heart. Many sociologists take their cue from Hochschild who separates the case of actors' emotion management from her analysis because performance and illusion are explicit and socially acceptable (if not desirable) in theatre (1983). The neglect may also be a part of a broader historical trend, at least in American sociology, to distance the discipline from the arts in an attempt to legitimate sociology as a social science (Zolberg 1997). Acting's art status distinguishes the feeling management actors do from the management done by others—for example, in the social allowances made for illusion in performance. But art is also work, or the accomplishment of a particular set of tasks (Hughes 1958), and involves common social processes and the coordination of a number of individuals (Becker 1982). The idea of art as work, then, suggests that studying actors' feeling management should yield insight on the emotion management done in other aspects of social life.

The Emotional Proletariat and Privileged Emotion Managers

Hochschild is sensitive to the social benefits of feeling rules and the work done to meet them. Her work gives greater empirical attention, however, to the costs associated with feeling management. She is particularly critical of organizational attempts to colonize the heart through the control of feeling rules. *The Managed Heart* (1983) offers a compelling argument that the struggle for control over workers' feelings will only increase with the expanding American service economy. It is

here that subsequent interest in structural limitations on emotion finds its seeds.

A significant amount of the work done on feeling management focuses on emotional labor. These scholars are particularly concerned with the effects of commercialization on emotion management, and approach this question in one of two ways: 1) qualitative case studies that examine how emotional labor is embedded within a particular occupational setting; and 2) quantitative analyses that explore how the associated costs converge or vary across occupations.³

Interest in commercialization and the formalization of feeling rules at work has led researchers to focus on what MacDonald and Sirianni (1996) call the *emotional proletariat*, workers that do interactive, front-line service and paraprofessional work. This includes insurance agents and fast-food employees (Leidner 1993, 1999); front-line workers in the health and banking industries (Bulan, Erickson, and Wharton 1997); care assistant workers (Trewick 1996); paralegals (Pierce 1995); bill collectors (Sutton 1991); waitresses (Paules 1991); store clerks (Rafaeli and Sutton 1990; Rafaeli 1989); and Disneyland park attendants (Van Maanen and Kunda 1989). These occupations demand high levels of interaction between workers and customers/clients. Workers are the public face of the company, and as such are subject to strict organizational feeling rules imposed by service organizations; these organizations have a vested interest in reducing their dependence on workers' skill through the routinization of scripts and management (Leidner 1993). Workers are also supervised by management and consumers to ensure that feeling rules are met (MacDonald and Sirianni 1996).

MacDonald and Sirianni (1996) compare the emotional proletariat to managers and professionals, whose feeling rules are collectively defined and whose emotional labor is more self-directed than organizationally monitored. Actors share the relative autonomy of professional or managerial feeling management

³ See Steinberg and Figart (1999) for a more extensive mapping of the emotional labor literature.

compared to the emotional proletariat. This autonomy is one of the characteristics of privileged emotion managers, but privileged status is also characterized by the amount of resources available to manage emotions. Autonomy and resources indicate when feeling management is legitimated by social institutions and its practitioners afforded greater status.

It is important to note that privileged status among emotion managers is relative, one based on comparison between groups. Professionals with office managers may have a greater status when compared to sales clerks, but lower status than actors, who have access to even more structural resources like rehearsal time and formal training on how to manage their feelings. There is also a difference in the types of resources available. Some are institutionally provided and protected, where norms and rules guarantee access and control for certain groups of people within the institution. "Mothering" paralegals, an important part of the social structure of law firms, manage others emotions at work (Pierce 1995) and are therefore an often unacknowledged institutional resource available to lawyers. Other resources are informal, such as a social network that allows venting (Hochschild 1983) or collegial humor (Martin 1999; Smith and Kleinman 1989) to manage stress and anxiety.

The type and amount of available resources in a social setting influences the strategies people use to do emotion management. I use the term *strategy* to emphasize people's active engagement with social structure (Lofland 1976).⁴ Feeling management is not a passive activity. People work to suppress and evoke emotions to meet feeling rules. This work is done using personal and structural resources. Conceptualizing these actions as strategies allows us to link individual behavior to social structure and make some degree of agency explicit. Depending on what resources are available and used, some strategies will be institutionally prescribed or sanctioned, while

others will be informally developed by people in a social setting.

Institutional resources and prescribed strategies offer more privileged status. They recognize the feeling management done and provide greater access and control over the materials needed to produce an emotional performance. In this sense, actors exemplify privileged emotion managers because, unlike any other social setting, the structure of theatre is primarily intended to facilitate an actor's performance. In fact, the abundance of resources onstage compared to other social spaces arguably makes actors the most privileged of the privileged emotion managers and an ideal case to study these dynamics. The institutional resources and prescribed strategies I discuss are not an exhaustive list, but a starting point to reconsider other feeling management, as in the case of mortuary science students (Cahill 1999); lawyers (Bogoch 1997; Pierce 1995); and managers and other professionals (MacDonald and Sirianni 1996).

METHODS

My discussion of the managed heart onstage comes from field work conducted in two acting classes, a directing class, and four performances over two years. I draw on over one thousand hours of field work, seven semi-structured interviews, and numerous informal conversations with actors, directors, and acting instructors with varying degrees of experience. I began my fieldwork in acting classes at a public university in Northern California, which I will refer to as Northern California University. I also acted in three productions with the University Players: *Drinking Companion* (Ayckbourn), *The Tempest* (Shakespeare), and *The Laramie Project* (Kaufman). The social network I built there eventually led to an opportunity to do a semi-professional, paid performance of *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare) at Bay Rep, a theater in the Northern Bay Area.

The University Players and Bay Rep are not representative of all U.S. theatre companies, which limits my ability to broadly discuss the relationship between the social structure of theatre and actors' feeling

⁴ Lois 2001, Cahill and Eggleston 1994, and Smith and Kleinman 1989 also refer to the ways people do feeling management as strategies.

management. These sites, however, offer important advantages for research. The social structure of theatre and the role of emotions in performance are made explicit at the university as instructors prepare students for a profession in theatre. Bay Rep and the University Players also enjoy more time in the process of creation of work (but shorter production runs) than most commercial theaters allow. This provided a prolonged opportunity to observe and engage in the acting process while I was in the field. Finally, these were more realistic sites for me to do highly participatory fieldwork than commercial or unionized theaters, given my limited training, experience, and lack of union membership.

The way these actors discuss feeling management is closely tied to the social structure of contemporary American theatre. Social, technological, and professional demands shape this structure, which creates a space where feeling management strategies can be overtly developed, practiced, and discussed. This relationship between social setting and social action is familiar in sociology (Lofland 1976). Examining setting allows me to identify the qualities that make actors' emotion management unique and also deconstruct these qualities to find the generic social processes at work. Understanding these processes makes it possible to discuss how actors manage their emotions onstage in a way that is meaningful outside of the theater. The resources and strategies actors use are therefore topically interesting and theoretically useful.

This paper draws primarily on participant observation, not supplemented with a large number of systematic interviews, which limits the claims I can make about what emotions actors manage during a production, the feeling rules actors perceive, and the motivation that drives any feeling management. Actors are human, not robots, so it seems reasonable to presume that they must manage their emotions at some point during a production. The numerous accounts by actors describing their experiences with stage fright (Lahr 2006) coupled with the fact that Stanislavski's early work on deep acting continues to be taught supports this assumption. There are a number of acting

theories, however, that discourage the kind of deep acting that Stanislavski discusses in his early work, so it would be false to assume that all actors in all productions are engaged in evoking emotions for a role while onstage. The claims I can make about actors' feeling management are grounded in the concrete behaviors and informal comments made by actors in my field sites.

STRUCTURAL RESOURCES IN THEATRE

Labeling actors as privileged emotion managers highlights the everyday social arrangements in which actors are embedded. These arrangements act as resources that assist actors' attempts to evoke and suppress feelings. I identify three such resources: theatre's division of labor, the rehearsal process, and formal training. I briefly describe each of these, and discuss their role in actors' feeling management.

Division of Labor

Theatre is one of the few overtly social arts in its creation. Most performances require the coordination and collaboration of multiple people. This is made plain to the audience in the playbill, which we can also think of here as the roster for a production's performance team (Goffman 1959; Hochschild 1983). I consider some of the available positions on the team and the assignment of tasks to these positions as a resource in actors' emotion management.

Bay Rep and University Player productions are characterized by an important division of labor. Actors, engaged in *primary* feeling management, focused on their own emotions, are responsible for only a few aspects of the show. They rely on ushers, house managers, stage managers, dressers, crew, and directors to oversee many others parts of the production. People in these roles, responsible for managing many offstage sources of emotion and distraction, are engaged in *secondary* feeling management, the management of others' emotions. These rarely acknowledged layers of *emotional buffers* structurally enable actors' feeling management.

The house manager and ushers reinforce the boundary between onstage and offstage,

the actor and audience, the illusion and real life. Seating confusion, ticket frustration, and public contact, all potential distractions, are fielded by the house manager and her team. With these tasks outsourced to others, actors can give more focus to their performance. They do not have to manage the stress that comes with these pre-show interactions and distraction.

While the house manager and ushers act as emotional buffers in front of the stage, dressers, crew, and stage managers are backstage emotional buffers, facilitating actors' emotion management by handling props, sets, costumes, and sometimes cues. This was made explicit to a group of University Players when one production manager announced, "Company members, you are not allowed in the prop cabinet. If there is something missing onstage, do not go and get it yourself. Tell one of the crew and they will get it for you. This is just like a professional company." The implicit message here is: the professional thing for you to do as actors is to let us, the crew, know what is technically wrong so that we can fix it in the future. Chad⁵—student, University Players' company manager, and experienced crew member—said quite candidly, "My job [on crew] is to make your job [as an actor] easier." The University Players learn to outsource the stress and distraction of managing technical aspects of a show to the crew, who become another emotional buffer.

Crew's role in a smooth performance was often unacknowledged in my sites. Recognition frequently came when something failed, when crew members did not manage technical aspects of the show. As Tatiana, a *Tempest* cast member, explained:

If you have a prop master that doesn't have the prop set in the right place at the right time, that is going to hurt your performance. It's going to throw off that moment. All of a sudden that puts a stress on the actor that they shouldn't have to worry about. It's an anxiety thing. (Pause) You're not thinking about your performance anymore . . . you're thinking about how to make sure that the audience doesn't know [it] happened.

⁵ All names in this paper are pseudonyms, most chosen by the people they represent.

Tatiana describes how actors often become aware of the crew's role as an emotional buffer when that role goes unfulfilled. When props are not set or a lighting cue goes awry, actors can experience anxiety that distracts their focus and draws them out of the performance. Some actors are better at managing this stress, and are able to maintain their performance, while others blamed what they saw as an "off" performance on prop, set, cue, or wardrobe malfunctions. But when crew did their job, which was most of the time in my fieldwork, they helped insulate actors from offstage emotion like anxiety.

Coordinating crew, dressers, and actors is the stage manager, who orchestrates the technical aspects of a production and when necessary deals with the crises that arise on- and offstage during a show. When technical problems arise, the stage manager makes sure that someone gets it fixed. When actors voice concerns, frustration, confusion, or any other stressful response, the stage manager often works to address the issue(s) and calm the actors. A large portion of offstage feeling management, then, rests on the shoulders of the stage manager as she resolves problems and coordinates the other emotional buffers. While other privileged emotion managers may have access to similar buffers, in theatre they are layered and highly orchestrated, providing actors with a complex hierarchy of invisible support in managing emotions. It is worth noting that while there was equal gender representation in my field sites, the dynamic that characterizes actors and emotional buffers exists in other social spaces, and is often stratified along gendered lines. For example, traditionally female dominated jobs such as secretaries, receptionists, and administrative assistants play supportive roles for traditionally male dominated jobs, like doctors, lawyers, and managers, where the more visible and socially valued work is done.

Rehearsals

The rehearsal process also defines actors as privileged emotion managers. While this process varies by director, the opportunity to test different choices, receive critiques, repeat

a performance numerous times, and perfect a role before it is seen by an audience distinguishes theatre from many social spaces and situations.

This preparation is done in front of an outside pair of eyes: the director's. While directing *The Laramie Project* and in his directing class, Andrew explained, "The main job of the director is to watch for the audience. You're a mirror for the actors." During *The Tempest*, Lars expressed a similar sentiment, "Don't worry about how it reads to the audience. That's my job." Directors are responsible for watching and critiquing the emotion management choices actors make. In doing so, they provide a different type of emotional buffer. They identify strong and weak emotional performances before they are seen by an audience, and reinforce or challenge these choices to strengthen the performance before it is publicly critiqued.

Strong emotional performances by Bay Rep and student actors were reinforced with compliments. Weak performances were sometimes difficult to handle. Directors used a variety of tactics to help actors improve their performance, such as invoking acting technique or using improvisation exercises. Madison, the director of *Drinking Companion*, frequently used improv exercises early in her rehearsal process. One rehearsal was spent helping me find a basis for feeling relief. She employed scene improvisations, hypothetical scenarios that emphasized character relationships, and exercises that emphasized the physical experience of relief. Later we ran the scene and Madison said, "That was much, much better. Exactly what I was looking for. You just need to keep those things in mind every time you run the scene." While the directors in my sites were unable to spend this amount of time with each actor in every section of a scene, they all provided criticism and advice for weaker parts of an actor's performance. This type of feedback is unavailable—and perhaps inappropriate—in other social situations.

The four directors I observed also helped actors manage frustration that developed in the rehearsal process, often through compliments and expressions of appreciation for

their casts. Actors who were still uncertain of their lines or entrances were sometimes told that "we are exactly where we should be" in the rehearsal process. Performance critiques were book-ended with comments like, "That was really great," or "You guys are doing some great stuff out there." These directors also established camaraderie with their actors, joking around with them offstage before and after rehearsal, and during breaks. I also observed that when frustrations did come out onstage directors were more likely to use compliments or humor to diffuse the actor's frustration. Directors relied on all of these approaches to buffer actors from some of the stress and pressure from the rehearsal process, preventing or reducing actors' frustration onstage.

FORMAL TRAINING AND FEELING MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Theatre's division of labor and the rehearsal process constitute the social setting that structures actors' emotion management. I now shift my focus to social action and consider the strategies actors use to manage emotions onstage. Formal training⁶ provides actors with a set of techniques to manage emotions on- and offstage, and an opportunity to perfect and internalize these techniques so that their use becomes habitual and "natural." This training facilitates a conceptualization of feeling management as a skilled activity, one that requires a degree of flexibility and autonomy not often discussed in the feeling management literature. I identify five strategies, which I group into three categories: cognitive strategies (the *magic if* and the *given circumstance*), focus strategies (*objectives*), and warm-up strategies (*physical warm-ups* and *warm-up games*).⁷ Cognitive strategies rely on knowl-

⁶ By formal training, I refer to acquisition of acting technique from instructors and other actors. Every part of the socialization process an actor goes through as they develop their craft and perform is part of training, in a broad sense.

⁷ Objectives, the Magic If, and the Given Circumstances come from Stanislavsky's (1948) work. Physical Warm-ups and Warm-up Games are my own terms, which I believe characterize their respective strategies.

edge and the imagination to evoke or suppress feelings. Focus strategies use concentration to reduce internal and external distractions, primarily to suppress emotions. Finally, warm-up strategies are backstage, usually pre-performance, activities that create a general, undirected emotional arousal that actors can use during a performance. I present these strategies in a typology that, while not exhaustive, offers a language to discuss how feeling management is done in and out of the theater.

Cognitive Strategies:

The Given Circumstances and the 'Magic If'

The given circumstances are the physical, social, and historical conditions that structure a scene or play, as set down by the playwright. They are among the first parts of Stanislavski's system that actors learn in introductory acting courses at Northern California University. Actors determine their character's given circumstances by answering a series of basic questions as they read the play or scene: *Who, where, when, and what*. Answers to these questions come from the information the playwright provides in a script, and construct a character's social narrative—the character as she understands herself and as others understand her, as she finds herself situated within a particular social environment and in a particular period of time as a series of events unfold. While different scripts offer this information in varying degrees, actors are taught to look for this playwright provided information. It is the relevant social structure of the character's world.

Once an actor identifies the given circumstances for her character, she then uses the magic if to enter the character's world. The actors create hypothetical situations ("What would I do if _____? How would I react if _____?") that she then uses to find the psychological, emotional, and physical life of her character. As actors continue to train and perform in shows, these strategies become second nature. While both strategies were explicitly discussed in my acting classes, they rarely came up in rehearsals. Sometimes a director would remind an actor of a particular given circumstance. In *Twelfth Night*, Doc pulled me

aside a couple times to point out that I (Antonio) was a wanted man in Illyria, where the play was set. Or he would remind Eric that, as far as Sebastian (his character) knew, his sister was dead. In these moments, the director emphasizes a particular given circumstance to make it more salient for the actor in the scene. It was up to us to use the magic if and figure out how we would act within the world of the play. Through experience and training, actors learn to pay attention to and use the given circumstances and the magic if on their own.

In using the given circumstances, actors must always invoke the magic if. It places the actor within the social and physical conditions the character encounters and coaxes an emotional experience within her. The given circumstances, however, are tied to the concrete details of the character's reality, while the magic if can be used on its own. Actors begin with the information the writer provides in the text, but sometimes this is not enough to achieve the desired performance. She or the director might then use the magic if with an imaginary set of circumstances to produce the appropriate responses from the actor.

Doc used this strategy when he wanted his actors to "up the stakes", or increase the risk or tension in a scene to make it more engaging to watch. The first scene of *Twelfth Night*, for example, was set on a beach some indeterminate amount of time after a ship wreck. During one rehearsal, after a run-through of this scene, he gathered the four actors in the scene and asked, "What would it be like if you just got out of the ocean two minutes ago?" He told us to keep that in mind, and had us start again. There was a different energy in the scene during the second run-through. Everyone had a new sense of urgency in their voice and we were physically more active, making new movement choices and exploring different interactions in response to Doc's proposition. After the run through, the director gathered us again, and asked, "How'd that feel?" Everyone agreed that it felt "much better" and "much more intense" onstage. He responded with, "It was much better. Much better. If you were at a 1 or a 2 before, this was definitely a 5, 6, or 7. Keep playing with it. Keep that sense of urgency."

Doc's suggestion, while outside of the given circumstances, helped produce a different emotional performance that drove the scene. It demonstrates how the magic if can be used on its own. The director provided a hypothetical situation, independent of the social and physical world the author created to help evoke the desired emotional response he wanted from his actors.

We see similar strategies in other settings. Hochschild describes how flight attendants are encouraged to use the magic if to deal with irate passengers. One explained, "I pretend something traumatic has happened in their lives" (1983:25). Another said, "I think to myself, 'He's like a child.' Really, that's what he is. And when I see him that way, I don't get mad that he's yelling at me. He's like a child yelling at me then" (1983:55). Treweek (1996) captures a similar tactic among care assistant workers when one woman says, "I wouldn't want my mother to be in a state, so I care for them [residents] like my own mother" (124). In each of these cases, someone asks "What if _____?" to manage their emotions: What if something traumatic had happened? What if he was a child? What if this was my mother? This is different that the strategy hairstylists use (Gimlin, 1996). While the stylist-client relationship still involves a paid service, Gimlin notes that "hairstylists conceive of their relationship with customers as extending beyond this transaction . . . [to take] on the quality of a friendship" (1996:514). Stylists change the social narrative of their relationship to their clients. It is easier to be excited or concerned for a friend than a customer, so this change helps stylists give a personalized and believable emotional performance. Acknowledging that differences between these jobs and acting exist, we still see similar cognitive strategies at work as people manage their emotions.

Focus Strategies: Objectives

Cognitive strategies engage an actor's imagination to encourage a particular emotional performance. While these strategies can be used to evoke or suppress emotions, focus strategies like objectives are primarily used to

suppress feelings. In Stanislavski's method, an objective is what a character wants from or wants to do to another character in a scene or play. In the acting classes I observed, students were taught to identify their character's objectives and the tactics their character might use to attain them.

Objectives were prescribed and used to help maintain a strong boundary between the world of the play and reality. Stanislavski (1948) believed that actors, particularly novice actors, can become more concerned with how an emotional performance is received by an audience than the performance itself. He argued that this made for bad performance. Implicit in this argument is the idea that when we are genuine about our feelings, the emotion is more important than the performance of that emotion. When actors focus on their character's objectives, they become more concerned with the experience of their character in the world of the play and less concerned with the audience. The performance more closely resembles real life, where the most genuine displays of emotion are done without interest in how others receive the display.

To a certain extent, actors cannot drop all concern for the audience during a show. They must remain conscious of the theater as a performance space and remember where and how close their audience sits to know where to face and how loud they need to speak. But mechanical aspects of a performance like these are less invasive to actors' emotion management than the emotive characteristics of an audience. I saw positive audience feedback during a performance—laughter, clapping, and active attentiveness—fuel actors' performances by giving them an adrenaline rush. Actors expressed frustration if there is negative or no feedback—a lack of laughter after jokes, casual conversation, or sleepers. Backstage, actors discussed whether the audience is "with them" or if "it's a tough audience" who doesn't "get it." Perhaps because the audience can influence an actor's perception of her work, directors and acting instructors train actors to focus on their objectives rather than the audience. Anne Newcomer, an acting instructor at Northern California University, frequently gave the note in acting class that "[the scene

is] about what you want, what you need from your scene partner. Don't worry about what we [the audience] feel." Directors in each show gave a similar note in the rehearsal process.

Actors also used a strong focus on objectives to suppress other feelings in a performance. Anne explained to her students, "I understand that you have other things going on in your lives. But when you come in here, I need you to leave that outside the space so we can focus on the work." Pursuing a character's objectives gave actors a concrete way to shift their focus away from their own feelings, and compartmentalize them while they work. I interviewed TJ, a young, heterosexual actor who had just played a gay high school student in a University Players production. His role involved two very intimate, same-sex kisses onstage. One of the assistant directors for the show told me that these kisses created a lot of tension in rehearsal. When I interviewed TJ, he admitted to being nervous early in rehearsals and on the night his mother came to see the show. But he repeatedly emphasized the importance of focusing on his character's objectives to play the role. It helped him manage his anxiety over the kisses by focusing on something else. Smith and Kleinman (1989) report a similar strategy amongst medical students when they deal with the uneasiness of intimate contact with patients. Students describe how they "focus real hard on the detail at hand," "concentrate on the procedure, the sequence, and the motions," or "focus on learning" to help relax and suppress any provocative emotions the exam could produce (60–61).

Directors and acting instructors also emphasized objectives when an actor's performance became too emotional. During one rehearsal of Bay Rep's *Twelfth Night*, Walter was working on the song his character, Feste, sings to the Count Orsino. After the first run of the scene Doc, the director, said, "Walter, you're doing a great job with that song. And I know what you're trying to do. But now you're playing the emotion. I need you to play the intention. What are you trying to do to Orsino?"

The problem of "playing the emotion" was not uncommon in my sites. Directors and acting instructors used this phrase when they felt the actor's emotional performance is unbelievable or "bad," often times because it was a demonstrative show of emotions that seemed to lack a deep acting basis. Anne connected the problem with a lack of professionalism. She explained to her students how playing the emotion is the same as "an actor showing us how brilliant he or she is." But she believed that professional acting is "not about you. It's about the work. It's about the play." In class she socialized her students to shift their focus from emotions to objectives. She demanded peer critique use a language of objectives, tactics, and obstacles over emotive language like "too sad" or "not angry enough". This helped students internalize the strategy so that it became habitual. It also reframed actors' concerns from "Am I showing the right emotion?" to "Do I have the correct internal foundation for this emotion?"

Andrew, director of *The Laramie Project* explained the problem of trying to "play an emotion" to his directing class:

When you are onstage, it's always got to be something practical. You can't play something theoretical. It has to be concrete. You can't play 'sad.' You can't play 'unhappy.' You can't play 'in love.' There's no such thing as playing 'in love.' 'In love' is made of little actions. Sometimes it means passion. Sometimes it means laughter. It's all those little moments that make love.

Emotions like love come from actions, what we do with or to other people, or what they do to us. This perspective was shared by many of the directors, acting instructors, and actors in the field. Actors learned to focus on their objectives to produce an appropriate emotional performance, based on concrete actions over abstract emotional states.

Warm-up Strategies:

Physical Warm-ups and Warm-up Games

The three strategies discussed above are psychological feeling management techniques. They require mental work or the ability to shut out distractions to evoke or suppress emotions. For actors, these strategies become

habit through practice so that if and when they are used onstage, they require little conscious effort. They become reflex.

Actors complement these psychological strategies with their warm-up activities. A warm-up can have two components: one is strictly physical; the other consists of games actors use to boost their “energy.” The idea of energy⁸ often referred to that feeling of being “on” or “psyched” during a show. Each warm-up engages both of these components to different degrees. Physical warm-ups include stretching, moving around the space, vocal exercises—anything that engages the body on a highly physical level. The manifest function of these is to physically prepare the body for a performance, but they also help actors create or control the adrenaline rush or excitement that can be useful in performance. Like physical warm-ups, warm-up games require active bodies, but they also include interaction between cast members or activities that are designed specifically to boost an actor’s energy, or psych her up before a show. The management of emotions is more intentional in these activities. Warm-ups are primarily part of an actor’s pre-show ritual, taking place in the hour or two before a performance begins. There are times, however, when actors use some of their warm-up activities backstage during a show, to continue to manage their emotions in their down time.

Warm-ups can accomplish both functions of emotion management: evoke or suppress feelings. Some warm-ups, primarily warm-up games, create an undirected emotional arousal that actors can tap into during a performance. Once on stage, the actor can channel this

arousal through the indirect strategies already described to “spontaneously” or “naturally” create emotion on stage. Leidner’s (1993) description of company cheers at Combined Insurance represents a similar strategy. The importance of this type of warm-up became clear to me during a production of *The Laramie Project*. Each night during our run, the cast would gather five minutes before our “places” call to do what we called “rape some babies.” We squeezed in a circle, shoulder to shoulder, and cuing off one of the actors we quietly chanted:

*“We’re gonna rape,
kill,
pillage, and burn.
We’re gonna rape, kill, pillage, and burn.
Eat the babies.”*

We repeated this four times, each time getting louder until we were all screaming it at the top of our lungs backstage. Not only did peoples’ voices change, so did their facial expressions. Some of the actors would get a crazy look in their eye, while others contorted their faces as they got louder. After we finished, everyone looked excited and “on.” Katie, a second-year MFA⁹ acting candidate in *The Laramie Project*, introduced the chant to the cast during an early rehearsal when everyone was low energy, and we all enjoyed it so much that we made it a part of our pre-show ritual. The grotesque lyrics of the chant were so absurd, as were some of the ways people performed it, that it raised our adrenaline before we went on stage, giving us the undirected emotional arousal we could use in our performance.

The second purpose of the warm-up is to control or suppress emotional arousal. While a general excitement can be good before a show, too much emotional arousal can have the reverse effect. It can create feelings of nervousness and anxiety that distract the performers focus, cause them to react too quickly, or forget lines or movement altogether. Grindstaff (2002) identifies a similar problem daytime talk-show producers face with their guests. The “money shot” of emotional perfor-

⁸ Though not completely synonymous with emotion, “energy” had an emotional component as it was used by these actors. During rehearsal, the more common use of the term energy referred to physical pace/tempo onstage, the speed of reaction, and the volume of an actor’s voice. But during warm-ups, backstage before a show, or onstage during a show, energy was also a felt experience. It sometimes referred to the adrenaline rush of performance. Other times actors talked about a need to focus their energy and shut out the distractions of the day—suppressing feelings from everyday life. Even the physical discussion of energy had a basis in deep acting. In class, Anne Newcomer pushed her students to “feel an impulse to move.”

⁹ Master of Fine Arts

mance is key to a show's success, and producers "fluff" their guests—get them emotionally aroused—to ensure that the "money shot" erupts on camera. But guests can sometimes get too emotionally aroused and climax too soon. Volunteer search and rescue workers also experience pre-performance emotions that Lois (2001) roots in their adrenaline rush, which can focus workers or distracts their efforts. Actors have similar experiences backstage before a show. While actors may sometimes seek to create a general emotional arousal before a show, they can also experience a pre-show adrenaline rush that needs to be controlled.

Some University Players in *The Tempest* used physical warm-ups to help suppress some of this unwanted arousal. Backstage, prior to our places call, some actors would run through several yoga poses. The poses were usually fairly common—downward-facing dog, child's pose, sun salutations—and were usually executed fairly slowly and deliberately. On a couple of occasions, I joined in. Running through yoga poses not only stretched my muscles, it also helped calm me in the jittery moments before opening.

The emphasis on group warm-ups and warm-up games in University Player productions helps novice actors cultivate techniques to manage their emotions physically. Young actors are taught how to "psych" themselves up before a show, and create a general emotional arousal they can tap into during a performance. They are also taught how to suppress some of this emotion when they need to so that they can focus on stage. The particular warm-up activity can change depending on the needs of the actor. Regardless, warm-ups are the backstage, often active, and physical ways that actors manage their emotions prior to performance.

CONCLUSION

Novice and semi-professional stage actors are an intriguing case of feeling managers. The stage provides a unique set of conditions under which actors manage their emotions. Theatre structures are constructed around this management and offer resources that enable

this work. Actors use formal training and rehearsal time to work out their performance and determine what they must do to achieve it in a show. When a production begins, management and crew assume responsibility for managing the stress, anxiety, and frustration that are peripheral to an actor's role. These institutional resources mark these actors as privileged emotion managers.

Perhaps aspects of this privileged status have made sociologists reluctant to pursue actors' feeling management. Hochschild (1983) differentiates actors from other people because, she argues, the managed heart is different onstage. It is true that theatre offers some of the best conditions to do feeling management, and actors may be the most privileged emotion managers. But while the emotion management of these actors may differ from that done by people in other social settings, we can learn much from this case. First, theatre's uniqueness draws our attention from the disadvantaged to the advantaged managed heart. Scholars have paid considerable attention to those groups that carry the greatest burden of emotion management. By shifting our focus "up" and studying privileged emotion managers, we get a richer understanding of feeling management and the ways social structures enable its execution. Privileged emotion managers also provide a comparison group to understand better the constraints that the emotional proletariat experience and the associated social costs.

Actors are not the only privileged emotion managers. Managers and professionals, such as lawyers (Pierce 1995) and engineers (Van Maanen and Kunda 1989), may also have privileged status depending on the resources available to manage their emotions. Trial lawyers have time to prepare witness examination and opening/closing statements before doing so in court. This preparation time is a resource that resembles rehearsals in theatre. Counselors, psychologists, and psychoanalysts undergo rigorous training to learn how to handle clients' emotions. Although the emphases differ (managing others emotions versus managing one's own emotions), the training these professionals and actors receive is far more extensive than anything offered to the emo-

tional proletariat. Upper management and professionals often have access to emotional buffers like administrative assistants and receptionists who reduce their boss's emotional workload by managing the peripheral stressors of the workplace. In the private sphere, many men may have privileged status relative to their female partners. Research demonstrates that women often shoulder the greater share of emotion management at home (DeVault 1999; Wharton and Erickson 1993; Hochschild and Machung 1989), and often act as emotional buffers for men.

In each of these examples, a key difference between privileged emotion managers and the emotional proletariat is the availability of resources. Sometimes these are social resources, like training or preparation time. Other times resources are people who act as emotional buffers. Privileged status is relational under these conditions. Privileged emotion managers profit from emotional buffers as the feeling management they are required to do decreases. These interactions may be quite complex, and future research should explore how people negotiate these worker-as-emotional-resource relationships.

Resources can be formal or informal. The type of resources one can access helps define privileged status. They indicate who acknowledges and aids an individual's feeling management in a social setting. Formal resources signify times when organizations explicitly recognize and plan for certain types of emotion management. They increase the options for how people engage in emotion management, allowing for greater flexibility and autonomy in the management process. Informal resources, such as humor (Martin 1999; Cahill and Eggleston 1994; Smith and Kleinman 1989) or a network of coworkers that encourage a rant (Logan 2005), indicate recognition and support of emotion management from oneself and one's peers. They are responses from individuals acting alone or with peers to the feeling management demands of a situation, not the organizational anticipation of these demands. Formal resources are not necessarily more effective than informal resources for enacting feeling management. Greater individual and organizational antici-

pation for an array of emotion management needs increases the opportunity to exercise more autonomy in the management process. We must therefore research both types of resources to understand better how feeling management is constrained or enabled.

We should also examine how people intentionally manage their emotions in social settings. I use a discourse of feeling management strategies to emphasize this active and purposeful engagement with emotions. Theatre's sensitivity to the actor's work makes feeling management strategies explicit. These strategies are embedded in the unique set of structures that constitute theatre. But the explicit discourse and practices around emotions in the four productions in my fieldwork provide a way to categorize how others manage their emotions. There are physical, psychological, and concentration strategies that actors employ. Evidence in the feeling management literature suggests people use similar strategies in other settings. There is, however, a lack of consistent and systematic discussion of feeling management strategies in the literature, how these strategies differ or coincide, and when each is most effective. This lack of discussion implies that feeling management is enacted in comparable ways regardless of setting. We should not assume, however, that the physical work of helping a friend move is the same as the manual labor done by children in sweatshops or that done by coal mine workers. How physical work gets done differs across situation; the same holds true for feeling management.

Social networks play an important role in theatre, and these networks require nurturing and emotion management. How actors manage emotions offstage as they negotiate their professional relationships may look different than the feeling management they do onstage, lacking the structural support they receive during a show. Further research should explore actors on- and offstage emotion management and consider how actors' privileged status is contingent on social setting.

While I argue for the utility of moving actors from the outskirts of sociological research on emotions, some skeptics may counter that the differences between the stage

and everyday life are greater than the similarities. Some critics will argue that, in most cases, acting is a labor of love. Any emotion management done is not a means to an end, as it gets characterized at work, but an end in-and-of itself. As the end itself, feeling management is a gift and not a commodity. Such a distinction, these critics would argue, makes it difficult to compare actors to people in other organizational settings. The assumption here is that emotion management done in these other settings is never a gift, never the end itself. Bolton and Boyd's (2003) work on flight crews challenges this assumption. They find flight crew members invoke different feeling rules when they engage in feeling management, some of which reflect everyday social norms and not company mandates. They argue that emotion management in an organization can therefore be gift or commodity, depending on the feeling rules people activate. This suggests that actors may not be as different from agents in other organizational settings as one might assume.

Critics are also likely to invoke Hochschild's assumption that we expect more genuine emotional displays in everyday life than we do onstage. It is fair to acknowledge that illusion is almost always explicit in theatre. Yet in a society where service work (and the performative labor it demands) has become increasingly common, this expectation of genuine emotional display in everyday life may not always apply. We do not know the degree to which people expect genuine displays, or the conditions under which this expectation may change. In some cases people may be more interested in a performance that fulfills customary civility than sincere response. When I ask the sales associate at my local grocer how their day is going, I am often more interested in filling our brief time together with small talk. A less than sincere "Fine" is satisfactory. The idea that everyday social life is filled with anticipation for authentic emotional displays is an untested assumption. Rather than continuing to set the managed heart onstage as a completely unique case of feeling management based on this assumption, we should begin to give more

attention to the consumption of emotion management in addition to its performance.

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