An indivisible union? Assessing the marriage of Hochschild's emotional labour concept and labour process theory

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Abstract

Labour Process Theory (LPT) has progressively but critically adopted Hochschild's emotional labour theory, principally for analysis of service work. However, until recently there has been little detailed assessment from within the LPT tradition of emotional labour's theoretical roots, structure and overall compatibility. This article critically assesses contemporary debates within LPT on the compatibility of Hochschild's theory. It argues that while she makes foundational use of Marx's theory of labour power, she inadequately captures the contradictory nature of employment relations, the social basis of workplace emotions and the incompleteness of management control. This is principally due to her tendency to focus on the individual harm of emotional labour via her individualised concepts of 'transmutation of feelings', 'surface acting and deep acting'. For Hochschild's theory to be compatible, it requires a thorough dialectical understanding of workplace emotions and their management as contradictory social phenomena, which workers experience individually and collectively.

Introduction: Imprecise boundaries

"It is interesting to note that in her initial article on 'emotion work', Hochschild made no reference to Marx and drew primarily on the interactionist social psychology of Goffman; in her subsequent book she commenced with a reference to *Capital* and made Marx's analysis of alienation an important point of reference. This is... indication of the imprecise boundaries between Marxist and non-Marxist sociology." (Hyman, 2006, p.40)

Hyman's observation on the difficulty of specifying Hochschild's relationship with Marxism has been a running thread through the enormous literature on her 'emotional labour' theory since its full appearance in *The Managed Heart - the commercialization of human feeling* (1983). Nevertheless, Marxist derived Labour Process Theory (LPT) (Braverman, 1975; Thompson, 1983/89) has progressively adopted it as a core concept in its applied analyses, principally of service work (Warhurst, Thompson and Nickson, 2009). Yet the 'imprecise boundaries' between Marxist – including the foundations of LPT - and non-Marxist sociology in Hochschild's theorisation of emotional labour have only been sporadically addressed from within the labour process tradition until very recently (see Bolton, 2005, 2009, 2010; Brook, 2009a, 2009b; and Taylor, 1998)

What follows argues that the attraction of the emotional labour concept for the labour process analysis tradition¹ (LPA) is precisely because Hochschild explicitly defines and locates emotional labour within Marx's concept of wage-labour by introducing it as an additional

aspect of labour power, alongside physical and mental labour. More significantly, Hochschild argues management's control is unstable, whereby workers frequently offer only 'surface acting' rather than genuinely felt performances. Although she does not explicitly acknowledge the existence of an antagonistic relationship at the point of service production, her account of struggles within the emotional labour process is broadly compatible with LPT's understanding. She also makes pivotal use of Marx's alienation theoryⁱⁱ by arguing that emotional labour has a human cost in that it estranges workers from the ownership and control of their feelings. As such, Hochschild offers a politicised critique of workplace emotions (Fineman, 2005).

However, the common charge from within LPA that Hochschild's theory inadequately captures the contradictory nature of workplace relations and the incompleteness of management control is a valid one (Bolton, 2005; Brook, 2009a; Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Taylor, 1998; and Warhurst *et al*, 2009). This is because she overly focuses on the individual experience of emotional labour via her core notions of 'surface acting', 'deep acting' and 'transmutation of feelings', at the expense of wider workplace social relations. This emphasis on the individual distorts her analytic framework, as she is unable to adequately identify and explore the collective experience of producing emotional labour within the context of a contested management regime, which in turn weakens her account of resistance. Therefore, what follows concludes by arguing that the integration of the emotional labour concept within LPT requires a re-theorisation that provides a thorough dialectical understanding of workplace emotions.

Contours and directions

While LPT has diversified significantly from its Marxist origins - principally drawn from Braverman's (1975) contemporary explication of Marx's theory of the labour process under capitalist relations of production (Thompson, 1983/89) - it has throughout its waves of development (Thompson and Smith, 2001; 2009) retained a core theoretical framework. This core commences from the character of labour as a unique commodity because of its indeterminacy and thus "the conversion of labor power (the potential for work) into labor (actual work effort) under conditions which permit capital accumulation"" (Littler 1990, p. 48 quoted in Thompson and Newsome, 2004, p.134)

From this understanding flow a number of principles that are pertinent to any debate on the theoretical relationship between Hochschild's emotional labour concept and LPT. First, that LPT principally focuses on the experience of employees during the transformation of their labour power into a productive form that yields a surplus/profit for capital, rather than the particular means deployed by the employer (Thompson and Smith, 2009). Second, that the employment relationship under capitalist relations of production is based on exploitation and subordination, thereby generating a "structured antagonism" during the transformation

of labour power (Thompson and Newsome, 2004, p.135). Third, the transformation of labour power implies a control imperative, which requires concrete management institutions applying a variety of control strategies and tactics (Thompson and Smith, 2001). Fourth, labour power's inherent indeterminacy, borne of the structured antagonism and its unique 'still to be realised' commodity form (Smith, 2006) ensures that management's control is fraught with tensions and contradictions, which generate a tendency for workers' to resist as well as comply and consent. Finally, LPT is concerned with analysing capital's expansion of labour power capacities in response to its growing emphasis on service work. In particular, capital's explicit demand for enhanced service via the recruitment and training of specific personality-attitudinal traits and corporeal 'display' qualities in the form of emotional labour and aesthetic labour (see Witz *et al*, 2003) respectively. Thus, labour's determinate form as an end-product, such as customer service, is not of primary analytic importance but whether "it has been drawn into the network of capitalist social relations, whether the worker who carries it has been transformed into a wage-worker, and whether the labor of the worker has been transformed into productive labor" (Braverman, 1975, p.362).

Given this core theoretical framework with its focus on the transformation of labour power, it is not surprising that the annual 'call for papers' by the International Labour Process Conference has long invited contributions on emotional labour, as an 'aspect of labour power'. This widespread, if critical, acceptance of Hochschild's emotional labour theory as an important element within contemporary LPA (Bolton, 2010; Thompson and Smith, 2009; Warhurst *et al*, 2009), however, has not been matched by a sustained and detailed debate on the compatibility of its foundations and principal elements, until recently (see Bolton, 2009; Bolton, 2010; Brook, 2009a; Brook, 2009b)ⁱⁱⁱ. The most notable exception prior to this debate is Taylor's (1998) study of telesales workers in which he argues that Hochschild's theorisation is insufficiently nuanced to capture the complexity of employees' behaviour and underestimates the inherent resistance to management control (discussed below)^{iv}.

The current debate was spurred by an erosion in recent years of the assumed value of the emotional labour concept within LPA (Brook, 2009b), principally since the emergence of Bolton's (2005; Bolton and Boyd, 2003) eclectic critique^v of Hochschild's theory. In her critique, she condemns Hochschild's emotional labour concept as 'one-dimensional' because it is unable to capture the complex and contradictory experience of emotion workers. Moreover, she argues that there is an "emotional labour bandwagon" (2005, p.53), which incorrectly conceptualises all forms of emotion work as emotional labour (i.e. it includes all emotion work outside of direct customer interaction, principally not-for-profit, public sector services). For Bolton, only emotion work directly commodified for a profit as commercial customer service – what she calls 'pecuniary' emotion management^{vi} – constitutes emotional labour as defined by Hochschild. In effect, Bolton defines emotional labour via its determinate form as a specific service product possessing exchange value rather than as an integral aspect of labour power. In so doing, she appears to do the

opposite of LPT's core requirement to define labour through its social form as wage-labour power. Furthermore, Bolton (2005, Bolton and Boyd, 2003) classifies other forms of emotion work, which she argues are not emotional labour, via their social-organisational source (e.g. a medic's professional etiquette or an expression of a teacher's socialised compassion), much of which, she argues, comprises freely-given authentic feelings, beyond management control that are therefore uncommodified. The overall effect of Bolton's critique is the marginalisation of the emotional labour concept where it is only applicable to purely commercial service work rather than to the full range of employment roles where an element of emotion work is required to get the job done.

Bolton's contribution has enjoyed increasing influence within and outside of LPA (see, for example, Lewis, 2005; Lynch, 2007; Simpson, 2007). In addition, her analysis is now so widely accepted that several leading LPT writers have moved-on from just accepting her critique of Hochschild, to stating that her alternative typology of emotion management work is compatible with LPT (Warhurst *et al*, 2009, p. 102), without offering any detailed justification. By-contrast, Brook's (2009b) counter-critique argues that Bolton misreads Hochschild and builds her argument on an erroneous understanding of the core LPT concepts of labour power commodification and the (emotional) means of production (see below). Moreover, because Hochschild explicitly theorises emotional labour as an integral and unified aspect of labour power, it is possible to argue that Bolton's critique and alternative typology are significantly less compatible with LPT than Hochschild's original concept (Brook, 2009b). It is therefore timely to assess in detail the theoretical foundations and structure of Hochschild's emotional labour concept to determine the extent to which it is compatible with LPT.

Hochschild's theory

Hochschild commences *The Managed Heart* (1983) by comparing the work of a boy in a 19th century wallpaper factory, cited by Marx, and a flight attendant over a century later:

"The work done by the boy in the wallpaper factory called for a co-ordination of mind and arm, mind and finger, and mind and shoulder. We refer to it simply as physical labor. The flight attendant does physical labor when she pushes heavy meal carts through the aisles, and she does mental work when she prepares for and actually organizes emergency landings and evacuations. But in the course of doing this physical and mental labor she is doing something more, something I define as 'emotional labor'. This labor requires one to induce or suppress feelings in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others..." (1983, p.7)

The purpose of her comparison is to highlight the harmful effects of emotional labour because there "lies a similarity in the possible cost of doing the work (as) the worker can become estranged or alienated from an aspect of self – either the body or the margins of

the soul – that is ‘used’ to do the work” (1983, p.7).

This foundational application of alienation theory is joined by Hochschild’s use of Marx’s distinction between *exchange-value* and *use-value* in her oft-quoted, primary definition of emotional labour:

“[T]he management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has *exchange value*. I use the synonymous terms *emotion work* or *emotion management* to refer to those same acts done in a private context where they have *use value*” (1983, p.7).

For Hochschild, ‘emotion work’ is the management and presentation of emotions in the private sphere of our lives. Emotional labour, by contrast, involves the commercialisation of waged-workers’ emotion work through their ‘transmutation’^{vii} into a commodified service interaction with a customer. In the course of this transmutation, front-line service workers become alienated from their emotional product, its design and deployment. This is because management wrest formal ownership and control from workers of the form, timing, giving and withdrawal of feelings, moods and their display.

This alienating loss of workers’ control is compounded by an unequal relationship with customers, where the latter is formally ‘sovereign’ within the interaction (see Lodziak, 2002). This is in contrast to our private lives where we are ‘free to question the going rate of exchange and free to negotiate a new one. If we are not satisfied, we can leave; many friendships and marriages die of inequality’ (Hochschild, 1983, p. 85). Management achieves this subordination to the customer via the imposition of codified ‘feeling rules’, designed to achieve its required standards of customer service.

Hochschild characterises employees’ behavioural compliance with management’s feeling rules as ‘surface acting’. However, she also recognises that management increasingly seeks to internalise within workers’ the required feelings rules and their display. This is in order to enhance the service product and reduce the danger of workers suffering ‘emotive dissonance’ (emotional ‘burn-out’)(see Jansz and Timmers, 2002) caused by the strain of continuously bridging what is really felt with what has to be feigned over long periods. Hochschild argues, therefore, that many workers strive to internalise the codified feeling rules because it offers a more comfortable emotional state through “changing what we feel or by changing what we feign” (1983, p. 90). This is what she characterises as ‘deep acting’.

Deep acting occurs, Hochschild claims, when there is a ‘fusion’ (1983, p. 119) of the workers’ real and acted emotional labour. However, this comes at a price, as it is a deeply alienating condition requiring a systemic suppression of the real self and self-subordination to the commodification of their feelings. Nevertheless, it is a contradictory and unstable condition, as it can be prised apart by the demands of capitalist accumulation, whereupon it can be transformed into its opposite, resistance:

“Often the test comes when a company speed-up makes personal service impossible to deliver because the individual’s personal self is too thinly parcelled out to meet the demands made on it. At this point, it becomes harder and harder to keep the public and private selves fused... 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?” (1983, p.133)

Thus, for Hochschild, emotional labour is riven by structural tensions and contradictions borne of competitive market pressures and the employment relationship. While this self-evidently chimes with LPT, to what extent is her specific theorisation of emotional labour as an aspect of labour power compatible?

Hochschild on emotional labour power

While Hochschild states that emotional labour is emotion management produced for monetary profit (the evidential source of Bolton’s, 2005, definition), she is ambiguous on whether it is produced only during commercial service interactions. Elsewhere, she says that another important distinction between emotion management and emotional labour is whether there is ‘exploitation of the bottom by the top’^{viii} (1983, p.12), implying that it is defined by an essentially antagonistic employment relationship. This latter, broader definition would appear to be more compatible with her primary definition of emotional labour as sold for a wage and possessing exchange value. Thus, in line with LPT, she explicitly adopts Marx’s theorisation of wage-labour as the commodification, through purchase by an employer, of a worker’s labour power (Marx, 1976, p.270). Thus, Hochschild argues that as ‘deep gestures of exchange enter the market sector and are bought and sold as an *aspect of labour power*, feelings are commoditized’ (1979, p. 659 [author’s emphasis]), in the same way, presumably, as physical and mental labour power.

Thus, Hochschild’s explicit identification of emotional labour as ‘labour power’ establishes its foundational compatibility with LPT, which is principally “concerned with the transformation of labour power” (Thompson and Smith, 2009, p.919). It is also indicative of her acceptance of Marxism’s crucial distinction between ‘labour’ and ‘labour power’, whereby the worker sells their labour power to an employer (as the capacity to work), rather than their completed labour in the form of a finished product. LPT follows Marx in arguing that this distinction is to indicate that workers’ physical and mental (and emotional) capabilities exist in an ongoing, uncertain relationship to their employer (Thompson, 1983/89). This is because labour power is a unique commodity. Once purchased, employers cannot guarantee its final form or cost, as they are unable to detach it physically, mentally or emotionally from the worker. This ‘indeterminacy of labour power’ (Smith, 2006) generates a structural, counter-tendency to managerial control, which takes the form of an antagonistic relationship at the point of production. Thus in workplaces there is a continual haggling, in varying degrees, over the price, content and duration of labour power, as the

“worker brazenly accompanies his labor power right into the workplace and stands protectively by it” arguing “about the terms of its sale” (Rees, 1998, p. 221). Consequently, while all waged labour power is a commodity, it is an inherently contested and unpredictable commodity form.

In the years following the publication of *The Managed Heart* (1983), Hochschild has recognised that the logic of her concept implies that emotional labour is not solely performed by front-line workers engaged in customer service, such as airline cabin crew. This is because all workers in multiple areas of any organisation with employees undertake emotional labour, as an aspect of labour power, in varying degrees:

‘All in all, we can think of emotion as a covert resource, like money, or knowledge, or physical labor, which companies need to get the job done. Real-time emotions are a large part of what managers manage and emotional labor is no small part of what trainers train, and supervisors supervise. It is a big part of white-collar ‘work’. This is true for manufacturing firms... but it is far more true in the rapidly expanding service sector – in department stores, airports, hotels, leisure worlds, hospitals, welfare offices and schools.’ (Hochschild, 1993, p. xii)

Accordingly, Hochschild (2003) welcomes the application of emotional labour analysis to industries and work forms other than commercial front-line customer service, such as teachers, medics and police officers (see Bolton, 2005 and Steinberg and Figart, 1999 for extensive reviews).

This wider application is possible because Hochschild’s foundational use of Marx’s wage-labour concept, which implies that the pre-condition for the production of emotional labour is fulfilled at the point workers’ labour power converts into wage-labour (Thompson, 1983/89; Hyman, 2006), in the same way as for physical and mental labour. Therefore, Hochschild’s definition of emotional labour, as ‘sold for a wage’, enables its application to all forms and degrees of waged emotion work, including those engaged in non-commercial work such as caring professionals. In short, she defines emotional labour by its initial commodification as labour power rather than by its commercialisation as a service product, unlike Bolton (2009 and 2010).

Hochschild’s theory, therefore, is applicable to all forms of waged-labour involving a degree of emotion work. Moreover, it possesses an understanding of emotional labour as being in a unified relationship with physical and mental labour power. This is because Hochschild, understands labour-power to be ‘the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being’ (Marx, 1976, p. 270) but goes further by also identifying emotional labour. She demonstrates this notion of an integrated unity of individual faculties when explaining that:

“The flight attendant does physical labor when she pushes heavy meal carts through the aisles, and she does mental work when she prepares for and actually organizes emergency

landings and evacuations. But in the course of doing this physical and mental labor she is doing something more, something I define as 'emotional labor'". (1983, p. 7)

Hochschild therefore recognises that irrespective of whether workers are principally employed for their emotional, physical or mental labour, each performs on a daily basis a mix of all three forms. An obvious example is that in all sectors 'an array of workers, in a myriad of organisations, are subject to [management] attempts to secure and capture their 'sincere' emotional expressions of commitment to organisational goals and customers, whilst routinely undertaking mixes of physical, mental and emotional labour' (Brook, 2009b, p. 541).

This unified understanding of labour power capacities is prevalent in labour process analysis (LPA) studies of service work. In them, emotional labour is an integral and inseparable dimension of labour power, alongside physical and mental labour, where it is subsumed within a generic theorisation of the social relations of production as antagonistic and contradictory (see, for example, Taylor and Bain, 2003a, 2003b; and Mulholland, 2004). These studies portray service workplaces as comprising "a complex interplay of (workers') compliance, consent and resistance" (Taylor, 1998, p.100). In addition, they understand that emotional labour, like physical and mental labour, is subject to shifting boundaries at the 'frontier of control' (e.g. Filby, 1992; Taylor and Bain, 2003a) where management control can be 'partial, incoherent and often contradictory' (Taylor, 1998, p.100). Therefore, despite all workers ceding formal 'ownership' of their labour power, they do not forego its complete control. Nevertheless, the extent of emotional labour's indeterminacy, compared to that of physical and mental labour power, is a key question within LPT debates.

Agency and the indeterminacy of emotional labour

While LPT assumes an interdependent unity of labour power capacities, it is commonly argued that emotional labour enjoys an exacerbated indeterminacy (see for example, Bolton, 2010; Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; and Warhurst *et al*, 2009) in comparison with physical and mental labour. This raises the question of the extent to which workers retain ownership or predominant control over the form, timing and use of their feelings in comparison with the dexterity of their hands or the mental-moves required in their job.

On the one hand, exacerbated indeterminacy is evident in the partial and fragile success arising from the ubiquitous attempts by much HRM-type management to win the emotional commitment of employees to organisational goals through 'customer orientation' and more generic 'culture management' strategies (Brook and Pioch, 2006; Legge, 2005; Peccei and Rosenthal, 2000). On the other hand, underlying the argument of exacerbated indeterminacy is the assumption that successful emotional labour requires sincere performances. However, what management deems to be 'successful' need not comprise authentic emotions, as many employers do not expect emotional sincerity. Instead, many

settle for workers' behavioural compliance as the optimal performance, especially where jobs are low paid and low skilled (see Ogbonna and Harris, 2002, on the UK hospitality industry). Thus, if behaviourally compliant 'empty performances' (Bolton and Boyd, 2003) are all that is expected then it represents a successful realising of emotional labour power capacity, even if the workers' emotions underpinning them are grudging or blasé in response to being unable or unwilling to generate genuine feelings. It is for this reason that Hochschild theorises emotional labour's commodification as comprising both empty 'surface acting' and more sincere 'deep acting'.

In addition, the notion of exacerbated indeterminacy is also contingent upon the means of emotional labour's production. This is because for LPT the means of production comprise a combination of the forces of production (labour power, technical capacity and fixed capital) and social relations (design and organisation of work) of production (Marx, 1976) where 'the human and technical aspects of the labour process interpenetrate' (Thompson, 1983/8, p.39). Thus, all service production, whether in shops, airlines, call centres, hospitals or schools, rely on a mix of fixed capital, technical and logistical support as well as the emotional performance. In addition, politico-economic forces such as market competition, labour market conditions, new technologies and public services' marketisation also exercise considerable influence on the structure, design and standards of service labour processes (Vaughan and Taylor, 2006). Therefore, a worker's emotional labour power is but one, if central, element of the means of production. Moreover, its successful realisation is contingent upon its product market and the material conditions of its production (cf. scripted and monitored call centre work against a confidential medical consultation). In short, exacerbated indeterminacy is not a generic feature of emotional labour but contingent upon the material conditions of its labour process, service product form and managerial regime, in the same way as physical and mental labour. As for workers retaining ownership of their emotional means of production (Bolton, 2005; Warhurst *et al*, 2009), employers are acutely aware that they, not the workers, own and have responsibility for interactive service products. This is borne out by the fact that recipients understand that if they experience poor service, they need to seek redress from the organisation, not the front-line worker.

Flowing from this is the question of whether it is logical to speak of a discrete emotional labour process. The contemporary growth of service work, accompanied by employers adoption of 'customer orientation' and 'culture management' strategies, has made the explicit requirement for emotional labour common, even when the job design principally requires physical or mental labour. In response, employers increasingly recruit workers on the basis of having the appropriate attitude as well as skills (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002). Consequently, the notion of a discrete 'emotional labour process' is arguably oversimplistic and risks decoupling the emotional aspect of labour power from the routine reality of most workers' experience of combining all three aspects (Brook, 2009b).

Nevertheless, it remains useful shorthand for indicating a focus on the emotional aspect of a labour process (Bolton, 2009).

An incomplete transmutation?

The core criticism of Hochschild's thesis from within LPT is that by conceptualising a successful and complete transmutation of feelings, she fails to capture the contradictory and incomplete nature of the 'emotional labour process'. This line of criticism draws on the overstated notion of exacerbated indeterminacy and the erroneous argument that workers' retain ownership of their emotional means of production. Thus, Bolton claims that what "Hochschild fails to recognise is that the indeterminacy of labour is further exacerbated within the contested terrain of the emotional labour process" (2005, p. 63). While she is joined by Warhurst *et al* (2009) in claiming that 'workers need not be conceptualized as necessarily being alienated or estranged from their own feelings given that they own the means of this particular production' ^{ix} (p.108). Thus, Hochschild's concept is condemned as too 'one-dimensional (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002, p.248) and "ultimately absolutist in its implementation and consequences" (Bolton and Boyd, 2003, p.290.

Accordingly, Bolton and Boyd (2003), in contrast to Hochschild, found that airline cabin crew do not employ 'deep acting' but instead 'remain very aware that they are dealing with demanding, sometimes 'obnoxious', customers and that they are offering an 'empty performance' where they 'act out their role obligations without ever 'buying-in' to the norms set by the company' (p.301). Their conclusion is that whatever the anger, exhaustion and frustration experienced by the cabin crew, it does not represent an 'invasion of the self', as argued by Hochschild, but the contradictory, oppositional and dynamic nature of the emotional labour process. Similarly, Callaghan and Thompson (2002) in a study of a bank call centre conclude that '(f)ar from being passive providers of emotional labour, emotional employees are active and skilled emotion managers in their own right' (p. 248).

Taylor (1998), however, offers a less damning assessment. In his study of 'Flightpath' telephone sales workers, where he pays close attention to the compatibility between the emotional labour concept and LPT, he argues:

"Hochschild's... distinction between 'surface acting' and 'deep acting' is too stark and simplistic... (T)here were employees who were able to engage in what can be labelled 'sophisticated surface acting' or 'deep acting' for pragmatic purposes' (in order to earn an income, meet and surpass targets)... Those employees who appeared to experience a 'transmutation of their private emotional system' – 'emotional alienation' were in a tiny minority..." (p.99)

He argues in conclusion that there is an incomplete transmutation, as management control can be partial, incoherent and frequently contradictory (as it is within other physical and

mental labour processes). Thus, managerial demands for emotional performance have a tendency to provoke resistance amongst employees, thereby making emotional labour a “double-edged sword” (Taylor, 1998, p.99). In short, his critical account suggests that Hochschild’s concept is too blunt an instrument to capture the contradictory complexities of workplace relations. However, he does not go so far as to argue that Hochschild analysis is one-dimensional or portrays passive actors. Rather, he appears to imply that her theorisation of workplace relations is insufficiently dialectical.

Hochschild on resistance

How accurate then is the argument that Hochschild portrays emotion workers as passive or even crippled actors, where the successful transmutation of feelings implies that management so successfully appropriates workers’ feelings that they are unable to exert an active and counter-controlling force in relationships with management or customers? This is a strange conclusion as *The Managed Heart* (1983) contains detailed discussion and evidence of workers’ misbehaviour, resistance and trade union organisation. Hochschild is able to offer such an account because she conceptualises emotional labour as an aspect of labour power, marked by an inherent antagonism within the wage-labour relationship (including an alienating but incomplete loss of workers control). Moreover, she theorises independent worker activity as aggravated by labour intensification, generated by corporate accumulation strategies in response to intensifying competition. In short, she theorises the transmutation of feelings as an unstable condition:

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. (1983, p. 125)

Hochschild also argues that the cumulative effects of labour intensification and job degradation can transform workers responses into conscious resistance, individually and collectively, where they openly contest the terms of sale of their labour power:

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. (1983, p.127)

She further explains that the growth of US airlines trade unionism in the 1970s, in response to labour intensification, was an expression of ‘accumulated resentment and discontent’ (1983, p.126). In addition, she provides examples of nascent class-consciousness (without naming it as such), when she discusses how those employees who willingly comply with management’s work intensification “become the “rate-busters” who are resented by other

workers' (1983, p.130). Thus, central to Hochschild's portrayal is an acknowledgment that as management attempt to tighten control and demand greater effort; its efforts are commonly resisted:

'As one veteran put it: "The more the company sees the battle, the tougher they get with the 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."' (1983, p.130)

Hochschild's account of resistance demonstrates she understands that workers are able to question the transmutation of their feelings and subsequent alienation from their sense of self. Her theorisation, therefore, implies that employees possess the agency to begin to challenge the exploitative and subordinating control of management. However, Hochschild's notion of a 'successful' transmutation of feelings, which she describes as "a delicate achievement" (1983, p. 119) also appears to contain the assumption that it is a normative state for emotional labourers:

Before the speed-up, most workers sustained the cheerful good will that good service requires... 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. (1983, p. 126)

Nevertheless, she also carefully states that that there is a cost to be paid for successful transmutation in that "the worker must give up control over *how* the work is to be done" (1983, p. 119), thereby acknowledging the alienating effects of emotional labour. This formulation appears to suggest that workers, outside of conditions of unsustainable labour intensification, tend to be unreflective on the alienating cost of losing control of their emotional labour. In addition, it suggests that Hochschild is at odds with LPT's understanding of the experience of waged-labour as inherently contradictory. This is because the notion of a successful transmutation appears to assume a linear, one-sided, management control process. It is because LPT conceptualises the employment relationship as inescapably contradictory and management control as inherently partial that Taylor (1998) argues that there is an 'incomplete transmutation' amongst the vast majority of Flightpath telesales employees, while Bolton and Boyd (2003) argue that 'empty performances' are routine amongst cabin crew.

This tendential weakness is principally a consequence of Hochschild not applying the logic of her primary theorisation of emotional labour power as an alienating relationship to the routine, day-to-day, experience of individual workers. Thus, her concept of a successful transmutation is vulnerable to the charge of being a normative and therefore passive experience (Bolton, 2005; Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Warhurst et al, 2009) where misbehaviour and resistance emerge only in the event of transmutation's failure (Brook,

2009a). As a corollary to this normative tendency, Hochschild also lacks a conceptualisation of employees' consciousness as routinely contradictory; in other words, one that explains how alienation shapes workers but does not blind them to the reality of capitalist employment relationships (Lukacs, 1974).

Without such an understanding, she is unable to theorise how workers retain the routine capacity to think and act independently of management control, albeit within the constrained circumstances of the employment relationship. If Hochschild did this, rather than referring to a 'successful transmutation' she would conceptualise workers' as possessing sufficient agency to pursue ameliorative measures on a day-to-day basis or even exert a degree of counter-control in relationships with management and service recipients (Brook, 2009a; Filby, 1992; Taylor and Bain, 1999). In short, workers' detachment and resistance - Hochschild's 'war of smiles' - would be an ever-present possibility due to their day-to-day experience of 'incomplete transmutation'.

LPA studies of service work, therefore reject, correctly, the notion of a successful transmutation. Instead, management control of emotional labour is conceptualised as frequently variable, contested and double-edged (Warhurst et al, 2009) where the triadic nature (employer, employee and service recipient) of the labour process (Korczynski, 2002) means workers experience "continual negotiation and re-negotiation over the transformation of *emotional* labour power into a serviceable product" (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002: 251). For example, Filby's (1992) memorable study of betting shops found that women workers built an informal counter-culture by exploiting their 'official' sexualised emotional labour to ridicule male managers and unpleasant 'punters' with sexual humour. Similarly, Taylor and Bain's (2003b) call-centre research revealed how workplace activists subverted their anti-union management by using a culture of humour. On a more prosaic and tangible level, Mulholland's (2004, p.720) study of call centre workers found that "sales sabotage, working to rule, work avoidance, absenteeism and high turnover" are routine expressions of the inherent antagonism in the emotional labour process.

The above raises the question of the extent to which 'transmutation' is a normative concept. Is it one of 'absolute' management control, as argued by Bolton (2005), or rather is one that possesses a normative tendency, with the effect that it produces an over-emphasis on the success of management control? It is important to recognise that Hochschild makes transmutation's alienating effects central to the concept, which has the effect of ensuring that it she applies it as a contradictory and unstable condition. This is because Hochschild recognises that the alienation generated by workers' systemic separation from the design, control and ownership of their emotional labour is never a complete process. Thus, workers' not only haggle over the terms of sale of their labour power but also probe the frontier of its control in a continual search to ameliorate, even resist, their alienation, as Hochschild's graphic portrayal of the 'war of smiles' demonstrates. Therefore, the contestation over the terms of labour power commodification is a counter-tendency (Brook, 2009a; Rees, 1998)

that corrodes the possibility of 'absolute' management control and with it workers self-reification (successful transmutation) as commodities. This contradictory dimension is why Hochschild understands that the experience of service work causes the employee to ask if "her smile and the emotional labor that keeps it sincere are really hers... Or are they deliberately worked up and delivered on behalf of the company"(1983, p.133)

Hochschild's individualisation of emotional labour

While Hochschild's portrays the emotional labour workplace as pitted with a mixture of workers' consent, indifference and resistance, her theoretical premise is under-developed and stunted by the tendency to dichotomise the distinction between a 'successful' and 'failed' transmutation of feelings. In short, she lacks a thorough dialectical understanding of the dynamic contradictions that mark both workers' consciousness and the labour process^x. She compounds this weakness by her conceptual foregrounding of the individualised human cost of emotional labour. This is the result of her central analytic focus on surface acting and deep acting, as the internalised responses of individual workers during the transmutation process. This in turn is primarily the consequence of her theory of an 'emotion system', which is principally drawn from the individually focussed work of Goffman and Freud (Hochschild, 1983).

The consequence of Hochschild's tendency to analytic individualisation is that it overshadows her rich mapping of service organisations as contested, collective terrains, where workers' experiences of emotional labour are simultaneously individual and collective. Thus, by focussing on internalised, individual strategies, Hochschild over-emphasises the individual cost of emotional labour and tends to present the individual worker as atomised. This is because she insufficiently grounds her analysis in workplace social relations, such as the ubiquitous presence of informal workplace cultures that, at the very least, ensure ameliorative support from co-workers (Korczynski, 2002) and often space for misbehaviour and resistance (e.g. see Filby, 1992). In this way, Hochschild pays insufficient attention to the implications of employers' making demands for the same emotional labour from the many, not just isolated individuals. Thus, the individual's response to management's demands and their experience of emotional labour is invariably a collective, shared activity. Indeed, these day-to-day 'communities of coping' (Korczynski, 2002) often comprise an essential precursor to the trade unionism (see Taylor and Bain, 2003b) and open resistance Hochschild documents in *The Managed Heart*. In this way, she does not recognise explicitly the existence and significance of organisational space outside of management control (Bolton, 2005), which workers fill with ameliorative and resistive activities sanctioned by informal workplace cultures. Moreover, just such an understanding of the collective worker as an actor is at the heart of LPT's foundations, which understands all wage-labour to be a social form, invariably experienced as a shared endeavour in

workplaces. Thus, for LPT, a concept of the collective worker is an inseparable dimension of workplace agency, alongside that of the individual actor (Mulholland, 2004).

The above raises the question of whether Hochschild's concepts of a 'transmutation of feelings', 'surface acting' and 'deep acting' are, or can be compatible, with LPT. While Taylor (1998) refers to an "incomplete transmutation" (p.99) as a common experience of emotional labour, he is also correct to argue that the any notion of a transmutation misleadingly implies the possibility of workers buying-in to a management prescribed, normative state of mind. Thus, his study of telesales revealed that workers "appeared to 'pragmatically' rather than 'normatively'... accept managerial prescription of emotional labour" and that "(m)anagerial attempts to control such a private, personal realm... appear to provoke strong resistance" (1998, p.99). Thus, resistance is endemic to the emotional labour process, not just in response to 'extra-ordinary' management demands for labour intensification, as Hochschild suggests.

Equally, the notions of 'surface acting' and 'deep acting' are too stark and simplistic to capture the mix of workers attitudes, motivations and behaviours. Rather, employees engage in "sophisticated surface acting" or "deep acting for pragmatic purposes" (Taylor, 1998, p.99), to earn an income, often requiring the meeting and surpassing of targets, at the same time as standing guard over their personal feelings (Bolton and Boyd, 2003). Indeed, LPT has long recognised that the material experience of waged work, especially management control, generates a rich mix of dynamic responses, amongst and within individual workers, ranging from consent to resistance - *getting on, getting by and getting back* (Thompson, 1983/89; Thompson and Newsome, 2004). Therefore, it is possible to argue that LPT already possesses a sophisticated and flexible array of concepts, which is more capable of capturing the richly textured emotional labour experience than that of Hochschild's dichotomous surface and deep acting formula. Finally, LPT's foundational understanding that waged labour power is routinely contradictory and contested means that even though Hochschild theorises transmutation as an unstable condition, its normative tendencies means that it is ultimately incompatible.

Conclusion: Emotional labour power and LPT

For LPT, the principal enduring feature of Hochschild's theory is its identification of emotional labour as an additional aspect of a worker's aggregate labour power capacity. As such, it enhances the ability of LPT in its primary analytic concern of studying 'what is done to labour power' within the employment relationship (Thompson and Smith, 2009). In addition, Hochschild's theorisation is broadly compatible by virtue of the fact that she understands that there is a human cost to performing emotional labour, via her application of Marx's alienation theory, which in turn implies an inherent antagonism between management and labour. She demonstrates this understanding concretely in her portrayal

of workers' resistance to management's demands for labour intensification. Despite these broad points of compatibility, Hochschild's theory has been consistently criticised, to varying degrees, for its stunted ability to capture the complex and contradictory experience of the emotional labour process and the incompleteness of managerial control. The result is that there is a debate within LPA as to whether the very concept of 'emotional labour' should be retained as a core LPT concept.

This article has sought to argue that LPT should retain emotional labour as a core concept on the terms originally argued by Hochschild, that is, as an aspect of labour power alongside physical and mental labour. However, her internal theorisation possesses normative tendencies, principally her concepts of transmutation, surface acting and deep acting, which in turn overly individualise her analysis of the emotional labour experience and presents resistance as extra-ordinary. Thus, Hochschild does not possess the conceptual means to theorise emotional labour as a simultaneously collective and individual experience, marked by a routinely contradictory and contested relationship to management control. Accordingly, LPT needs to develop an internal theorisation of emotional labour power, from within its own tradition and without, that is able to capture these dimensions.

Notes

ⁱ See Thompson and Smith (2001 and 2009) and Thompson and Newsome (2004) for historical accounts and mapping of LPA's theoretical development.

ⁱⁱ Brook (2009a) offers a detailed exploration and critical assessment of Hochschild's usage of Marx's alienation theory.

ⁱⁱⁱ There is insufficient space to allow a detailed revisiting of the Bolton-Brook debate.

^{iv} Sturdy and Fineman (2001) offer an assessment of emotion work and LPT with particular reference on resistance but do not address directly Hochschild's concept nor the core theoretical issue of emotion work as an aspect of labour power.

^v Like Hochschild, Bolton bases her theory and analysis of workplace emotions on Erving Goffman's interactionist social psychology, which she then blends with LPT.

^{vi} In place of the emotional labour concept, Bolton (2005; Bolton and Boyd, 2003) offers an alternative typology of four emotion management forms in which each is distinct by virtue of its social-organisational source. The first two, 'pecuniary' and 'prescriptive' are feeling rules, which derive from commercial and professional-organisational demands respectively. The result is that workers produce instrumental performances for financial and status-oriented reasons that tend to be empty of feeling. The third form is 'presentational' emotion management, which represents the 'basic socialised self' (Bolton and Boyd, 2003, p.297). The final form is 'philanthropic' emotion management, which is the willing giving of 'emotion gifts' to service recipients and co-workers 'outside' of corporate, organisational or professional rules. Both presentational and philanthropic forms comprise 'authentic' feelings that remain outside of the commodification process. Moreover, for Bolton, even when workers are performing empty 'pecuniary' or 'prescriptive' emotion management they are "knowledgeable agents" (2005, p.103) capable of "mixing and managing all forms of emotion management according to 'rules' other than those solely controlled by the organisation" (2005, p.103).

^{vii} Hochschild states that she deliberately chooses a 'grand word'. She further explains that her usage is designed to express the grievous nature of the process not to imply permanent 'mutation' (1983, p.19).

^{viii} Hochschild does not offer a theorisation of exploitation of emotional labour; nor does she offer an explicit discussion or theorisation of class. Rather it is a matter of inferring that she assumes – probably unwittingly – a broadly Marxist understanding of class given her theorisation of labour power and alienation.

^{ix} This argument is based on a common misunderstanding of Marx's theory, which assumes alienation is a workplace, point of production experience rather than endemic to capitalist society. It is not possible to escape alienation under capitalist social relations as Meszaros explains: "Selling is the practice of alienation... Alienation is characterized by the universal extension of 'saleability'...; by the conversion of human beings into 'things' so that they could appear as commodities on the market." (1970/2005, p.35)

^x One route for developing a dialectical understanding of the experience of emotional labour power is the work of the early Soviet psychologists, Vygotsky, Volosinov and Bakhtin (see forthcoming article from Brook). Their integration with contemporary classical Marxist analysis (of social movements) is already underway (e.g. Barker, 2001)

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