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## Introduction

# Welfare State Reform, Recognition and Emotional Labour

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Welfare state retrenchment and its corollary, the encouragement of ‘active citizenship’, are widespread phenomena in Western countries today. While public and academic debates have focused on the practical consequences of changing rules and shrinking entitlements, there has been much less attention on how citizens experience these reforms and their accompanying rhetoric. We know even less about how welfare reform impacts upon people’s emotions. Such a focus, however, is important because the reform of the welfare state is about more than changing rights and duties. Reforms tell citizens what they are worth, how they are valued and judged, and how they are supposed to *feel* about the new arrangements.

The aim of this themed section is to understand the emotional subtexts behind changing social policies. We examine policy reform not merely as the reform of rules, rights and duties, but as ‘emotional reform’, particularly as it pertains to how people feel about the cutting back of publicly funded services. To the extent that welfare state retrenchment does not cause waves of protest, one may be tempted to conclude that it does not significantly impact upon people’s lives. But at the level of emotions, nothing could be further from the truth. The empirical evidence presented in this issue confirms that welfare state reform is a source of high drama in people’s lives, entailing significant emotional costs and labour to cope with its impact.

This introduction first reviews some of the key challenges faced by European welfare states and their dominant policy responses. We then discuss how a sociology of emotions, as pioneered by Arlie Hochschild, can help us understand the subtext of welfare state reform. We conclude by introducing the contributions to this issue, each addressing a different aspect of welfare state reform, recognition and emotional labour.

### **Reforming the welfare state**

European welfare states as they have developed in the post-war era face daunting challenges as new demographic, economic and social realities confront policy-makers and politicians. Scholars such as [Bonoli \(2005\)](#) and [Taylor-Gooby \(2004\)](#) have pointed to

the new social risks emanating from women entering the labour market, changes in family structure, the ageing of populations and bleaker career perspectives in an increasingly flexible labour market.

In response, we are witnessing two broad trends in welfare state reform across Europe. First, while the old, protective welfare state was seen as an unconditional safety net for all citizens, the new 'activating' welfare state imposes conditions upon its citizens: they must first strive to be self-sufficient and to take 'ownership' of the challenges in their lives (White, 2000; Goodin, 2002). These include their labour market (re)integration as well as arranging for their own long-term care. Citizens, in short, must take *responsibility* for their own lives and not simply passively 'consume' services (Newman *et al.*, 2004; Newman and Tonkens, 2011). Second, in recognising that the new social risks differentially affect groups of citizens, by age, educational level, employment, form of household and gender, governments are increasingly tailoring public services to meet individual needs (Ungerson and Yeandle, 2007; Dickinson and Glasby 2010).

We further witness a third broad trend in the reform of social policy more generally: a shift in emphasis from redistribution to recognition (Fraser and Honneth, 2003; Thompson, 2006). While social policy was previously seen as a means to redistribute goods and services (in line with Rawls' famous *Theory of Justice*), today there is greater attention to how social policy contributes to the recognition of (groups of) citizens as full human beings worthy of respect (Young, 1990; Honneth, 1995). Some argue that well-developed welfare states help citizens feel recognised in their needs (Lister, 2007); others that they fuel dependence and passivity, eventually undermining self-respect (Dalrymple, 2001).

### Welfare reform and emotions

How do citizens feel about the new conditions under which they can access public services? How are their feelings influenced by social norms on what one is entitled to feel? Can people legitimately feel angry if their entitlements are reduced, if their responsibilities are increased, or if they are told that good citizenship depends on being employed or on their involvement in care-giving for family members and neighbours? How does what people feel translate into what they do?

To examine the lived experiences of citizens with welfare reform, we make use of Honneth's notion of (mis)recognition, as well as Hochschild's sociology of emotions. We note the shift in emphasis in social policy from redistribution to recognition, and leave the heated debate over the exact relationship between redistribution and recognition to one side (see Thompson, 2006, for a brief overview). Here it suffices to show that the emotional subtext of welfare state reform is intimately tied to issues of recognition, a theme that has received surprisingly little attention.

Welfare state reform to date has primarily been analysed through the lens of redistribution: to what extent are goods and services under the new conditions (re)distributed (more) equally among (groups of) citizens? To understand redistribution, we do not have to know how welfare reform *feels*. Emotions do, however, come into view when we consider welfare reform through the lens of recognition. Honneth argues that social analysis must examine 'institutionally caused suffering and misery' (2003: 117): not only the grand injustices that fuel social movements but 'the everyday dimension of moral feelings of injustice' (*ibid.*: 114). Misrecognition, according to Honneth, is at the core of all suffering and injustice (Thompson, 2006: 109). Misrecognition comes in three

forms: (1) as maltreatment, when people are physically injured, undermining (bodily) self-confidence; (2) as disrespect, when people are not treated as rational human beings; and (3) as denigration, when people's identities are not valued and their self-esteem is undermined (Honneth, 2003: 114–35). These three aspects of misrecognition, it will be seen, are helpful in understanding how welfare state reform 'works' as emotional reform.

American sociologist Arlie Hochschild has built upon theories of symbolic interactionism to show the importance of emotions in everyday life (see, for example, Goffman, 1967). One of her major achievements has been to connect intimate, privately felt emotions to broader social and cultural changes. To highlight the social construction as well as the social and moral complexity of emotions, Hochschild employs the conceptual duo of 'feeling rules' and 'framing rules'. She writes: 'We do not simply feel, we think about our feelings, both individually and collectively. The way we think about them also influences our feelings. We experience feelings in tango with feeling rules, the social guidelines that direct how we want to try to feel' (2003: 97). Feeling rules are 'socially shared, albeit often latent (not thought about unless probed at)' (2003: 97). 'Feeling rules define what we imagine we should and shouldn't feel and would like to feel over a range of circumstances' (2003: 82).

In her later work, Hochschild introduces the concept of 'framing rules'; 'the rules according to which we ascribe definitions or meanings to situations' (2003: 99). Hochschild discerns three sorts of framing rules: moral, pragmatic and historical (2003: 116). *Moral* framing rules concern ideas about what is morally right. Citizens who face reduced entitlements to publicly funded care employ moral framing rules when they argue in terms of the rights and duties of governments and citizens, referring to justice, equity, equality and so on. *Pragmatic* framing rules concern what is deemed possible. Although they have their entitlements reduced, care-dependent individuals may control their anger because they see that cuts are necessary and others are worse off and hence more deserving than themselves. Or conversely, they may become angry as they perceive that help is readily accessible to virtually everyone but themselves. *Historical* framing rules refer to another time in one's personal or collective history. A recipient of care may feel grateful that she is in a better position than her own mother when she was that age. Or she may feel neglected or disrespected because compared to a decade ago, people like her are much worse off than they were then.

Tonkens (2012) argues that Hochschild does not explicitly expound on the relationship between feeling and framing rules, although their relationship can be deduced from how the concepts are employed. Framing rules point to the cognitive frame within which feeling rules are situated. The norm that women should be at home is a framing rule, while the norm to feel happy about being at home, or to feel guilty about being absent from home, is a feeling rule (2003: 127). Similarly, Turner and Stets (2005: 41) argue: 'Framing rules designate what interpretations and meanings individuals should give to situations, whereas feeling rules specify how people ought to feel in a situation given a particular interpretation demanded by framing rules.'

In contrast to Goffman's situationism, Hochschild believes that there is room for agency in shaping one's emotions. Managing one's emotions in order to comply with feeling rules is what she calls 'emotional labour'. The concept of emotional labour has been applied to numerous areas of research, including the service industry (for example, Tolich, 1993; Morris and Feldman, 1996), nursing and healthcare (for example, Smith, 1992; Bone, 2002; Brunton, 2005; HUSSO and Hirvonen, 1992), the exchange of

informal care (for example, Cahill and Egglestone, 1994; [Grootegoed et al., 2010](#)), and participation in collective action (for example, [Baines, 2011](#); [Barnes, 2008](#)).

Although Hochschild does not argue that performing emotional labour is the fate of the 'powerless', she does emphasise that there is more pressure to conform to unwritten feeling rules when one belongs to a relatively powerless group. Emotional labour is, moreover, highly gendered: most low-skilled and low-paid or unpaid work done by women demands emotional labour, such as care work. The emotional component of care demands skilled emotion work which is recognised less than physical care work due to its invisibility ([James, 1989, 1992](#)). Also, performing emotional labour tends to be naturalised as a female trait rather than being seen as hard work, it tends to be undervalued and omitted from job rating systems, which explains why care work is usually badly paid ([Brouns et al., 1996](#)).

### Interpreting emotional labour

Although Hochschild's concept of emotional labour is broadly used in the social sciences, it has also attracted criticism. Bolton and Boyd (2003), for example, argue that Hochschild too readily assumes that all emotion management is hard work, and propose distinguishing between 'presentational' and 'philanthropic' emotional labour: the former is routine-like compliance with feeling rules, the latter requires serious effort to control or change one's emotions. For Bolton and Boyd, what matters is the motivation behind emotional labour: is it to respond to organisational demands, to be social towards colleagues/peers, or to be altruistic? Wouters (1989) and Korzunski (2002) have shown that service workers can enjoy emotional labour as a challenging but rewarding part of their jobs.

Tonkens (2012) argues that Hochschild's theoretical framework lacks an intermediate level between macro-sociological processes such as globalisation and commercialisation on the one hand and the micro-sociological processes of emotional labour on the other. 'Commercialisation', for example, does not directly influence how people should feel about any given situation; its impact is felt through the mediation of institutional arrangements. Tonkens therefore proposes the concept of 'citizenship regimes' to fill this gap: macro-sociological processes invoke policy responses (such as welfare state reform) which create new citizenship regimes, which in turn shape the framing rules that set the stage for feeling rules. Tonkens defines 'citizenship regimes' as 'the institutional arrangements, rules and understandings, and power relations that guide and shape current policy decisions, state expenditures, framing rules, feeling rules and claims-making by citizens' (Tonkens, 2012: 201). Welfare state retrenchment leads to new citizenship regimes and thus to new feeling rules, emotional demands and emotional labour.

This themed section explores different types of emotional labour performed by people subject to welfare reforms and new citizenship regimes, pressured by changing policy rhetoric on how to be good citizens and how to feel about receiving government support. We analyse citizens' struggles between how they feel about reduced entitlements and how they think they should feel, as well as the consequences of these gaps between is and ought.

### Overview of the contributions

All contributions to this themed section are based on original research on emotions and emotional labour in 'activating' welfare states. They examine social work, long-term care,

social assistance and volunteer work in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Austria, Slovakia and Bulgaria.

We begin with an overview article by Verhoeven and Tonkens on how citizens are increasingly summoned to perform voluntary work, especially in the care sector. Based on the discourse analysis of 'Big Society' rhetoric by British and Dutch policy-makers, the authors point to the different feeling rules that policy discourses impose on citizens. Whereas Dutch citizens are urged to feel more responsible for the well-being of care-dependent citizens, their British counterparts are encouraged to take pleasure in community care-giving.

Moving from how feeling rules are construed at the policy level to the emotional subtext of policy, Kampen, Elshout and Tonkens examine how the emphasis on 'individual responsibility' affects the self-respect of low-skilled, long-term unemployed citizens participating in workfare programs. Struggling to maintain their self-respect, these fragile individuals have to perform emotional labour to bring their desires, hopes and dreams in line with daily reality, where they occupy the bottom of the social ladder.

Baxter and Glendinning continue the exploration of emotional labour in citizen's lives by pointing to the growing importance of exercising choice in arranging one's long-term care. Although the dominant feeling rule is that one should be happy to exercise choice over one's care arrangements, this is not the case for many people with disabilities and older people who do not possess the necessary skills, time and energy to make informed decisions. These people then feel the need to downplay their emotions by describing their lack of joy in making choices as a personal 'failure'.

Next, Tonkens and Verplanke observe that the provision of public services has become increasingly conditional: if one wants to receive a service, one has to comply with the demands of the provider. If one fails to do so, services are often terminated. There are, however, people who breach their contracts time after time, falling back into the same dire situation that prompted them to ask for help in the first place. Social workers must then visit these people to help them re-enter the contract. Based on an in-depth analysis of these 'behind the front door' policies, the authors show that without emotional safety on the part of service recipients, contractual relations cannot be maintained.

Österle and Bauer use the example of Austria to focus on the emergence of a grey economy of care involving migrant workers. Their article analyses how policies impact upon the choices made by care-recipients and their families, and how migrant workers perform emotional labour not only for their new employers but to prevent themselves from looking back to their own families and related care duties.

In the final article, Grootegoed, Duyvendak and Bröer examine how citizens respond to cuts in care provision. Most Dutch citizens with long-term care needs do not make use of their right to appeal the reduction or elimination of their previous entitlements, even when this leads to marked problems in daily life. Given the new policy's stated intention of preserving care for the most needy, many affected clients feel they have no right to be angry. Despite their (often objectively warranted) grievances, they do not appeal as breaking with the new moral code will trigger feelings of shame: of not being autonomous, of demanding too much when others are worse off, and of appearing ungrateful.

Hochschild concludes the section by discussing how major welfare reforms unevenly affect citizens with the greatest needs, and how politicians and policy-makers try to engineer what citizens should feel about welfare reform. Their efforts, however, may collide with cultural realities and citizens' views on the proper feelings that accompany

'give' and 'take'. Hochschild shows how a new field of enquiry opens up when we study the emotions and emotional labour that accompany major welfare reform and how global politics are tied to intimate emotions such as pride and shame.

In sum, the themed section addresses how, in the current times of major welfare restructuring, reforms are more than a redistribution of entitlements; they have real and sometimes dramatic consequences for how welfare recipients perceive themselves and their places in society. As most welfare states are pursuing agendas of retrenchment, we propose an agenda of research: to study the experiences of citizens living with the consequences of reform, not only whether protection against social risks is equitably redistributed but how their emotional safety is recognised.

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