Selling feelings for a wage: a labor process perspective on emotional labor power, its indeterminacy and incomplete commodification

Paul Brook, University of Leicester, UK

Introduction: A meeting of ideas

Arlie Hochschild’s (1979; 1983/2003) pioneering contribution to the sociology of work on emotion work has been profound. For over 30 years her innovative emotional labor concept has inspired and underpinned an exponential growth in the study of workplace emotion from a range of theoretical perspectives within organization studies (Fineman 1993; Sieben and Wettergren 2010) and many other social science fields (Fineman 2008). Throughout this time her primary definition of emotional labor as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (1983, 7), as a requirement of paid employment, has been accepted by adherents and critics alike.

For the influential labor process analysis tradition (see Thompson and Smith 2009), Hochschild’s theorization of emotional labor, as “sold for a wage” (1983, 7) and an additional aspect of labor power, alongside physical and intellectual labor (1979), has ensured its progressive incorporation into the main body of labor process theory (LPT) (Brook 2010). Indeed, the widespread adoption and adaption of Hochschild’s emotional labor concept has proved to be a theoretically and empirically enriching experience for labor process analysis (LPA) (Bolton 2005; Warhurst et al. 2009).

While LPA has Marxist origins, principally deriving from Harry Braverman’s (1974) seminal Labor and Monopoly Capital, it has evolved over the decades into a tradition that encompasses Marxist, post-Marxist, neo-Weberian and other materialist perspectives on the capitalist labor process (Jaros 2010; Thompson and Newsome 2004; Vincent 2011). Nevertheless, common to LPA is the insistence that the labor process is contradictory and structurally antagonistic owing to the combination of labor power’s indeterminacy and the unequal and exploitative nature of the employment relationship. The consequence is that managerial control of the labor process tends to be routinely contested, fragile and partial. Therefore, LPA debates concerning the nature, experience and management of emotional labor have focused on the questions of what is actually sold to an employer by an individual worker and the degree to which it is owned and controlled by the employing organization. These questions also encompass the extent to which emotional labor should be conceptualized as distinctly different from physical and intellectual labor, and whether it is feasible to conceive of a discrete emotional labor process.

This chapter critically assesses debates within LPA on Hochschild’s concept and subsequent attempts to revise or replace it with a theory of emotion work that is compatible with the principal tenets of LPT. This is followed by a critical defense of Hochschild’s concept from a classical Marxist perspective (Callinicos 2007; Rees, 1998), which defends and elaborates

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1 This chapter is based on arguments drawn from a series of three articles (Brook, 2009a; 2009b; 2010).
her central position that emotional labor is an aspect of labor power and therefore common to all forms of jobs, irrespective of whether it is performed as an interactive service encounter with a customer or during a routine meeting between a manager and supervisees in an office, hospital, school or factory. However, Hochschild is also critiqued for inadequately theorizing the contradictory, contested and collective nature of the labor process through her over-individualization of the emotional labor experience and tendency to assume, normatively, near-complete management control. It is then argued that for the emotional labor concept to be compatible with LPT, emotional labor power should be theorized within a unitary concept of labor power, comprising a dynamic, interdependent complex of physical, intellectual and emotional effort. Moreover, such an understanding should be based on the central notion that labor power is inherently indeterminate and therefore a special type of commodity. The chapter concludes by arguing that emotional labor cannot be conceptualized as a distinctly different form of labor power - compared to its physical and intellectual counterparts – on the mistaken basis that it is a deeper, less ‘detachable’ aspect of the self and therefore performed within its own discrete emotional labor process.

What is labor process theory?

LPT has retained throughout its waves of development since the nineteen-seventies a core set of theoretical propositions (Thompson and Smith 2001; 2009). It commences from the character of labor as a unique commodity due to its indeterminate form after hiring, as yet-to-be-realized labor. Hence, employers have to ensure the conversion of labor power into actual work effort under conditions that permit capital accumulation (Littler 1990; Thompson and Newsome 2004). From this understanding flow a number of sub-propositions:

1. The principal focus should be on the experience of employees during the transformation of their labor power into a productive form, rather than the particular means deployed by the employer (Thompson and Smith 2009).
2. The basis for capitalist employment relations is exploitation and subordination, which produces a “structured antagonism” during the transformation of labor power (Edwards 1990, 128; Thompson and Newsome 2004).
3. The transformation of labor power implies the need for control necessitating managerial institutions applying a variety of strategies and tactics (Thompson and Smith 2001).
4. Labor power’s inherent indeterminacy and the employment relation’s structured antagonism ensure that management’s control is fraught with tensions and contradictions, which manifest as a tendency for workers to resist as well as consent (Edwards 1990; Thompson and Newsome 2004).

Arising from this core theory, LPA is therefore concerned with analyzing capital’s expansion of labor power capacities in response to competitive market conditions, in particular (and increasingly), capital’s demand for enhanced service via the recruitment and training of specific personality traits (Callaghan and Thompson 2002) and corporeal display qualities
In keeping with LPT’s materialist foundations, interactive service work is understood as not purely an ‘intangible’ experience but as an inherently material process (Pettinger 2006; Warhurst et al. 2009). This is because the means of service production comprise an integration of human and technical aspects of the labor process (Thompson 1983/1989), such as a call center worker using telecommunications technology to interact with a customer. Indeed, all interactive service production tends to rely, in varying degrees, on a mix of fixed capital, technical/logistical support and material retail goods in conjunction with the human element.

For LPT, therefore, the logical consequence of its core principles is that labor’s determinate form, such as its use to perform a particular type of customer interaction, is not of primary analytic importance. Instead, the key question is whether labor “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 1974, 362). Thus, because Hochschild’s (1983/2003, 7) primary focus is on theorizing emotional labor as a social form (“the management of feeling”), as an aspect of wage-labor (“sold for a wage”) rather than as an occupationally specific determinate form of work (e.g. serving airline customers for profit) there is a conceptual bridge between her theorization of emotional labor and the core tenets of LPT. It is this bridge that has underpinned the progressive incorporation, albeit variously, of her emotional labor concept into LPT (Brook 2010).

**Emotional labor (power) in perspective**

The incorporation of the emotional labor concept into LPT has been a profoundly critical process (Brook 2010; Warhurst et al. 2009). Writers within the LPA tradition have tended to highlight the inability of Hochschild’s concept to capture the complex and contradictory experience of the (emotional) labor process (Bolton 2005; Brook 2009a; Lopez 2010; Taylor 1998; Warhurst et al. 2009). In particular, they highlight a normative tendency in her theorization, which assumes that emotional laborers are passive (Callaghan and Thompson 2002) resulting in management possessing the capacity to exert near complete control over the labor process (Bolton ibid) through what Hochschild refers to as the successful transmutation of their feelings by management, during which “the worker must give up control over how the work is to be done” (1983/2003, 119 [Hochschild’s emphasis]). This claimed normative passivity stands in stark contrast to LPA’s foundational conceptualization of managerial control as structurally contradictory and invariably incomplete (Thompson and Newsome 2004). This is because all labor power is a special type of commodity owing to its inherent indeterminacy.

Even after labor power is purchased by an employer as wage-labor, it is only for a limited period and not in its entirety, as “a lump, once and for all” (Marx 1976/1990, 271), as with buying a photocopier or building. To do so would require the worker to sell their entire physical, intellectual and emotional entity as a slave. Thus, converting their individual self
“from the owner of a commodity into a commodity” (Marx ibid). In addition, and crucially, an employer’s purchased labor power is characterized by its perpetual existence as a yet-to-be realized value-producing resource that has to be continually trained, directed, controlled, policed and even cajoled into undertaking productive labor in sufficient quantities; of appropriate quality; and in the requisite time and place (Smith 2006). This is because the workers retain ultimate ownership of their labor power, even if they relinquish control of its application and management in the labor process for fixed periods (Brook 2009a). It is only the final determinate product (embodi}ing an employee’s completed labor) that passes into the employer’s full ownership (i.e. a standard commodity), as either a tangible good, such as a fast-food meal, or as a completed service interaction, which the organization claims as its ‘own’ through subsequently taking responsibility for its delivery and consequences, as demonstrated by the provision of service-user and customer complaints procedures, underpinned in large measure by legal liability (Brook 2010).

Labor power, unlike dead and spent labor, therefore, is a living, indeterminate commodity that is inherently unpredictable and intractable. Consequently, an employer is routinely confronted by a structural contradiction at the heart of the capital-labor relation in which both parties are driven to continually contest labor power’s price, usage and mode of control. This is because it cannot be physically, intellectually or emotionally detached from the individual self, with the inevitable consequence that the worker “brazenly accompanies [their] labor power right into the workplace and stands protectively by it [arguing] about the terms of its sale” (Rees 1998, 221). In this way, employees remain in ultimate possession of their labor power, whether physical, intellectual or emotional, as a commodity, even if they hire it out for a limited period and in prescribed quantities to an employer (Braver}man 1974; Marx ibid).

Revising Hochschild or moving on?

This foundational understanding of labor power’s indeterminacy has profound implications for LPA’s theoretical engagement with the emotional labor concept. From a LPT perspective, Hochschild’s (ibid) normative assumption that management’s control is so effective it is able to appropriate workers’ feelings via a transmutation of feelings appears to be a rare feat, even logically impossible, given the indeterminacy of labor power (Bolton and Boyd 2003; Brook 2010; Callaghan and Thompson 2002; Lopez 2006; Taylor 1998). For this principal reason, theoretical interventions within LPA have sought to revise, even replace, Hochschild’s concept. A notable contribution is by Taylor (1998, 99), who offers instead a more nuanced interpretation of Hochschild’s stark distinction between emotional surface acting (externalized behavioral compliance) and deep acting (akin to Stanislavski’s method acting), thereby conceptualizing emotional labor as routinely comprising an “incomplete transmutation of feelings”; whereas Lopez (2006), in his study of care homes, argues for more flexibility in Hochschild’s concept to allow emotional labor to be understood as on a

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2 Hochschild claims that she chose the term transmutation because it is a “grand word” (ibid, 19) that expresses the grievous nature of the process, rather than adopting it to imply a complete mutation of a worker’s feelings.
continuum, where there are coercive feeling rules\textsuperscript{3} at one extreme and authentic emotional care (facilitated by a loosening of management’s codified feeling rules) at the other. For Bolton, however, Hochschild’s normative tendencies are so deeply embedded that they generate a “one-dimensional analysis” (ibid, 2), which effectively disallows the possibility of employees’ independent emotional agency, as her analysis of management control is “ultimately absolutist” in its consequences (Bolton and Boyd 2003, 290).

In short, there is a high level of agreement within LPA that Hochschild’s theorization is stunted in its ability to capture the contradictory and contested nature of workplace relations. However, the degree of critique is varied and the range of proposed remedies is wide. At one end are Taylor (1998) and Lopez (2006), who want to retain Hochschild’s core concept, whilst reorienting it to capture the incompleteness of managerial control via revising its conceptual components. At the other end is Bolton’s (ibid; Bolton and Boyd 2003) influential critique, which seeks to move on from what she calls the “emotional labour bandwagon” (ibid: 53) with its accompanying one-sided portrayal of workplaces, populated by passive, even crippled, actors who are wholly subordinated to managerial control. In her accompanying re-theorization (ibid; Bolton and Boyd 2003), the foundational tenets of Hochschild’s concept are marginalized, arguably even rejected (Brook 2009). Indeed, the very use of the term emotional labor is effectively jettisoned, as tellingly revealed by the title of Bolton’s monograph where she fully elaborates her critique and re-theorization, Emotion Management in the Workplace (ibid).

Bolton’s (2010) re-theorization, rather than understanding emotional effort as a core aspect of labor power, relegates emotional labor’s conceptual applicability to its final determinate form as a commodified, for profit, customer service product, such as hairdressing or restaurant waiting. Emotional labor, therefore, is no longer a generalized social form of wage-labor but rather defined by what Bolton refers to as its pecuniary function (a ‘for sale’ service commodity), as part of a wider typology of emotion work comprising: pecuniary, prescriptive, presentational and philanthropic\textsuperscript{4} forms of workplace emotion management. Unlike pecuniary work, the latter three variants are not understood as commodity forms but instead are principally defined in terms of the degree of emotional autonomy exercised by the employee and/or the level of emotional authenticity invested by them. For Bolton (ibid), employees always retain ownership of the emotional means of production, in contrast to their physical and intellectual labor (Warhurst et al. 2009).

The argument that workers retain ownership of the emotional means of production and therefore most emotion work remains private emotion management rather than commodified

\textsuperscript{3} Codified feeling rules refer to management’s requirements that employees adhere to prescribed emotional behavior, even feelings, in defined workplace social contexts /service interactions (see Hochschild 1979).

\textsuperscript{4} Prescriptive emotion management is the codified organizational and/or professional norms required during service interactions; presentational emotion management has its source in the individual asserting the basic socialized-self through applying their own personal norms of emotional engagement in addition to any prescribed rules; and philanthropic is emotion management that is given as a personal ‘gift’ by the employee, over and above any managerial, professional or socialized emotional norms. For Bolton (ibid, 102), the latter two are “moments of truth”, expressive of employees’ “authentic selves” that are beyond management’s control or ownership (i.e. commodification).
emotional labor lifts all but pecuniary emotional labor out of the unitary concept of labor power. This is based on a common argument within much of LPA that the emotional dimension of labor power, unlike physical and intellectual labor, uniformly possesses an exacerbated indeterminacy (Bolton 2010; Callaghan and Thompson 2002; and Warhurst et al 2009). Underlying this argument is the assumption that successful emotional labor comprises sincere feelings and behavior, which cannot be captured and owned by management. In effect Bolton argues that in contrast to physical and intellectual labor, the vast majority of emotion work is autonomous, even independent, of the valorization process (the realization of exchange-value) through which labor power is transformed into a productive commodity by the employer. In other words, her theorization implies that most forms of non-pecuniary emotion work are not fully “drawn into the network of capitalist social relations” and therefore the labor of the worker has not been transformed into productive labor (Braverman 1974, 362) by virtue of its exacerbated indeterminacy. It is on this basis that she maintains that her understanding of the emotional labor concept (i.e. commodified emotion work) is inapplicable to non-commercial forms of interactive front-line service work, such as public healthcare and education. In addition, this understanding means that the concept of emotional labor is also inapplicable to other non-service forms of workplace emotional effort, often required to get the job done, such as performing teamwork based tasks.

In response to Bolton’s critique and re-theorization, I argue in detail elsewhere (Brook 2009b; Bolton 2009) that she misunderstands the basis of Hochschild’s primary theorization of emotional labor as an aspect of labor power, which therefore means it is already transformed into a - yet to be realized - commodity form when sold for a wage to employers, irrespective of whether its final determinate product form is for profit or not. Such an understanding is consistent with LPT’s foundational understanding that labor power is a special type of commodity that is purchased and exploited through the employment relationship, thus implying that all forms of hired labor power effort are drawn into capitalist production relations as wage-labor, whether they are for directly commercial purposes or public services; and irrespective of whether they comprise ‘authentic’ emotional displays or not. Therefore, the extent to which employees’ emotional labor is sincere during service interactive encounters is irrelevant as to whether their emotion work is formally owned and controlled by the employer. Whatever an employee feels or does as part of their job has already passed into the employer’s possession as completed labor, albeit in the contested context of the labor process.

The degree to which sincere emotional labor is a pre-requisite for organizational success is dependent on management’s definition of what is required by the worker, which in turn is contingent upon the nature of the service product and its labor process. Compare, for example, the depth and quality of emotional sincerity required performing a high volume, directly supervised interaction, such as that of a supermarket check-out operator, where emotionally empty but polite performances are adequate, with that of an oncologist informing a patient confidentially, privately and with empathy that they have cancer and a short time to live. For the latter, the labor process has to allow for a much greater degree of employee autonomy compared to the former. While for the former, emotional sincerity is not required
but rather behavioural compliance, although even this requires emotional effort. In this way, the level of emotional labor power’s indeterminacy is not uniformly exacerbated but conditional upon the degree of labor process autonomy, largely determined by the nature of the emotional product, in just the same way as for physical and intellectual labor. Indeed, its degree of indeterminacy is no greater than that of physical and intellectual labor power (see Brook, 2010).

The notion that workers retain ownership of the so called emotional means of production is also based on a misunderstanding of a core LPT concept. This is because the means of production comprise both the forces of production, principally labor power, technical capacity (e.g. training and service technologies) and fixed capital (e.g. retail stores and hospitals), and the necessary social relations of production (the employment relationship and accompanying managerial control) to ensure the production of a profit/surplus (Marx 1976/1990). In short, the means of production are where indeterminate human capacities and technical/fixed aspects of the labour process interpenetrate (Thompson 1983/8, 39). Therefore, it is not feasible for an individual employee to retain ownership of the means of production, as the deployment of emotional effort is but one, if central aspect of it. Equally, it is the employing organization that pre-owns the technical/fixed components, not the employee.

My defense of Hochschild’s emotional labor concept against Bolton’s critique, however, is also critical from a LPT perspective (see Brook 2009a; 2009b; 2010) for two principal reasons. First, Hochschild’s theorization over-emphasizes the individual experience at the expense of the collective response to emotional labor. Second, her concept insufficiently captures the contradictory and contested nature of the labor process, as other LPA writers have argued. The remainder of the chapter explores these criticisms in more detail as part of a critical defense of Hochschild’s central contribution to contemporary LPT. In other words, what of Hochschild’s emotional labor concept should be retained, revised or replaced in developing a robust integration with LPT?

**Retaining Hochschild’s foundations**

Central to Hochschild’s concept is her understanding that emotional labor is an integral aspect of labor power capacity. She states that as “deep gestures of exchange enter the market sector and are bought and sold as an aspect of labor power, feelings are commoditized” (1979, 659 [Hochschild’s emphasis]). The opening lines of The Managed Heart (Hochschild, ibid) then provide a concrete example of how she understands emotional labor as an aspect of labor power capacity, along with physical and intellectual labor, when she compares the work of a boy in a 19th century factory 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 […].” (ibid, 7)

Hochschild then joins her foundational theorization of emotional labor, as an aspect of labor power, with her application of Marx’s distinction between exchange-value and use-value (Marx 1976/1990) in her oft-quoted, primary definition of emotional labor:

“[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.” (ibid, 7) [Hochschild’s emphases]

By making this distinction between emotional effort that is bought for a wage, possessing exchange value, and private emotion management with use value, Hochschild demonstrates that her primary analytic focus, like LPT, is on the social form of emotional labor power and its transformation into productive labor (Brook 2010). In addition, her understanding of emotional labor as an aspect of labor power is also indicative of an acceptance of Marxism’s and LPT’s crucial distinction between labor and labor power, whereby workers sell their labor power to an employer - as the yet-to-be realized capacity to work - rather than their completed labor in the form of a finished product (Marx 1976/1990; Thompson 1983/1989).

Hochschild’s (ibid) original definition suggests that emotional labor is only constituted by the emotional effort used directly for interactive service. However, she went on to accept that the logical implication of theorizing emotional labor as the emotional aspect of labor power is that a degree of emotional effort is inherent to all forms of labor power:

“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, xii)

Therefore, a large element of employees’ emotion management in the workplace (even resisting the urge to say what they actually think to a supervisor) is a ‘normal’ condition of the job, just as physical labor entails a ‘normal’ degree of physical management, such as complying with health and safety rules (e.g. walking not running around machinery). As such, emotional labor power can be understood as comprising three dimensions: an object of work to influence others, such as serving customers or managers supervising staff; a means to get the job done, such as being patient when frustrated with a task; and a condition of performing the work appropriately, as per the requirements of management’s feeling rules or

It logically follows that irrespective of whether a worker is principally employed for their emotional, physical or intellectual labor, they can and do perform a mix of all three forms on a daily basis, in all types of organizations; service and non-service, commercial and not-for-profit. Indeed, many workers in a range of employment sectors, not just those engaged in front-line service delivery, are increasingly expected by their employers to offer at least a nominal display of organizational commitment and to be customer-oriented (Brook and Pioch 2006) in tandem with their physical and intellectual work. Hence, Hochschild’s example of a flight attendant simultaneously undertaking a range of physical, intellectual and emotional tasks, as part of her everyday job, is highly salient for contemporary LPT. This is because it suggests the notion of a discrete emotional labor process (see Bolton 2010; Vincent 2011) is conceptually inaccurate with the consequence that it decouples emotional effort from the routine working experience of combining it simultaneously with physical and emotional labor in a range of related, non-interactive, service tasks (Brook, 2010)5. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that Hochschild concurs with Marx that labor-power is “the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being” (1976/1990, 270), with her explicit addition of emotional capacity. Like Marx and LPT, Hochschild’s concept would appear to assume an integrated unity of an individual’s labor power faculties.

Confronting normative and atomizing tendencies

A paradox lies at the center of LPA’s critique of Hochschild’s concept. The core criticism that she fails to capture the contradictory and incomplete nature of the labor process, thereby portraying employees as passive (Thompson and Callaghan, 2002) even ‘crippled actors’ (Bolton ibid, 48), appears bizarre from even a cursory reading of The Managed Heart (Hochschild ibid). This is because it is replete with detailed discussion and evidence of workers’ indifference, resentment, resistance and trade unionism. Does this mean that much of LPA has misconstrued her emotional labor concept or is it because while Hochschild offers a graphic portrayal of workplace tensions and contestation her empirical evidence is not wholly consistent or fully explained by her theorization? To explain this apparent paradox, I will argue that both explanations are partially correct.

In the Managed Heart, Hochschild (ibid) is at pains to demonstrate how the cumulative effects of labor intensification and job degradation in the US airline industry generated individual and collective resistance by flight attendants through which they openly contested the terms of sale of their labor 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

5 Nevertheless, I accept that the phrase emotional labor process is a useful shorthand for indicating a focus on the emotional aspect of a labor process (see Bolton, 2009)
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.” (ibid, 127)

Hochschild, therefore, theorizes the transmutation of feelings as an unstable condition rather than one with absolutist consequences producing passive workers (Brook 2009b; 2010). Nevertheless, the notion of a successful transmutation appears to assume the possibility of complete management control. Thus, Hochschild is vulnerable to the charge from within LPA of theorizing a normative and therefore passive experience, where misbehavior and resistance emerge only in the event of transmutation’s failure (Brook 2009a). By contrast, Taylor (1998, 99) argues that an “incomplete transmutation of feelings” is a common experience. This conclusion is supported by Bolton and Boyd’s (2003, 321) finding that “empty performances” are routine amongst airline cabin crew. LPA studies of service work therefore reject the possibility of a wholly successful transmutation. Instead, management control of emotional labor is understood by LPA as frequently variable, contested and double-edged (Filby 1992; Taylor 1998; Warhurst et al. 2009). In addition, the *triadic* nature of the service labor process (organization, worker and service-user) (Lopez 2010) results in a “continual negotiation and re-negotiation over the transformation of labor power into a serviceable product” involving all three parties to varying degrees (Callaghan and Thompson 2002, 251).

While Hochschild’s portrayal of the workplace is pitted with a mix of consent, indifference and resistance, her theoretical capacity to capture the full depth and range of employees’ agency is stunted by her tendency to dichotomize the distinction between a successful and failed transmutation of feelings. This weakness is compounded by her one-sided emphasis on the harm done to the individual when performing emotional labor - principally the employee’s alienation from their emotions and their “real self” - at the expense of explicitly acknowledging that workers continually strive to ameliorate their alienation both individually and collectively (see Brook 2009a). This one-sided emphasis occurs because Hochschild’s concept and analysis focuses on the internalized responses of workers to management’s attempt to *transmute* their individual feelings, which she theorizes as either *surface acting* or *deep acting*. This focus on the internalized individual experience overshadows her rich mapping of service organizations as contested and collective terrains.

The principal consequence of Hochschild’s focus on the individual is that she over-emphasizes the human cost of emotional labor and tends to present the worker as atomized. This is because she insufficiently grounds her analysis in wider organizational social relations, principally the ubiquitous presence of informal workplace cultures, which can provide, to varying degrees, ameliorative support from co-workers (Korczynski 2003), space for misbehavior (Filby 1992; Ackroyd and Thompson 1999) and even open, collective resistance (Baines, 2011). Indeed, the triadic nature of service work is fertile ground for workers to build informal solidarity relations with customers (Lopez 2010), as in the case of Villarreal’s (2010) study of bus drivers and their passengers; or even formal organizational unity through community unionism, as illustrated by Baines’ (2011) study of Canadian and Australian social services practitioners and their clients.
Hochschild’s (ibid) analysis, however, is unable to embrace theoretically this routine experience of the collective worker and its wider context of workplace social relations (see Hyman 2006; Mulholland 2004). With her analytic lens zoomed in on the individual, she is unable to capture adequately the implications for workplace relations of employers’ demand for collective adherence to the same feeling rules from employees, who are frequently working side-by-side, such as in shops, hospitals and call centers. In short, Hochschild’s portrayal of the workplace effectively obscures the conceptual significance of the fact that emotional labor is most often experienced as a managerial demand made on the many, rather than on isolated individuals. If she did so, her analysis would give a much stronger sense that individual reactions to management’s demands are frequently part of a wider collective response that constitutes a largely shared activity. It is this shared experience that enables workers to create informal, mutually supportive sub-cultures outside of management control. As suggested above, these “communities of coping” (Korczynski 2003, 55) are also, crucially, a potential source for contesting unacceptable management ideas and demands, which in turn can offer embryonic conditions for the emergence of trade unionism (Taylor and Bain 2003) and the open resistance and unionization vividly documented in The Managed Heart (Hochschild ibid).

In summary, Hochschild fails to acknowledge explicitly the existence and significance of organizational space outside of management control, filled by ameliorative, even resistive, informal networks of workplace ideas and behaviors. The understanding that the collective worker is a key workplace actor is a core feature of LPT owing to its theorization of all forms of wage-labor as a social form. Consequently, for LPT, the collective worker is an inseparable dimension of workplace agency (Mulholland 2004) owing to its interrelationship with the individual being constitutive, integral and dynamic (Hyman 2006). Thus, while Hochschild portrays the individual and collective agency of emotional laborers, contesting the frontier of control between capital and labor (Thompson, 1983/1989), her theorization is stunted in its ability to explain its structural source, dynamics and consequences in terms of the inherent incompleteness of managerial control.

**Conclusion: towards addressing the gaps**

Hochschild’s pioneering emotional labor concept enables LPT to systematically theorize the centrality of emotional effort in the contemporary service-oriented workplace. In addition, it offers a foundational understanding that emotional labor power is exercised in an integral, interdependent relationship with its intellectual and physical counterparts. Indeed, it has opened the door to a wider array of concepts, in particular aesthetic labor, which emphasizes the increasing corporate demand for specific corporeal qualities and displays from employees (lookism) that is often combined with the requirement for a degree of sexually alluring display and/or behavior (sexual labor) (see Warhurst and Nickson 2009). More recently, another concept, body labor, has emerged that is defined by the “manipulation or touch of another [conscious] body when sold for a wage or commodified” (Cohen 2011, 190). Whether it is aesthetic, sexual or body labor, each concept stresses that these increasingly
prevalent forms of work comprise an interdependent complex of physical, intellectual and emotional effort. Within LPA, emotional labor and these newer concepts are now essential tools to explain the nature and effects of new forms of service-oriented, frequently branded work (see Pettinger 2004) and their labor processes.

For LPT, the question of the nature and content of emotional labor power is ever more important if it is to maintain its conceptual and analytic effectiveness in the face of corporate employers increasingly seeking to mobilize the whole person in their ceaseless search for competitive advantage (Warhurst et al 2009). To date, this has not been addressed explicitly within LPA debates, especially in terms of articulating a theory of emotion that is consistent with LPT’s materialist underpinnings (Thompson and Smith 2009). One possibility is to utilize Bakhtin’s (1993) materialist conception of emotion, which he argues is the volitional tone of all human activity. In this way, emotional effort is understood as providing the color and tenor to all labor, such as the examples of passionately, indifferently or reluctantly speaking to customers. Away from service interactions, examples would be discussing a problem at work sensitively with a colleague, nervously undergoing an annual appraisal review with the line-manager or even sweeping a floor cheerfully. Thus, emotions are not theorized as discrete entities or things but rather as the emotional quality of activity. Consequently, emotional effort is conceptualized as the tonal quality of all instances of labor, whatever the mix of physical, intellectual and interactive activity. The quantity and quality of emotional effort, therefore, is largely determined by the nature of the task. Emotional labor in this sense is something that is undertaken by all employees whenever they perform an element or task as part of their paid work, as Hochschild (1993) acknowledges when she refers to it as a covert resource needed to get the job done.

Emotional labor, as an inseparable aspect of labor power, enjoys the same variable level of indeterminacy as physical and intellectual labor. It does not possess an exacerbated indeterminacy by virtue of its existence as a discrete or semi-detached entity that is somehow a more authentic dimension of the self than its physical or intellectual counterparts. Thus, emotional labor is an integral aspect of labor power; a singular, unique and special type of commodity that is forever possessed, if not fully controlled or formally owned, by the individual worker. As such, it is hired out to an employer as yet-to-be realized labor for a contracted period of time, during which the terms of its sale and use are forever subject to contestation and renegotiation by its bearers, the individual and collective worker. Because emotional labor power cannot be physically detached from the worker, the employer can never fully own and control it as a standard commodity until it is spent or dead labor in the form of a completed intangible interaction or a finished tangible product. In short, buying ‘alive’ feelings for a wage is a perpetually partial and contested form of commodity ownership and control.

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6 For more detail on Bakhtin’s theory of emotion and its potential integration with LPT, see Brook (2013).
References


