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Speaking from the Heart: Gender and the Social Meaning of
Emotion (review)

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sociological discussions of the place of rationality and irrationality in late modern societies, and has some commonality with the risk society work on this theme. It may also be situated in relation to discussions of postmodern economics.

References

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Trent University

Jim Cosgrave

Stephanie A. Shields, *Speaking from the Heart: Gender and the Social Meaning of Emotion*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, 214pp.

Speaking from the Heart is a book that belongs in the hands of students. It is one of those rare books that calls out to be taught and engaged. Written in a conversational voice it draws learners into its crevices, and, like the best within the tradition of the essayist, it offers rewards to readers that encourage a close and careful reading of the text.

This is a text firmly grounded in the liberal arts. The author moves freely and eloquently from the *Phaedo* to conventional contemporary psychological research on emotion — from popular culture to 19th century social theory. By so doing, the author models the need for interdisciplinarity as one engages the problem of emotion and gender as lived experiences. It is a book that adopts multiple vantage points for analysis as it moves from chapter to chapter. While Shields' perspective as a psychologist is an important reference point throughout, this text prioritizes the examination of the relationship between emotion theory and gender studies above disciplinary orthodoxy. The result is an engaging and challenging rendering of emotion and gender. Those working within the extended tradition of interpretive sociology will find much in this work that is friendly to their theoretical inclinations. Shields emphasizes the symbolic qualities of emotion and emotionality. Her understanding of emotion is located relative to the self and the interest or stake a person has in everyday life. Shields argues, "Emotion is taking it personally."⁽⁶⁾ This deceptively simple assertion is a valuable point of departure. From an interest in emotion as intersubjectively accomplished comes a more general interest in the meaning of

emotion, the doing of emotion and gender and the generic themes of culture creation and maintenance.

However in all of this, sociologists are apt to find aspects of this volume strikingly familiar. There are, in my opinion, intellectual debts in this work that go unpaid. The author's understanding of the self owes much to Mead and Blumer, the presentation of self to Goffman, labelling to Becker, and the doing of gender to Garfinkel. Here again we see an example of contemporary social psychology which excludes the advances in the area which properly belong to sociological social psychologists.

That said, it would be quite unfortunate if this volume were to be overlooked by sociologists. I would argue that *Speaking from the Heart* should be of rather broad interest in our discipline, for at the heart of the book is an understanding that "gendered emotion is not a feature of an achieved gender role, but an always in-progress negotiation of gender practice." (93) By explicitly allowing for the negotiated features of human group life, Shields' work takes on a lively relevance for all who seek to develop an understanding of the generic social processes which accompany the human condition. Therefore, the relevance of this work is not limited to the substantive areas of gender and emotion. For example, this work has a contribution to make to the sociology of deviant behaviour.

Themes such as "manly emotion as ideal emotion," "entitlement to anger," and "judging emotional appropriateness," turn our attention to self/other definitions and emotions as lived. Emotions, like other social objects, may be defined as offensive, unwelcome, unwarranted, or otherwise inappropriate by a variety of audiences. Shields' analysis provides a helpful voice in the gendering of the appropriate and the interactional problematics of doing emotions. Shields' extensive work with the notion of "manly emotion" is ultimately about doing emotion "the right way." When this ideal is not realized, we find ourselves venturing well into the territory of deviant behaviour.

While Shields is certainly culturally attentive in her theorizing, this book is written by a U.S.-based academic for a U.S. audience. It is awash with U.S. popular culture references — the Super Bowl, Jerry Maguire, *People*, Oprah Winfrey, Miss Manners, and Michael Jordan. The result is a series of examples to generic issues that have a very limited shelf life. This is a shame really, because the heart of this work has more currency to students than Al Gore and the XFL.

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