

Chapter 4: Emotional and Embodied Labour

We have seen in the analysis of the importation of market definitions and measures into non-market production that non-market work is quite different from waged labour, and that the tools of market analysis hide as much as they reveal about women's work in the home. The analysis of what I will call emotional labour is one further and particularly crucial problem for applying market definitions and measures to non-market production. It is also a challenge to those market measures even when they are applied to market production.

The analysis of emotional labour comes out of what might more traditionally be called a sociology of work and there are now a variety of feminist analysis of it under various names. It suggests not simply that the market based definitions ignore women's work, but that work/production - and indeed the economy - might mean something quite different within a feminist perspective.

Household emotional labour

What I take to be included in a concept of emotional labour goes under various names, but a useful starting point is Delphy and Leonard's definition of emotional work as,

work which establishes relations of solidarity, which maintains bonds of affection, which provides moral support, friendship and love, which gives people a sense of belonging, of ontological strength, of empowerment, and thereby makes them feel good. This too requires effort and skill. It is not just a question of thinking about someone, but of doing actual activities: talking to them about things that interest them, fetching them things that give them pleasure, smiling at them, cuddling them, and stroking their bodies and their egos.¹

They go on to note that this emotional work "is an especially important component of women's domestic work".² However in their analysis this emotional labour is only one of five types of women's domestic work. Apart from the obvious production of visible goods and services, they note women's cultural work, that is, work which is done for display as part of maintaining or promoting the status of the household (or its head). There is also sexual work

¹ Christine Delphy and Diana Leonard (1992) *Familiar Exploitation: A New Analysis of Marriage in Contemporary Societies*, Cambridge: Polity Press. p 21.

² *ibid.*

and reproductive work (narrowly defined as child bearing).³

Chris Beasley adopts a similar, though more detailed categorisation with six categories of unpaid work. These are:

- service support labour including travel, education and civic duties;
- housework;
- body work/body management including organising diet, exercise, maintenance of beauty, childbirth, activities related to menstruation and health;
- sex;
- childcare; and
- emotional labour including “husband care”, care for friends, relatives and neighbours.⁴

In the more usual definitions of work like those noted in Chapter 2 and 3 only “housework” and some aspects of both “service support” and “childcare” would be regarded as part of household production. That the rest of this list should be considered as work is perhaps surprising. Including these very subjective labours, that is, labour which cannot be separated from the labourer, clearly contravenes the third person criteria. Someone else could not be paid to perform the services. However the issue is revealing of both the inconsistencies in the application of the third person criteria, and the problems of such a definition in the household economy.

Perhaps most controversial is the inclusion of sex and reproduction as domestic work, not least because traditionally sex has been seen (in the male gaze) as clearly leisure - a break from and opposite to work. (Similarly, reproduction has been seen as a natural part of being a ‘woman’, not something requiring work.) Prior to the second wave of feminism, economists and national accountants could jokingly refer to the inclusion as production of “matrimonial services” on the grounds that these could be substituted by the paid services of prostitutes.⁵ The suggestion was seen as too ludicrous to be taken seriously, but feminists have long

³ *ibid.*, pp 21 - 27.

⁴ Chris Beasley (1994) *Sexual Economyths: Conceiving a Feminist Economics*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin. p 33.

⁵ Paul Studenski (1958) *The Income of Nations: Theory, Measurement and Analysis Past and Present*, New York: New York University Press. p 178.

questioned the assumption that family and heterosexual relations were ‘natural institutions’ free of coercion and exploitation. Feminists have then applied various analyses of power and politics to the household.

In the context of sex and work, it would seem that if we accept the fairly basic proposition from the sociology of work that there is no objective meaning to “work” and “production”.⁶ Rather, as we saw in the last chapter, social relations define work, and therefore, within patriarchal social relations, sex may well constitute work. Delphy and Leonard argue that,

Marriage is defined by sexuality and often also by reproduction. For a marriage to be consummated (that is, for the contract to be fully and finally sealed) requires a particular kind of sexual intercourse to take place, and the whole weight of culture makes clear that having sex and having children (sons in particular) are things wives owe their husbands.⁷

Sex (and motherhood) is work precisely because of the institutional arrangements of marriage/heterosexism which define the role of women in the household and ensure that sexual and reproductive work takes place regardless of the emotional attachment. In many cases sex is simply “part of being married” - as opposed to “part of being in love”. Of course it may be both, but for Delphy and Leonard questions of pleasure and/or attachment are not the point. Most people in our society enter paid work willingly and get some pleasure from it, and it often gives a sense of self-fulfilment and self-worth. This is perhaps most evident in the fact that unemployment is seen to be a “crisis” and is often associated with lack of self-esteem. Both paid work and household work are exploitative according to Delphy and Leonard’s Marxist schema, but the fact of choice or pleasure does not mean that it is not work being undertaken in both instances.⁸ When thus stripped of emotional ties, sexual services (and other forms of emotional labour) should clearly be classed as production activities according to the third person criteria - someone else could be paid to perform the services.

Beasley explicitly criticises Delphy’s abstraction of work from emotional ties, and criticises the narrow third person criteria definition of work. She argues that these ‘services’ can not be separated from the person providing them *because* of the emotional ties involved. Much of

⁶ See for instance, Keith Grint (1991) *The Sociology of Work: An Introduction*, Oxford: Polity Press.; Herbert Applebaum (1992) *The Concept of Work: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern*, Albany: State University of New York.

⁷ Delphy, *op.cit.*, p 22.

⁸ *ibid.*

women's labour in the household is inextricably linked with emotional ties, creating a different sort of economy:

In this complex interweaving of the creation of services/goods with the expression of love/affection/care one sees the formulation of an *emotional economy* which cannot be reduced either to Marx's narrow definitions of labour as (a) 'production' of food and objects, or (b) 'production' of commodities under capitalism, or even (c) his broader definition of all activities necessary to human survival, since 'activities' still tend to be described with little reference to, for example, invisible, emotional and psychic aspects of labour.⁹

In critiquing this Marxian model, Beasley is criticising the feminist appropriation of the contract exchange model of labour which Marx used to analyse capital-labour relations.¹⁰ While Beasley concedes that there may be some elements of contractual exchange in the household, she argues that the separation of product and producer, and of exploiter from exploited in the (Marxian) contract exchange model, is an inappropriate way to conceptualise an economy "so deeply infused by gratification and self-identity".¹¹

Beasley argues that emotional labours, including activation of subjectivities, that is, the 'production' of personal and social identities, is fundamental to the household economy. This is not a one-off production of a social role, but as Jenny Cameron points out, subjectivity is constantly being constructed through the daily performance of household labour.¹² Given this 'production' of subjectivity, neither women, men nor children - the objects of the emotional labour - are entirely "thingified" in the process of production. Nor is women's labour entirely removed from its authors. This subjectivity is inherent in all housework when it is viewed as a labour of love, but particularly in sex and emotional labour (and husband care and mothering) which are most clearly about the particular person doing them. They are not the same if a third person substitutes.

Indeed, Susan Himmelweit argues that the *inability* to directly substitute market labour for women's caring labour is pivotal. It reinforces the tendency in economics (based on the process of commodification) to render invisible domestic activities and needs which do not

⁹ Emphasis in the original. Beasley, *op.cit.*, p 13.

¹⁰ In particular Beasley refers to the Delphy's work, but also critiques the Marxian frameworks of Ferguson, Hartsock, MacKinnon, Young, Jagger and Hartmann. *ibid.*, p13.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p 14.

¹² Jenny Cameron (1999) "Throwing a Dishcloth into the Works: Troubling Theories of Domestic Labour" *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol 9, No. 2, pp 34 - 35.

take the form of work/consumption. This commodity fetishism places a money/material needs nexus at the centre of society and devalues those not involved in the material/‘work’ process (ie. carers). As we shall see further on, Himmelweit then claims that the feminist attempt to show that household work is like paid work has reached the limit of its usefulness and needs to be challenged if women’s work is to be fully recognised.¹³

The point is not just that caring activities are ignored by the definition of production (although this is certainly the case), but that this subjective/emotional labour is inherent in all household labour. This makes problematic any distinction which rests on a third party criteria - the ability to pay someone else to do the particular job. This has further implications for any measurement of this economy based on notions of time, efficiency and productivity. In the emotional economy there is no set working day and market notions of work intensity and productivity do not translate well. For instance, Beasley notes that involving children in household work/activities may intensify work but decrease productivity (measured in simple input-output terms). This is not economically irrational. Rather in this case the meaning and social relation significance of mothers being with children is more crucial than the actual goods and service produced or the time taken.¹⁴ And in an emotional economy where women’s personal/sexual labour is relatively impervious to technological improvement, notions of productivity are not easily applicable. In terms of traditional economic measurements of time, efficiency and productivity, *the emotional economy is unmeasurable.*

These authors, in their different ways, all argue that women’s emotional labour is work (ie. productive - part of the economy). In doing so they expose fundamental problems in the definition of work (and therefore the economy) which is used in the attempts to account for non-market production noted previously. If “work” is simply meant to include only physical tasks and service provision in line with the third party criteria, then the subjective elements of emotional labour may not qualify, but the provision of sexual services for example, should then be included in the household production. Stripped of their emotional ties, these sexual services clearly have market substitutes. On the other hand, if these ‘services’ can not be separated from the person providing them because of the emotional ties involved, that is, the emotional ties make it a different activity to a market activity (and therefore prostitution is not

¹³ Susan Himmelweit (1995) “The Discovery of ‘Unpaid Work’: The Social Consequences of the Expansion of ‘Work’” *Feminist Economics*, Vol 1, No. 2, pp 1 - 19.

a simple substitute), then all women's labour in the household is suspect because it too is interwoven with emotional ties. To exclude all this household work from the definition of the economy because it does not fit a market based criteria of exchange-ability and potential sale-ability (the third person criteria) would be to render invisible again (still) much of what women do. But equally as important, to include the work women do simply as a list of tasks which could be provided through the market hides the real nature of household production. Inevitably, it also ignores much of that production which is beyond a task list.

Emotional Labour in Paid Work

Of course emotional or subjective labour is not limited to the household, as is evident in Arlie Hochschild's groundbreaking work on the emotional management tasks of air-hostesses. Hochschild defines emotional labour as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display", and she sees it as a commodity which is exchanged on the market.¹⁵ Or more accurately,

In the absence of an English language name for feeling-as-contribution-to-the-group (which the more group-centred Hopi culture called *arofa*), I shall offer the concept of gift exchange.¹⁶

Thus muted anger, conjured gratitude, and suppressed envy, etc are offerings back and forth between people, an exchange regulated by "feeling rules" which provide standards of what is owed to another person. In the case of airline stewardesses this "gift" is alienated from the workers and employed by capital as a necessity of capitalist competition. The airlines compete on the basis of the quality of service they offer and they promote this by relying on the emotional labour of flight attendants. This is clear in the training and appearance regimes in the US airlines Hochschild studied,¹⁷ and in the airline advertising which is based on their service, often a particularly sexualised service.¹⁸

While Hochschild's focus was on the airline industry, she also looked briefly at debt

¹⁴ Beasley, *op.cit.*, p 18.

¹⁵ Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983) *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of Human Feeling*, Berkeley: University of California Press. p 7.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p 18.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p 93.

¹⁸ The classic example here is the "Singapore Girl". See Geraldine Heng (1997) "A Great Way to Fly': Nationalism, the State and the Varieties of Third-World Feminism" in M. Jacqui Alexander and

collectors and other jobs which involved emotional labour. Such jobs, she argues, have three characteristics in common. They require personal contact with the public, they require the worker to produce an emotional state in another person (gratitude, fear, ease) and they allow the employer, through training and supervision, to exercise a degree of control over the emotional activities of employees. Hochschild estimated that 1/3 of all employees in the US engage in some form of emotional labour (which she clearly distinguishes from work which places emotional burdens on employees) while about 1/2 of women in the paid work force do emotional labour.¹⁹

Implicit in these figures and explicit in her analysis of emotional management of debt collectors is a consideration of the emotional labour of men - something largely absent from the feminist writing on household emotional labour. The issue of men's emotional labour is in fact a vexed question and is taken up below and in the next chapter. For now I propose to leave it aside as none of the other authors discussed here analyse it.

Hochschild's study was followed by studies relating to what might be termed emotional or sexualised labour in other areas of paid employment. Lisa Adkins noted the studies of Williams into the Australian airline industry, and MacKinnon and Stanko's analysis of sexual harassment as an integral part of the workplace for women.²⁰ Similarly, Rosemary Pringle's well-known examination of secretaries also showed that their work involved considerable emotional labour: for example, a certain necessary deportment and dress, welcoming visitors, and generally "looking after the boss". Even tea and coffee making also involved elements of what in Delphy and Leonard's classification would be cultural display as the task was saturated with symbolism of the boss'/man's power.²¹

Pringle in fact had considerable difficulty in identifying the actual tasks and skills of a secretary, partly because the role of the secretary was seen as a thoroughly sexualised job.

Chandra Tolpade Mohanty (ed), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, New York: Routledge.

¹⁹ Hochschild, *op.cit.*, p 147, 11.

²⁰ However Adkins is critical of these studies, particularly MacKinnon and Stankos, for positing aspects of this emotional labour (my term) as being about gender rather than work - gendered work. Lisa Adkins (1995) *Gendered Work: Sexuality, Family and the Labour Market*, Buckingham: Open University Press. ch 2.

²¹ Rosemary Pringle (1988) *Secretaries Talk: Sexuality, Power and Work*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin. See especially, pp 24 - 25.

That is, the job of secretary was synonymous with being ‘woman’ - a subordinate other defined primarily by her relations to men/the boss.²² This is obviously problematic in that it undervalues women’s work and skills as secretaries. But it is also clear that elements of subjectivity, of being a particular sort of woman, looking a particular way, and being in a particular one to one relation with the boss (often including negotiating his emotional and family needs) are all part of the job.

This is a theme taken up by Lisa Adkins’ in her study of the British tourist industry.²³ She showed not only that women continued to perform unpaid labour in the market sector, but also that “sexuality” is implicated in the very organisation of the labour market. Adkins’ view of sexuality here is fairly narrow as she does not raise questions of homosexuality or even masculinities at work. Instead, her focus and understanding of the sexuality of “gendered work” is in terms of labour which is about women’s bodies as objects of desire, rather than about the tasks of work. Her study of two sites in the tourist industry (a leisure park and a large hotel) shows that part of the job of women is as objects of sex entering into a sexual exchange with customers, bosses and other workers.

This sexualised labour is built into women’s work by recruitment practices, job requirements, and often by dress codes which place women as sex objects and women’s bodies therefore as *sites* of work. In the hotel the personnel specifications for the ‘female’ jobs of waitress, receptionist and domestic were all the same: employees should be “attractive”, “average weight and height” and “must have [a] helpful enthusiastic attitude”.²⁴ By contrast the specifications for the predominantly male occupations (chef/cook, barman, porter, kitchen hand) had varied, more job related specifications and certainly did not require attractiveness. Similar scenarios were evident in the leisure park, and Adkins concluded that,

women workers were subject to a set of criteria relating to appearance regardless of occupation, while men were not. These criteria can be said to exist regardless of occupation in two senses. First, they existed not because the occupation ‘needed’ its workers to possess these qualities - you do not have to be pretty to make sandwiches - but because women workers were constructed as somehow needing these appearance qualities *to be workers*. [Second] women became operatives precisely because of the existence of appearance criteria. In other words, these criteria (as far as the catering assistants and the women operatives were concerned), to some extent at least,

²² *ibid.*, pp 1-5.

²³ Adkins, *op.cit.*

²⁴ *ibid.*, p 110.

determined the gendered constitution of the occupations themselves.²⁵

This attention to appearance is not an isolated case. Adkins argues (citing a range of studies), that, “such appearance criteria operate across the commercial service sector for women.”²⁶ This echoes what Delphy and Leonard describe as cultural display and Beasley implies in the work category of body work/management.

Adkins also described other forms of emotional labour: sexual banter with customers and the submission to sexual harassment by customers. This was so much “part of the job” that Adkins reported that the women she spoke to were

blasé about it and somewhat surprised that I was even bothering to ask questions about this part of their work.²⁷

Not only did management not intervene, but uniform requirements at the leisure park actively promoted this sexualisation of the women workers. Just as Hochschild described airlines competing on the basis of a sexualised service to customers, so too Adkins noted that the women workers in the leisure park - and indeed in the British hotel industry - served as sexual attractions for men customers.

It is important to note that the penalty for not playing the sexual role is dismissal - that is, the women’s status as workers depends on the sexualisation of their work. Thus the sexual work is implicated in the capitalist-wage relation. This suggests that the capitalist wage relation is gendered through sexual labour so that men and women doing the same tasks are different sorts of workers.²⁸ Because sexual labour is compulsory for women in service industries, then gender and sexuality can not simply be seen to be outside of the “economic”. They are integral to the construction of capitalism and must therefore be included in any definition of the economy.

Differences, Definitions and Critiques

Adkins, Pringle and Hochschild’s work clearly shows that emotional labour is not limited to

²⁵ *ibid.*, p 107 - 108. Emphasis in the original. The quote refers to the leisure park, although it is consistent with the hotel Adkins examined.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p 124.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p 130.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p 141.

the household. Having said that, there are some important differences between the various analyses in terms of the subjectivity of emotional labours in the family and in the paid work force. While part of the construction of gendered work (Adkins) is about being a woman - or more accurately, a particular type of woman (a particular subject) - the particularity required is still more general and less subjective/personal than in the home. For instance, the sexualised requirements that Adkins notes in relation to bar staff at the workplaces she studied - that they be attractive, wear make-up, keep their hair off their face, etc - are restrictive and obnoxious, but they could still be filled by a considerable number of women. By contrast, the subjective requirement in the family is that it is the particular person, the particular wife/mother, who is doing the emotional labour. While not wishing to support a romanticised and oppressive notion of monogamy and the nuclear family (the "one true love"), it does seem to be significant that an inherent and important part of the emotional labour in the home is that it is done by a unique individual: unique in their relation to the labour and the 'product' produced (the caring, supporting, and ego and body stroking). In this I think Delphy and Leonard's abstraction in terms of simple tasks misses a unique feature of women's domestic labour.

It should be stressed that these differences between 'public' and 'private' types of emotional labour relate to questions of alienation of the product from the labourer and the substitutability of work, but they have little to do with questions of payment or market versus non-market production. The emotional labour which Beasley and Delphy and Leonard identify in the home is clearly unpaid. By contrast the emotional management identified by Hochschild and the sexualised labour identified by Adkins in waitressing and the tourist park employment is clearly "part of the job", that is, part of what women are being paid for. Janet Finch has also documented a variety of male professions like politicians, diplomats, clergy, army officers and doctors, where wives' emotional labour was an expected part of the husband's job.²⁹ The wives' emotional labour then is performed in the market or 'public' sector but it is not paid.

Thus there are three different analyses of various types of emotional labour. At one end

²⁹ Janet Finch (1983) *Married to the Job: Wives' Incorporation in Men's Work*, London: George Allen & Unwin., esp ch 8. More recently, Germaine Greer has noted the same displays are necessary of a "First Lady", even where, as is the case with the 'wife of' Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, the women had

Delphy and Leonard see emotional labour as a series of tasks which are done by women because those tasks are socially constructed as a wife/mother's job. They are unpaid because of the nature of the institution of marriage (and heterosexism) and exist regardless of the subjective emotional component. Beasley too sees emotional labour as being done by wives and mothers, not simply "women", but argues that it is therefore inherently subjective and should not be considered simply as abstract tasks of disembodied labour. Somewhere in between these two are the cases Adkins focuses on where such labour is definitely *embodied* and not simply *tasks*, but this embodiment is more generic: ie. women rather than a particular woman, (although notions of "attractiveness" in practice may also mean particular types of women - including particular races of women).

In terms of the issues relevant to this thesis, there is sufficient similarity in the analyses to suggest a broad conception of "emotional labour". Emotional labour, as I will use it, refers broadly to all the phenomena considered by Adkins as constituting sexualised labour, Hochschild as emotional management, Beasley and Himmelweit as subjective/caring labour and Delphy and Leonard as emotional labour (more narrowly defined) and cultural display work. However, in contrast to Delphy and Leonard and Hochschild, I would frame all these phenomenon in terms of an embodied labour with higher or lower degrees of particularity and subjectivity, although I will return to these crucial issues below.

Of course any understanding of all these emotional activities as labour or work (and therefore as productive) has its critics. I will leave aside objections based on the simple assertion that emotional activities breach the third person criteria and therefore can not be work - as if such categories were pre-ordained and immutable. Such arguments are outside the epistemological framework and concerns of this thesis. Of more concern are the objections raised within a feminist framework to the construction of emotional labour as work/production. Miriam Glucksmann accepts a social construction of work standpoint, but criticises theories of emotional labour for collapsing everything into "work".³⁰ It is not that she does not recognise the emotional tasks undertaken by women particularly, but she does not see that these are best analysed as "work". Similarly she recognises the emotional ties in household labour and the

successful careers in their own right. Germaine Greer (1999) *The Whole Woman*, London: Doubleday. pp 252 - 253.

³⁰ Miriam A Glucksmann (1995) "Why 'Work'? Gender and the 'Total Social Organization of Labour'" *Gender Work and Organization*, Vol 2, No. 2, pp 63 - 75.

way sexuality organises social space, including work, but she sees this in terms of work being “embedded” in other social patterns - embedded in non-work.

Glucksmann argues that emotional labour theorists lose sight of what is unique and important about work and economic relations. Thus for instance, she argues that the most basic and unique feature of the formal economy in industrial societies (as opposed to the household economy) is that

people come together in offices, shops, factories or schools ostensibly to ‘work’ and earn a living. This inevitably affects the range, quality, duration, etc. of the personal relations of paid employment which, in the first instance, are those of people as incumbents of particular posts, located at particular positions in a division of labour.³¹

What is at issue here is the nature of the theoretical abstraction from the multitude of factors and processes around work. Glucksmann is insisting on maintaining (analytically separate) notions of economy, gender and sexual relations. Not surprisingly, given the epistemological framework of this thesis, I share Glucksmann’s concern over the collapsing of “work” and “the economic” into everything else, but I can not agree with her that emotional labour should not be seen as work and a fundamental part of the economic. For Glucksmann, work refers to

activity necessary for the production and reproduction of economic relations and structures in a particular total social organisation of labour, irrespective of how or where it is carried out. The outside parameter would thus be an economic one of production and reproduction, *mainly* of the material conditions of life.³²

However, Glucksmann concedes that this outside parameter might include much that was non-material. It then becomes unclear on what basis she excludes emotional labour. Indeed the approach she advocates of not starting with an idea of an economic system and then deciding what is economic and non-economic, but rather starting from how activities connect together is precisely the relational approach with which Beasley and Delphy and Leonard define emotional activity as labour/work/economic. It is the particular social relations which define such emotionality and subjective activity as work.

Given this and the strength of the analyses of emotional labour, for now I am unwilling to give up the notion of emotional labour as part of the economy. If ultimately it is an argument over where to draw the line (the production boundary) in terms of which non-material aspects

³¹ *ibid.*, p 66.

³² My emphasis. *ibid.*, p 69.

of life to include/exclude, then I would want to include emotional labour, not least because the political price of excluding it is to render women's work invisible. Moreover I have not given up hope of the possibility of a useable definition of the economy which includes emotional labour.

Importance of the Analysis

However, it should be clear that the argument is not *simply* over where to draw a line on a continuum of activities which could be work. The recognition and understanding of emotional labour is important not just because it expands the activities of work, but because it represents a fundamental challenge to the prevailing definitions and measures of the economy. As Beasley argues, emotional labour is fundamental to the household economy and requires an analysis which begins from the specificity of that labour and of the sex relations of which it is a part. However, the fact that emotional labour also happens in the market means that the problem of emotional labour is not simply a problem related to including non-market production in the definition and measurement of the economy. The "problem of emotional labour" is *also* a problem of the way orthodox economics and the national accounts reflect women's work in the market sector.

Again the issue is not simply one of measurement - of finding a value for work which has no clear market substitute. It is a basic conceptual problem. The third person criteria would see much emotional labour as being outside the definition of production because a "third person" could not be hired to do it.³³ But if emotional labour is work and productive of a service, then the problem is not that this work does not fit the definition of production, but rather that the definition of production does not fit the work women do. In this analysis, what is meant by production and the economy might not be recognisable to traditional economics. As Beasley states,

The very meaning of the category economics, whether perceived positively (in mainstream/Liberal analyses) or negatively (in Marxist 'conflict' theories) as the 'efficient', sparing, concise regulation and use of labour and resources, must, it would seem, undergo a sea change to take account of the particularities of labour in sex relations.³⁴

³³ The possible exception here is Hochschild's notion of "gift exchange" which may be squeezed into a third person criteria model, but she did not apply this to the 'private' sphere where the third person criteria is more problematic.

³⁴ Beasley, *op.cit.*, p 20.

The analysis of emotional labour then represents a fundamental challenge to the definition of production and economy. As such it reopens the debate (although on very different terms) which has been closed since the neoclassical moment at the end of the last century, namely, that over the definition of “production”.³⁵ Yet, as we shall see below, it re-opens the debate in complex and contradictory ways. The analysis compounds the problems noted in the previous chapter around the differences of market and non-market labour, and shows that women’s work is different to that measured and understood in market/commodity production terms. But more than ‘simply’ challenging existing market definitions and measures (of production and the economy), the analysis of emotional labour also opens up to question the whole project of economic accounting.

The recognition in the previous chapter of the problems of time and money measurement of women’s unpaid labour was problematic enough for measuring the economy, but the analysis of emotional labour as inherently embodied labour makes measurement impossible. By definition, measurement requires delineation, the separation of the producer from the product - a separation not evident in the analysis of emotional labour. The problem is that any quantitative measure then must overlook, or indeed hide, the embodiment of women’s emotional labour. If emotional labour must be included in the definition of the economy, then it would seem that we must accept that we can not measure this economy.

However, this questioning of economic accounting goes beyond feminist economics (narrowly defined). I have noted parallel environmental debates about economic valuation. But in reference to the analysis above of the subjectivity and embodiment of labour, the critique is wider still because the notion of *embodied* labour is not limited to the category of emotional labour. Carole Pateman argues that the idea of alienated labour - whether thought in liberal terms of a wage contract or as the commodified labour power in the Marxist version - is fundamentally flawed.

Labour power, capacities or services cannot be separated from the person of the worker like pieces of property. The worker’s capacities are developed over time and they form an integral part of his self and self-identity; capacities are internally not externally related to the person. Moreover, capacities or labour power cannot be used without the

³⁵ In some senses, the debate was ‘re-opened’ by the feminist critiques discussed in Chapter 2. However, as I have argued, this was more by way of extending and more consistently applying the existing definitions than opening the possibility of a different meaning.

worker using his will, his understanding and experience, to put them into effect. The use of labour power requires the presence of its 'owner'.³⁶

The problem of the 'embodiment' of labour (and its unmeasurability) applies to all labour, not just to emotional labour and the jobs identified by Hochschild. This embodiment of labour also clearly applies to men's work - and even to the most archetypal Fordist commodity production where labour is unskilled and most fungible. Mike Donaldson, who draws from traditional Marxist labour process theory, nonetheless argues that "what is sold at the point of production is a pair of hands, a back, a set of muscles, a body".³⁷ For such workers, the commodity labour power cannot be alienated from themselves - their bodies. After describing the physiological strain of manual labour and the long term health and economic costs for such working class men, Donaldson concludes that,

it is not only that workers sell the daily use of their bodies to employers, but that employers actually consume their bodies, use them up.³⁸

Clearly from these workers' perspectives, labour is about their individual bodies, but Donaldson also argues that these labouring bodies "must bear the weight of the creation and maintenance of social masculinity" or rather, in the context of the whole book, he argues that social masculinity is constructed in the relation between the experience of men at work and in the home.³⁹ In this sense, Donaldson echoes Beasley's analysis of women's labour - that what is produced by labour is not just goods and services, but also (gendered) subjectivity. There is thus a subjectivity and embodiment in all work, even the work of the archetypal unskilled wage labourer, which is ignored by a definition and measure of the economy which sees production in terms of exchangeable commodities.

Standpoint

Yet it should also be clear that this view of the subjectivity and embodiment of this manual work is the view of the worker whose body is consumed, not necessarily the view of capital/management. Donaldson is right that what is bought is a back, a pair of hands, etc, but at least for capital employing unskilled work, one back/hand *is* exchangeable for another back/hand. When one wears out, capital (unlike labourers), can buy new ones. For capital, in

³⁶ Carole Pateman (1991) *The Sexual Contract*, Cambridge: Polity Press. pp 150 - 151.

³⁷ Mike Donaldson (1991) *Time of Our Lives: Labour and Love in the Working Class*, Studies in Society, Sydney: Allen and Unwin. p 17.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p 18.

relation to unskilled work requiring little or no training time (human capital) such labour and such bodies are fungible.

For skilled and semi-skilled labour the market is more limited, but I would argue that for most employers labour is nonetheless fungible: no-one is irreplaceable. The public service organisation I was employed by when first writing this thesis had a work force stratified by grades of 'competency' which relate to abstract content, process and skills of the job rather than the particular knowledge of a specific activity/information area. When combined with a comprehensive filing system which functions as the collective memory of the organisation - including the specific knowledge of individual projects, events etc - the staff become fungible within their competency range. Given that you have certain competencies, it is possible (indeed encouraged) to change from job to job, position to position and pick up where the previous occupant left off.

Even human capital theory which attempts to explain labour market and economic dynamics through an understanding of skills and knowledges held by particular workers or groups of workers, still ultimately sees those skills as alienable. Workers 'exchange' the skills and knowledge they have for increased wages, and the value of that labour is determined in that exchange (ie. in the process of alienation).⁴⁰ This is a commodified rather than embodied model of skills/knowledge, and it does not reflect the concern of Pateman and the analysis of embodied labour above - quite apart from the feminist concerns about the gendered nature of what constitutes skill (and who gets the training) in the human capital model.⁴¹

While from the point of view of the worker, their individual embodiment of the strength, skills, etc, is important to the way they earn their living, to the employer the embodiment is generic - the particular person is incidental to the labour provided. From that point of view, even the embodied labour is replaceable, exchangeable. This is particularly important because

³⁹ *ibid.*, The quote is from p 17.

⁴⁰ Ronald Ehrenberg and Robert Smith define human capital as "a term that conceptualises workers as embodying a set of skills that can be 'rented out' to employers". [My emphasis] They go on to say that "the value of this amount of productive capital is derived from how much these skills can earn in the market". Ronald G. Ehrenberg and Robert S. Smith (1994) *Modern Labour Economics: Theory and Public Policy*, 5th ed., New York: Harper Collins. p 279, 280.

⁴¹ A foundational work of these latter types of critiques, although referring largely to Marxist economics, is Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor (1986) "Sex and Skill" in Feminist Review (ed), *Waged Work: A Reader*, London: Virago. (Reprinted from 1980)

it suggests that defining production as that which is exchangeable (the third party criteria), is a definition from the standpoint of capital - from the experience of being able to buy and replace labour. It is a particularity of the capital-wage relation that labour is alienated as an exchangeable product. For self-employed workers (Resnick and Wolff's 'ancient' production relation), labour is entangled with capital so that labour is generally not sold on its own. Similarly, we have seen that the neverendingness of household work makes the measurement of household labour a foreign concept. Arguably, it is only in the wage contract that the use/consumption of labour takes on the particular form of alienable/exchangeable labour. And it only takes that form from the perspective of capital.

This suggests that, if alienability criteria are necessary in order to measure production, then the whole project of measuring production - the project of national accounting - is based on and reflects the experience of capital, not the experience of those who labour.⁴² The project of even a revised national accounting then appears to be a dead end, at best, for a radical political economy. At worst, it is a Trojan horse sneaking the standpoint of capital into what appears to be a progressive political economy. If, in line with the project and epistemology of this thesis, one wanted a view of the economy which reflected the experience of those who labour, and the gendered embodiment of that labour, then the logic of the argument suggests that we should abandon the third person criteria as a basis for definition. The "economy" then could not, and should not, be measured. End of argument ...

except ...

⁴² Even Marxian accounting which has as its purpose a critique of capital still falls into this capital-centric framework, although in some Marxian theory there is an appreciation that the political economy of labour may be different from the political economy of capital. See for instance, Michael Lebowitz (1991) "The Significance of Marx's Missing Book on Wage Labour" *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol 4, No. 2, pp 105 - 118.

except that politics and the consideration of the social construction of knowledge are rarely that straightforward. The argument culminating above is itself one-sided because, perhaps ironically, the analysis of emotional labour which provides such a powerful feminist critique of market economics, also raises as many problems for a feminist informed definition of the economy.

The Problem of Emotional Labour Revisited

The analysis of embodied and emotional labour provides a problem for a feminist informed economics precisely because it makes the third person criteria problematic. For all its problems, this third person criteria definition of production has been of great historical importance to feminist economics precisely because it provided a clear measure of commodity like production which was analogous to market production. As such the third person criteria provided the basis of the feminist critique of the national accounts definitions and measures of the economy. The argument was that women's unpaid work should be included in the definition of the economy because it is basically like paid work: it can be (and is) substitutable for paid work. As noted in Chapter 2, the claim that the official production boundary was arbitrary (or sexist) rested on a demand for a rigorous and full application of the third person criteria.

The historic importance of women's work being seen to be like commodity production is further emphasised by Susan Himmelweit. She argues that the "discovery" of unpaid work by feminist and neoclassical economists (Becker and the Chicago "new home economics" school) in the 1960s and 1970s was, in part, a result of changes in domestic work which made paid and unpaid work much closer and comparable.⁴³ From the late nineteenth century, she argues, the sexual division of labour meant that the idea of individual choice, of women *choosing* to do domestic duties which were their 'natural' station in life, was not considered. Thus there could be no economic notion of opportunity cost to measure alternative choices. But in the second half of the twentieth century the mutually reinforcing tendencies of the growing entry of women into the paid work force and the increasing market availability of substitutes for the products of domestic labour meant that choice was possible and opportunity cost (ie. economic cost) was thinkable.

⁴³ Himmelweit, *op.cit.*, pp 6 - 10.

In this environment, Himmelweit argues that the third person criteria was a useful appropriation by feminists from a model of work which was based on capitalist manufacturing. When feminists adopted this definition of work in the 1970s it helped to break down myths of natural roles and to show that domestic work was like 'real' work, it was purposeful activity not leisure - and it could be done by men. Yet despite this historic importance, Himmelweit argues that the situation has now changed. Just as feminists challenged concepts like "rational man" because they represented dualistic categories which did not apply to women, so too she argues that feminists need to deconstruct the commodity production concept of work (based on the third person criteria) - hence the analysis of emotional labour.⁴⁴

However, while supporting the recognition of emotional labour, I question Himmelweit's conclusion here. Certainly in terms of feminist scholarship the situation has changed as recognition of emotional labour makes the third person criteria untenable, but in terms of a feminist agenda of recognising and including women's work in the definition and measurement of the economy, many crucial things have not changed. There remains a marked gender division of labour in all western countries, such that any definition and measure of the economy which does not include unpaid work has clearly gendered outcomes. It also remains the case that, although there have been a variety of official and non-official attempts to measure non-market production, these remain marginal. The market based GDP remains the key measure of production and a definitive measure of "the economy".

In short, while feminist scholarship has changed since second wave feminists took up the third person criteria as a tool for critiquing the official definitions of production, much has not changed. The struggle for recognition of women's work and its inclusion as an uncontroversial part of "the economy" has yet to be won. Given this, there is a danger that a challenge to the third person criteria may undermine feminism's critique of the exclusion of women's work from the official definition of the economy. By this I do not mean that feminists may give credence to the traditional conservative arguments against the inclusion of women's work in the national accounts (because of its difference). The argument has at least moved on from there. The problem is rather that insistence on the difference of women's

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

work (work not definable by the third person criteria) runs a risk of marginalising the feminist critique from mainstream (and indeed much radical) economics and government policy. This abandons the field to those very measures which exclude women's work, which demote emotional labour to a sociological and psychological 'other' and which promote policies not helpful to women.

For, or perhaps because of, all its faults in reflecting the nature of women's work, a third person criteria based definition of production maintains a bridge to traditional economic analysis. The economy remains about something recognisable to traditional economics - the production of commodities rather than emotions and subjectivities.⁴⁵ The analysis of emotional labour which suggests that a feminist analysis might mean something quite different by concepts of "production" and "the economy", or that labour's embodiedness and timelessness makes it unmeasurable, means that it will hold little interest to a market based economics. It will also then be of less relevance to government economic policy - which from the perspective of a Marilyn Waring is exactly the reason why women's work must be counted (so it is visible to government policy).⁴⁶

Perhaps the problem of unmeasurability applies less to Hochschild's model of gift exchange or Delphy and Leonard's abstraction of emotional labour tasks which might be squeezed into a third person criteria model. But as we will see in the next chapter, even if it were possible to create such a list of tasks, it would be far removed from the concerns of orthodox (and most radical) economics. The inclusion *as production* of activities long considered as leisure or consumption (including some like putting on make-up, exercise, sexual banter or sex or dieting which are almost definitive of leisure/consumption) seems sufficiently radical as to safely be considered as marginal to mainstream economics for the foreseeable future.

Those like Chris Beasley who argue for an analysis based on the specificity of women's work recognise the danger of marginalisation, but see a greater danger in the co-option of the analysis to the market paradigm - or at least they argue that the limits of such a market based

⁴⁵ These subjectivities are of course part of mainstream economics, but they are incorporated into the founding assumptions of "rational economic man" and are therefore not subject to interrogation. Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff (1987) *Economics: Marxian Versus Neoclassical*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. pp 43 - 46.

⁴⁶ See also, Nilüfer Çagatay, Diane Elson, and Caren Grown (1995) "Introduction" *World Development*, Vol 23, No. 11, p 1829.

project are short of what is ultimately politically desirable. Again, this is 'simply' one instance of a wider debate in feminism over the appropriateness of paradigms based on predominantly male experience.

Given all the criticisms I have made of the application of market economics to non-market production, I must agree that a new paradigm is ultimately necessary: the problem of co-optation outweighs the danger of marginalisation. Indeed as a general proposition I would argue (in contrast to the usual use of the word) that it is *utopian* to expect an outcome (eg. post-patriarchy or post-capitalism) which is logically precluded by the tools one wishes to use to create it (eg. the capitalist state or patriarchal economics). Such tools certainly have their uses. However, if the project is not about managing a market economy according to Keynesian/neoclassical theory, but rather is about transcending the current order and understanding the economy in terms of feminist concerns - or the wider and different concerns of those who labour - then issues of marginalisation, while important, must be secondary. Ultimately market tools can not deliver the transformative goal.

Yet, even given this perspective, there are still major problems with including emotional labour and abandoning accounting in a new paradigm of economics. It is not at all clear to me what the economy would look like in this paradigm. If we abandon the notion of the economy as a thing, a "metallic object with clear cut sheer faces and no fuzzy edges", as Beasley suggests,⁴⁷ it is still unclear what "economics" would entail. As outlined in the first part of this chapter, the analysis of emotional labour sees production and the economy as being both *more than* the traditional (third person criteria) concept of production and being *different to it* - formulations which both have their problems.

More Than Commodity Production

The first set of problems relate to emotional labour as meaning that there is more to the economy than commodity production measured by market or third person criteria. Delphy and Leonard argue to an extent, that what is produced is gender/patriarchy; Beasley (and Cameron and Donaldson) argue that the product of such labour is in part (or inseparable from) subjectivity itself - the particular identity of women and men.⁴⁸ In different terms, Hochschild

⁴⁷ Beasley, *op.cit.*, p 110.

⁴⁸ Donaldson, *op.cit.* p 17; Cameron, *op.cit.*; Beasley, *ibid.*, p 13.

and Adkins argue that such emotional labour is part of work and capitalism, although it could also be suggested from their work that what is created is also an artificial or sexualised subjectivity.

What all this suggests is that emotional labour is about the production of gender, capitalism, psychology and socialised subjectivities. And if, as Adkins and Hochschild suggest, emotional labour is part of the job, and as Delphy and Leonard argue, it is part of marriage/the family/parenting/being a woman, then it becomes unclear what *the economic* is here. Hence, in the more traditional efforts to account for household production, a clear distinction is drawn between the emotional relations of the family and productive activities which are to be counted - usually a list of commodity production types jobs.⁴⁹

As noted in Chapter 1, the exercise of trying to define “the economy” and to mark out the territory of “economics” in this way is a distinctly modernist one. The quest to delineate “the economy” and “the economic” from “the other” (to create closure around “the economy”) is a reversion to a dualist epistemology with all the problems of arbitrariness and exclusivity which that implies. But the problem is what happens when we move beyond the postmodern insight that all categories (like labour or the economy) are socially constructed with problematic and contestable boundaries (and possibly centres). This is precisely what concerns Glucksmann in her critique of the “deconstruction” of work. When all activities are collapsed into the category “work” or where work has no distinctive features, then “work” becomes synonymous with “activity”. Categories and definitions can then be dissolved *ad infinitum*,

so that we will no longer know what we are talking about when we talk about work, since there is no way of distinguishing between ‘work’ and ‘activity’, and work becomes no more than a word for an essentialist concept whose only future lies in its abandonment.⁵⁰

Such an abandonment, Glucksmann implies, would be mistaken because something called work is an important and distinctive feature of the social terrain.

⁴⁹ Duncan Ironmonger, for instance, explicitly distinguished “family research” which he sees as being based in psychology and sociology from “household research” whose base he claims is economics. Duncan Ironmonger, ed (1989) *Households Work: Productive Activities, Women and Income in the Household Economy*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989. p 3.

⁵⁰ Glucksmann, *op.cit.*, p 64.

I think the same argument applies to the notion of “the economy”. If we accept that “the economy” is about subjectivity, psychology, gender, etc, then the notion of “the economic” becomes a “theory of everything” and “the economy” a pseudonym for society. This collapsing of definitional boundaries may be logical and useful in arguing against the ‘non-theoretical’ or ‘scientific’ definitions of the economy which still lurk in positivist economics, but I think ultimately it is an unhelpful deconstruction. It is still not clear what the economy might mean once we accept that the analysis of emotional labour means that the economy is more than production and the market dynamics of the official definition. If it is about gender, subjectivity, culture, psychology, etc., in short, if it is about life the universe and everything, then as Douglas Adams points out, the answer is 42. Which is to say that the definition may be clear, but the meaning is no clearer.⁵¹

Difference From Commodity Production

In the alternative to a new, all-embracing and absolute definition and measure of the economy, there is little choice but to accept a number of different definitions of the economy. Each definition has its own starting point and ability to reveal something different about the economy. This would be consistent with the epistemological approach outlined in Chapter 1, and it escapes the problem implicit in a unitary definition of the economy as requiring a theory of everything - production, prices, gender, psychology, etc.

Ironically, there is some precedence for this in the official definitions of the economy. As I noted in the Introduction here, there is a clear difference in the way “the economy” is defined between the production/territory based national accounts and the financial and ownership based balance of payments and foreign investment figures. In the national accounts framework, this is an anomaly of no great consequence, rather than an epistemological statement. Nevertheless, it does support a case for the possibility of simultaneously holding multiple definitions of the economy. However, there are problems with such an argument.

While the argument for “the economy as hologram” suggests that there is more to the economy than is seen in the official definition, in practice the argument ends up similar to one which says that women’s work is different to the official definition. Thus for instance: Adkins

⁵¹ In Adams’ *Hitchhikers Trilogy*, the universe’s most powerful computer, “Deep Thought”, was asked the meaning of life, the universe and everything. It’s answer was 42. Douglas Adams (1980) *The*

only talks about gendered work, not say, the relationship of prices to demand; Delphy and Leonard only talk about the domestic mode of production, not the capitalist one or the relationship between the two; and of course orthodox economics (and much Marxian economics) says a great deal about price and production, but nothing about gender.

Again the point is not that there is anything wrong with necessarily partial knowledge, but that while we might acknowledge multiple definitions of the economy, in practice we only talk about one at a time. As argued in Chapter 1, this is inherent in the nature of knowledge: the impossibility of talking about everything and the need to abstract from the factors overdetermining any given situation. But the more important point here is that inherent in any given epistemological standpoint is the *hiding* of other aspects of a phenomena because of the particular construction of objects and the focus of inquiry.

Just as the market focus on exchangeability hides not only non-market production, but also emotional work and the embodiment of labour, so too the concern with embodied and different labour hides the quantification, dollar valuation and exchange of labour (including emotional labour) which does happen in both market and non-market economies. Given this, a feminist informed economics might still (or also) want to say something about prices, aggregate production and macroeconomic models of growth and restructuring. These are legitimate subjects of a feminist economics, but in the absence of a feminist framework for quantifying the economy, feminists must then use mainstream economic measures. Thus, rather than freeing a feminist economics from the constraints of market economics, in this case the suspicion of the quantifiable, lands feminist economics back on the terrain of GDP, the SNA and other measures which hide the specificity of women's work.

Thus, despite the feminist critique of the assumption and rigidities of the 'scientific' model of economics based on mathematical abstraction and 'precision' noted in Chapter 3, there may still be a role for some form of accounting for women's work.⁵² If we think about the economy as a hologram where we see different things depending on our approach, then what we see and can use from *one* of these perspectives may be quantifiable production and a

Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, London: Pan Books.

⁵² Even Beasley, whose focus is the subjective nature of emotional labour, argues for a plurality of approaches including quantitative measures, thus suggesting that economic modelling might have *something* to contribute to feminist economics. *op.cit.*, p 113.

mathematical model of the economy. Given this, we might be tempted to ask, not, should we measure the economy (with the answer being no - as in the first part of this chapter), but rather, *can we define and measure the economy in such a way as to keep open the view of the hologram, of women's work, and the possibility of an unquantifiable 'product'.*

Conclusion

In this sense, the role for a feminist informed national accounting is the traditional one of making visible women's work, although with the analysis of emotional labour the nature of this project is somewhat different. How such an accounting might be done is the subject of the next chapters. This chapter has set the context for that discussion, firstly by bringing to the foreground the strongest arguments against the third person criteria definitions and measures of production (namely the analysis of emotional and embodied labour), and secondly by turning those analyses back on the political project of making visible women's work.

The unwieldiness of an economic "theory of everything" and the marginalisation of a "theory of difference" reshapes the question implicitly posed in this and previous chapters: should the economy be measured? Instead of a yes or no question relating to a singularly defined economy, we can now begin to search for a less final or less complete definition and measure which might recognise emotionality, subjectivity and product beyond the simple economic/non-economic binary. It is to this project I now turn.