

*Identitetsföreställningar. Performance, normativitet och makt ombord på SAS och AirHoliday (Performing Identity: Performance, normativity and power on board SAS and AirHoliday).* Dissertation at the Department of Ethnology, Göteborg University. Written in Swedish with an English summary. Author: Magdalena Petersson. Mara förlag 2003.

The empirical basis of this thesis is made up of 25 interviews with men and women employed by two airlines, by participant observations at the SAS Flight Academy, and observation studies made on board flights. Additional material comes from information leaflets for cabin crew and media representations of flight attendants.

At the SAS Flight Academy, newly employed cabin crew are taught to think of the air cabin as a stage. The passengers should be thought of as spectators, the staff as actors, and the work as a performance. They are taught that behaviour is a 'performance you choose to put on', and that it is not you smiling at the passengers all day long, but your character. Such theatre metaphors are common within service work and the definitions of good service depend on them. At the Flight Academy we, however, also learnt that if you play a part well enough, you become that part in the end. If you act nice, you become nice. The thesis discusses these comparisons with theatre and what meanings they have for how identity as well as service is understood and how these relate to each other. Within service work, categories of identity, like gender and ethnicity, are understood as constructions that can be staged within perceptions of 'good service'.

People often describe themselves as playing different roles or characters in different situations and these role comparisons are so spread that they can be understood as a discourse, a common way of understanding the world, yourself and others that has different effects. *The aim of the thesis is to study what effects theatre discourses have for how service work is constructed, perceived and performed in relation to images of the 'self' and categories of identity such as sex, gender and ethnicity, within two different airlines.* Do theatre discourses mean that perceptions of service work, gender, sexuality and ethnicity are repeated, transgressed, confirmed or subverted?

Performance is discussed as a discourse that people use to make sense out of various situations, and thus has effects for how subjectivity and identity are constructed. Is it a coincidence that performance is part of management ideologies as well as a critical concept within feminism? Should performance be considered as subversive or normative? Three different ways of understanding performance are discussed in the thesis: performance as a management discourse, performance as identity politics and the way the informants discuss performance, which builds on the two previous. The role discourses expressed in the interviews can be seen as popularised versions of Erving Goffman's role theories. The thesis however also compares them with Performance Management and Judith Butler's theories of gender as a performative performance. In the thesis I mainly discuss the normativity of performance. Stressing the normative is however subversive. The clear rules for the body that cabin crew are presented with, subvert, through their normativity, ideas of identity categories as based on an inner essence. The thesis critically examines the concept performance and discusses it, not only as a subversive power, but also as a normative force.

**Keywords:** flight attendant, hostess, airline, performance, performativity, gender, sexuality, service, service work, identity, Scandinavia, scandinavian, heteronormativity, ethnicity, emotional labour, stereotypes, heterosexuality, homosexuality, labour market, steward, role theory, normativity, power, management, work life, performance management.

**Distribution:** Mara förlag, Bagaregårdsgatan 7b, SE 416 70 Göteborg, Sweden

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ISBN 91-974674-0-5