

# 28<sup>th</sup> International Labour Process Conference

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## WORK MATTERS

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**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**DUE**

**OCTOBER 30, 2009**

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### Special Interest Stream

#### *The economy of feelings:*

#### *emotional labour, 'soft' skills and emotional intelligence at work*

The subject of emotion in organisations is now well established and widely debated, but the discussion appears to be trapped in never ending circular arguments concerning what is, or is not, 'emotion work' or 'emotional labour', how organisations attempt to control our feelings and the impact this has on our (apparently) fragile identities. In our view, a renewed agenda is needed to extend the impact of this important topic area. In particular, various interconnected analytical domains merit further empirical exploration and conceptual clarification in order to both unify and develop this field of study.

First, the status of emotional labour, as different types of paid and un-paid work within different occupations and sectors, requires clarification. Whilst some writers are concerned with the material realities of work involving emotional labour – many of whom draw on Labour Process Theory – these insights are often overlooked, despite the obvious theoretical and empirical richness they offer. Instead, we frequently find an emphasis placed on prescriptive psychological approaches that, whilst offering concern for failed customer service interactions and/ or the emotional burnout of managers and service agents, tend to individualise and de-contextualise emotion workers to the extent that we are left with free-floating, autonomous agents.

Second, emotional labour undoubtedly requires workers to use their 'soft' skills, but the capacity of workers to gain value for their abilities has been challenged due to their ubiquitous and hard to measure nature. Some workers access increased rewards as a result of using their 'soft' skills, but others do not, despite displaying ostensibly similar abilities. In our view, new analyses of emotional labour ought to be offered by experts of skilled work and emotional intelligence, but such analyses are uncommon. In particular, there is a pressing need to apply the measures of skilfulness that these experts develop to the means-end aspects of employment: to explore the links between 'softly' skilled emotional labour and performance management systems, training content, job grading, workplace reorganisation and human resource outcomes in general.

#### **Call for Papers and Abstract Submission**

A special stream at ILPC 2010 offers a unique opportunity to extend the reach and purpose of analyses of emotion at and in work. The stream wishes to engage with European and US debates and invites scholars from all over the world to consider the economic and social value attributed to our feelings within our workplaces, what demands emotional labour places upon us, and how people enact workplace prescription regarding the presentation of self. Of special interest to the stream will be empirical accounts that offer new insights into different occupations, along with conceptual ideas that are able to capture emotion in, out and around the labour process, whilst also challenging the status quo. Abstracts for the stream should be between 350-500 words. Abstract contents should enable the referees to determine what issue, development or problem is being investigated, how it is investigated, what the findings are and what contribution is being made to understanding in the field.

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