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Abstract Ethics, Embodied Ethics: The Strange Marriage of Foucault and Positivism in Labour Process Theory

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Abstract. In this paper, I draw jointly upon a Foucauldian ethical discourse and the example of the so-called 'Manchester school' of Foucauldian labour process theory (LPT) to question the political/ethical aspirations and effects of critical management studies. Specifically, I question the ethics and effects of LPT researchers' relationships with those they/we research. I organize the discussion around four Foucauldian ethical themes *or* feelings. *I thread these ethical themes throughout the paper to argue that, though Foucauldian LPT may be understood to* abstractly *resonate with these themes, its contribution is seriously undermined through the authors' lack of attention to ways of* embodying *this ethics in relations with the researched. By not embodying these commitments, the marriage between Foucault and LPT risks being read more as a marriage of convenience than commitment. And, further, a marriage that reproduces a politically problematic 'modernist/positivist' self–other separation or divorce between researcher and researched.* **Key words.** *embodiment; ethics; Foucault; labour process theory; methodology*

'When we write about the experiences of a group to which we do not belong, we should think about the ethics of our action, considering whether or not our work will be used to reinforce and perpetuate domination.' (bell hooks, 1989: 43)

This paper is an exploration and critique of the ethics and effects of our actions as academics and researchers engaged in critical management studies.[1] I draw upon Foucauldian ethical commitments and the example

of the 'Manchester School's' labour process theory (LPT) to illustrate and contextualize my discussion.[2] In using the Manchester school's LPT as an example, it is not my intention for this work to be read as either singling out particular authors for specific criticism, or as a contribution to the 'divide' between 'Foucauldian' and 'Marxist' LPT/ organizational studies. Rather, I would ideally like you the reader to use the examples and arguments in this paper to reflect upon the ethics and politics of your/ our own research practices and processes and their unintentional sub-ordinating effects in whatever 'school' of 'critical' management studies you engage with.

To encourage this, I organize the paper into three parts. In the second and third parts, I explore the resonances between the Manchester school's LPT and Foucauldian ethical commitments. In particular, I suggest that the school's writings may be understood as *theoretically or abstractly* resonating with Foucauldian ethical themes (second part), but that the authors do not seek to *embody* these themes or feelings in their research practices and processes (third part). This lack of embodiment may, I argue, be seen to have problematic effects for the researched, effects which are detrimental to our ability to confidently proclaim LPT (and by implication other 'critical' organization/management studies research) *as* 'critical' or 'political' academic work.[3] Before this, I use the first part of the article to draw out my understanding of Foucauldian ethics. Specifically, I draw out four ethical *themes* or *feelings*, which are threaded throughout the paper to structure my discussion. These are:

- understanding 'ethics' as intimately connected with 'politics';
- a critique of notions of sovereign subjectivity;
- a broadening of what we understand as political action or agency to include processes hitherto marginalized as 'merely personal';
- a commitment to permanently problemize, not authorize or normalize, our understandings, behaviours and representations.

Finally, perhaps a note is needed on the nature of my discussion of Foucauldian ethics in the first part. Like a growing number of other critics and academics, I experience many academic discussions of 'theory' as unnecessarily complex and inaccessible. Like others, I understand such writings to function as a form of exclusionary practice, with the effects of reproducing a problematic 'expert' elitist academic authority and culture (Seidman, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1983). Based upon this understanding, I have tried to introduce or draw out Foucauldian ethical themes or feelings through what I hope will be an accessible medium—a medium that facilitates and enables the reader's active engagement with the issues rather than submission to the presumed authority of the Foucauldian 'expert' theorist. Specifically, I draw out 'Foucauldian' ethical themes through a discussion of sex(ual ethics), and in particular the themes of monogamy and non-monogamy grounded in a male character's justification of his decision not to have sex, taken from Phillipe

Djian's novel *Betty Blue* (Djian, 1988). If you are not put off finishing the paper by this unconventional style, you will also notice metaphors of sex, monogamy/non-monogamy, marriage, divorce and separation threaded throughout the paper—starting with the title of the first part, below.

Fucking around with Foucault's Ethics

The title heading to this part of the article indicates or alludes to two aspects of my discussion. First, it alludes to my way of relating to theory and theorists (see also Wray-Bliss, 1998; Wray-Bliss and Parker, 1998). Specifically, I am not concerned to reproduce or claim either an 'expert' knowledge or 'truth' about Foucauldian ethics, or to claim that Foucault himself would have agreed with my interpretation of his work. I understand such conventional ways of dealing with theory and theorists to reproduce problematic authority relations, relations that I explicitly critique in this paper (see third part headed 'A Marriage of Convenience and the Divorce of Researcher from Researched'). Rather, I play around ('f**k around') with the ethical themes, feelings, or commitments that Foucault, his colleagues and critics have inspired in me.

Second, I illustrate and draw out what I understand to be Foucauldian ethical themes through discussing a male character's choice not to 'fuck around', as he phrases it in Phillipe Djian's novel *Betty Blue* (Djian, 1988). I explore the complex interrelationships and social/political effects that such a nominally 'personal' or 'ethical' choice may reproduce or transgress. I do this to open up the broader theme of this paper, which is to explore the ethical/political effects and implications of our nominally 'personal' presence as researchers and writers for those we research and represent.

> '. . . listen to me,' I went on. 'I was never much for fucking around, I never got much out of it. I know everybody else does it; but it's no fun if you do it like everybody else. To tell you the truth, it bores me. It does you good to live according to your ideas, to not betray yourself, not cop out at the last minute just because some girl has a nice ass, or because someone offers you a huge check, or because the path of least resistance runs by your front door. It's good for the soul.' I turned around to tell her the Big Secret: 'Over Dispersal I choose Concentration. I have one life—the only thing I'm interested in is making it shine.' (Djian, 1988)[4]

A starting point of a Foucauldian ethical critique may be understood as a concern to de-naturalize or '*problemize*' (Foucault, 1984c: 389) authoritative or prescriptive representations of self (Foucault, 1984a: 352), relations with others (Foucault, 1984d: 44), and society (Foucault, 1981). Such authoritative or prescriptive representations are understood as a form of limitation of other possibilities, other ways of being.[5]

How might this 'Foucauldian' concern to problemize authoritative prescriptions/descriptions of self, relations and society be used to explore the above issue of monogamy/non-monogamy? First, we could highlight

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the *normalization* of monogamy by (western) religious, governmental and medical authorities.[6] We might, for instance, explore the ways that particular religious and political leaders and authorities routinely privilege monogamy (particularly when institutionalized as marriage [Rose, 1996]) *over* non-monogamy. Drawing on this critique to re-read the extract from *Betty Blue*, we might interpret the speaker's concern to 'make his life shine' through resisting the temptation of sex, as the glow of self-righteousness, reflecting an official image of religious or moral dogma.

Second, we could highlight how casting monogamy as the natural, moral and god-fearing choice has functioned and does continue to function to *oppress* people. We might, for instance, explore understandings of monogamy as the institutionalization of women as the private property of individual men (codified, for example, in marriage vows 'to have and to hold'), and links between such 'property' relationships and domestic and sexual violence against women—evidenced, for instance, in the only recent criminalization of rape in marriage (1991/1992). We could link religious and governmental normalization of monogamy to the continual pathologization and oppression of those who identify (or are identified) as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Thus, we might highlight the ways that gays, lesbians and bisexuals are still routinely represented and understood as promiscuous (if not paedophilic), and thus as not only 'immoral', but now also 'dangerous' or 'unsafe' (Watney, 1996). Finally, we could explore the ways that the privileging of monogamy intersects with and legitimizes a colonial racialized discourse where black people, and particularly black African men, are pathologized by being represented as 'irresponsibly' promiscuous and not accepting the need to use condoms, and thus problemized (by a seemingly progressive discourse of AIDS awareness) as responsible for the predicted 'epidemic' of Aids on the African continent.

The above critiques of the oppressive other(ing) side of dominant discourses of monogamy highlight how that which we might conventionally understand as an apparently personal, individual, everyday, or ethical decision (to be monogamous or not to be—to have sex with this person or not) can be *re-presented as* and *re-connected with* politics (Foucault, 1984b).[7] Our 'personal', 'private', or 'ethical' relations and identifications are also inescapably wrapped up in and reproduce wider power relations which continue to pathologize other behaviours and people.[8] By drawing upon Foucault, we may therefore *broaden* what we understand as political oppression to include also spheres such as sexuality (Foucault, 1992) frequently excluded from mainstream/malestream political discourse (Hearn and Parkin, 1987).

By broadening what may be understood as political oppression, Foucault's work also opens up our appreciation of resistance to these 'new' forms of oppression as political agency (Simons, 1995). For example, some gay, bisexual, queer, lesbian and/or feminist individuals and groups

have explicitly explored non-monogamy as personal–political practice (e.g. Campaign for Homosexual Equality, 1972; Gay Liberation Front, 1971). In Foucauldian terms, these groups may be represented as understanding monogamy to be a personally and socially oppressive *limit experience* (McNay, 1994; Simons, 1995) containing policing and property relationship to self and others. And, further, a limit experience which needs to be *transgressed* so that other ways of relating to self and others may be created (Best, 1995; Foucault, 1977).[9]

It is important to highlight that gay, lesbian, bisexual, feminist and other groups and individuals that critique 'compulsory monogamy' call for the *practical/embodied* transgression of limit(ing) experiences of monogamy. Non-monogamy is, therefore, not only explored as an abstract or intellectualized personal/sexual politics. Such intellectualized politics may also enable the theoretical critique of oppression while the practical effects of such relations are still inscribed in our relationships and deeper sense of self. Like these groups, Foucauldian ethics asks us to pay attention to the politics of (our) bodies (Foucault, 1988), to *embody* our ethics/politics,[10] based upon the understanding that the forces of normalization are not imposed *on us* as an alien power from above but rather are daily reproduced *by us* in our everyday embodied reproduction of 'normal life' (Foucault, 1980: 94, 98, 1984b; see also Best, 1995; McNay, 1994).

As I have used a Foucauldian ethic to discuss some of the oppressive effects of normalized monogamy, and highlighted some of the groups explicitly resisting these effects through practical, emotional and conscious transgression, the reader might assume that the discourse of non-monogamy is being privileged by my reading of Foucault as *the* politically progressive sexual relationship choice. We might even begin to understand non-monogamy as the new 'truth' of proper, non-oppressive, sexual relations, with likely effects such as pathologizing those, such as the speaker in the passage from *Betty Blue*, who practise monogamy as sexually repressed and/or necessarily oppressing others. Thus, we might begin to understand non-monogamous selves as 'liberated' or 'true' selves whereas monogamous 'others' are presented as not knowing, and needing educating about, the true nature of their oppressive/oppressing sexuality.

Though this reproduction of truths and expert knowledges can be an effect of a Foucauldian problemization of normalized understandings and behaviours, Foucault's work does not have to reproduce such effects (see also the third part headed 'A Marriage of Convenience and the Divorce of the Researcher from the Researched'). Indeed, Foucault's critiques are notorious for problemizing orthodoxies or truth claims about society and self (Foucault, 1980: 131, 1991, 1992), and problemizing these truths/knowledges whether they are presented as progressive or not (see, for example, Foucauldian critiques of Marxism [Foucault, 1984c; Poster, 1984]; prison reform [Foucault, 1991]; and 'liberal' attitudes to sexuality [Foucault, 1992]).[11] The problemizing gaze of Foucauldian

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ethics is, in this sense at least, 'promiscuous'. There is no comfortable, secure, politically progressive, or enlightened haven outside of relations of power or within relations of power. Rather, we are exhorted to continually reconsider or *permanently critique* (Simons, 1995) the potentially problematic effects of the new (power) relations we have entered into and are thereby reaffirming and re-enacting.

To further problemize the issue of non-monogamy, we may highlight, as the speaker in *Betty Blue* does, the possibility that having sex with a person might represent the 'path of least resistance', a 'cop-out', or in some sense a 'betrayal' of self. Further, we could highlight the links between non-monogamy and historically masculine and contemporary 'post-industrial'/consumer society discourses of objectifying and commodifying sexual partners and securing sense of self through our conspicuous (sexual) consumption (e.g. Kundera, 1984). Thus, though the character in *Betty Blue* personally rejects 'fucking around', this is presented as a common, if not expected, practice in his circles ('I know everybody else does it'). Further, this practice is implicitly linked to the objectification of sexual partners as sexual objects, thus in his speech women are reduced to 'girls' possessing a 'nice ass'. Finally, the commodification and objectification of women are linked with a discourse of consumption in the equation of woman ('girl') and money ('check'/ cheque) ('It does you good to live according to your ideas, to not betray yourself, not cop out at the last minute *just because some girl has a nice ass, or because someone offers you a huge check*'). Next, we could render visible how sexual exploitation and abuse can be rationalized away or obscured by apparently 'progressive' discourses of non-monogamy, with the effect of, for instance, legitimizing new property relations whereby young women or men may be passed around as possessions. Finally, we might highlight how an exhortation to transgress the limiting moral conventions of monogamy may itself become a restrictive new orthodoxy of non-monogamy, enshrining new relations of obedience and repression. In this context, we could understand the whole of the above speech/ extract from *Betty Blue* as expressing the speaker's felt need to justify and legitimize his monogamy in a context where he felt pressure to be non-monogamous. As Stanley and Wise have argued (1983: 74), such new pressures or relations of obedience that apparently cut across the grain of restrictive conventional moral codes may be experienced as even more pernicious and censoring through being represented as *the* radical or political choice.

The above critiques (the limits) of non-monogamy seem to turn us back, almost full-circle, to monogamy, but this time monogamy understood as a *transgression* of the limits, restrictions and oppression of compulsory non-monogamy ('it's no fun if you do it like everybody else. To tell you the truth, it bores me. It does you good to live according to your ideas'). And yet, as I have argued above, the discourse of monogamy *is also* and *is still* a potentially restrictive and normalizing discourse.

What the Foucauldian permanent problemization of our subjectivities and practices does, therefore, is to problemize a discourse, any discourse, as inherently anything. Thus, for instance, as I have argued, the discourse of monogamy may be understood *both* as an embodiment and reproduction of masculine and capitalist patterns of ownership *and* as an attempt to resist masculine and contemporary consumerist relationships of conspicuous (sexual) commodification and consumption. Understanding and using Foucauldian ethics in this way encourages us to pay attention to what is *created* through our actions, relations and assumptions, and not to rely upon their essentialized rightness or treat a moral/political code as a non-problematic or authoritative truth (Foucault, 1983a, 1983b, 1984a).[12] This act of creation may be represented as embodied in the *Betty Blue* character's concern to make his life 'shine', where this 'shine' is understood as a process of self-transformation or aesthetic self-creation, honing and polishing the self so that it reflects back the image one wants to create, rather than the dull, singular and official image prescribed by authorities.[13]

Through this discussion of monogamy/non-monogamy, I have tried to draw out a 'feeling' for some of the themes of a Foucauldian ethics. In particular, I have drawn out: (i) an *intimate connection between* what we might understand as, on the one hand, the personal, *ethical*, everyday and, on the other, *political* issues and effects; such that our personal *embodied behaviours* are understood to reproduce or rebel against wider relations that bind your/our 'private' selves with the lives of others. This understanding has the effects of: (ii) showing the modernist conceptualization of the *independent atomized individual to be a myth*,[14] we are interdependent not independent beings, our actions have consequences for ourselves and others; and (iii) *broadening* what we may understand and relate to as of political concern to include areas conventionally marginalized as 'only' ethical, personal, or inconsequential. Further, (iv) I have highlighted the Foucauldian exhortation to *permanently problemize* the ways that we authorize or normalize our practices and identifications so that we may be more aware of how these may function to pathologize, or contribute to the oppression of, others (or in the words of Skunk Anansie [1996]: 'yes it's fucking political, everything's political').

The exhortation to permanently problemize provides us with no easy escape from power relations and removes from us the comforting but ill-founded ability to authorize our practices or identifications as beyond critique. For some critics of Foucault, this has been understood to mean that Foucault was a 'prophet of entrapment who induces despair by indicating that there is no way out of our subjection' (Simons, 1995: 3).[15] If, these critics argue, there is nothing outside of power relations, nothing without the potential to oppress or silence others, then everything is equally bad and we have no reason to act, no way of justifying or legitimizing our agency (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). Clearly it is possible to read Foucault this way. However, it is not necessary to do so.

In contrast, it is possible to see the other side of the permanent problemization of closure, as the privileging of openness. Thus, for instance, a Foucauldian ethics may be understood as focusing our ethical/political attention upon: revolt, transgression and resistance (Simons, 1995), and the importance of (metaphors of) self-stylization and aesthetics, embodied in the focus upon the *creation* of relations to self and others rather than privileging static authoritative truths of self. In Foucault's words, we need to open up a 'critique and creation of ourselves in our autonomy' (1984d: 44), or in the words of the male character in *Betty Blue*: 'I have one life—the only thing I'm interested in is making it shine'. Further, if everything is highlighted as potentially oppressive/restrictive by a Foucauldian ethics, this is not necessarily a cause for a loss of political agency, but, on the contrary, this may be understood as a call for heightened political vigilance, reflection and activism:

> My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. (Foucault, 1984a: 343)

In the next two parts, I draw upon this Foucauldian ethical commitment to 'permanently problemize' to explore our 'critical' management research practices and understandings. In particular (using Foucault's phrasing in the above quote), I explore in the next part of the article what the Foucauldian-inspired Manchester school's LPT has 'done' and how this resonates with a Foucauldian ethics. In the third part, I explore what is 'dangerous' with this 'Foucauldian' LPT and what the 'something to do' might be for us as 'critical' management researchers reflecting upon these dangers.

The Marriage of Foucault and LPT?

In this part of the article, I suggest resonances between the Manchester school's LPT and the four Foucauldian ethical themes or feelings drawn out and illustrated in the previous discussion.[16] To recap, these are a commitment to:

- see ethics as politics;
- critique sovereign subjectivity;
- broaden politics;
- permanently problemize.

Ethics as Politics

The first theme or feeling that I have suggested can be understood to constitute a Foucauldian ethic is the intimate connection between what we may have hitherto represented as the separate realms of the private, everyday, personal, or 'ethical' (e.g. sexual relationships), and the wider public realm of the 'political' (e.g. discourses of patriarchy, homophobia, sexism and racism).
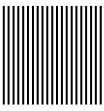
Here, I suggest that we can understand the Manchester school's critique of orthodox labour process theory and development of a Foucauldian-inspired LPT as similarly drawing upon Foucauldian ethical concerns to re-connect what has been conventionally marginalized as the 'personal', individual, or apolitical issue of workers' subjectivities and identities, with wider politics of capitalist labour process.

First, Manchester school authors have argued against orthodox LPT's *separation* of the personal/everyday from the political in the form of LPT's marginalization or exclusion of the issue of workers' subjectivity as ahistorical and astructural bourgeois social science (Knights and Will-mott, 1989). Far from being a 'fatal distraction' (Thompson, 1993) from the proper 'political' concerns of LPT, the authors argue that the neglect of workers' subjectivity, in favour of a concentration upon the 'objective' dimension of class, means that LPT is unable to adequately account for the continual reproduction of relations of domination and subordination enshrined in the capitalist labour process.

Second, building upon this critique of orthodox LPT, the school's authors argue that it is only by concentrating upon, rather than marginalizing, workers' subjectivity that we can appreciate how power relations are actually sustained within, what Willmott calls, 'the micro-politics of interaction' (1994: 105). The 'micro-politics of interaction' in the labour process (the process by which capitalist relations are daily reproduced) is a product and outcome of workers' attempts to develop and sustain a stable sense of personal identity. In seeking a stable sense of identity in conditions that continually threaten its erosion, workers invest 'their subjectivity in familiar sets of practices'; this has the effect of 'inhibit[ing] the potential for disruption by representing it as a threat to (workers') identity/sense of reality' (Knights and Willmott, 1989: 554). The 'personal' issue of a worker's subjectivity and identity, including even their sense of their own masculinity/femininity (Collinson, 1994; Knights and Collinson, 1987; Knights and Willmott, 1989), is *intimately* and *unavoidably* bound up in the reproduction and contestation of existing relations of power.

By focusing upon the ways that workers' 'existential struggles with self identity are promoted by, and serve to sustain, the contradictory organization and control of the capitalist labour process' (Willmott, 1993: 701), the authors' writings may be understood to resonate with or reproduce what I have argued is a Foucauldian ethical concern to *critique the separation*, and *explore the intimate connection between*, the 'personal', everyday, ethical, micro-practices of self, and wider 'political' relations of oppression and domination.

A Critique of Sovereign Subjectivity

The second Foucauldian ethical theme is problemization of our under-standing of our selves as separate from and independent of others. I

highlighted two effects of this critique of independent/sovereign subjectivity in my earlier discussion of non/monogamy. First, I highlighted how nominally 'individual' choices and behaviours are inextricably bound up in and reproduce effects for/upon others. Second, I highlighted how Foucauldian ethics problemizes the authorization of any particular understanding of self as the 'truth' of our essential selves. In this section, I suggest that we may similarly understand the Manchester school's Foucauldian-inspired LPT to similarly draw upon and resonate with this ethical theme.

First, the school's key criticism of Burawoy's (1979) reconstruction of LPT is levelled at his understanding of workers as possessed of some inner creative essence blocked by capitalist production regimes (Knights and Willmott, 1989; Willmott, 1993). This construction of workers' essential subjectivity is understood to be a dangerous product of humanist/enlightenment thinking that serves the problematic effect of separating off workers' 'subjectivity' from the social context within which it is/they are enacted and constructed. Burawoy is therefore presented as having performed the valuable role of refocusing attention upon workers' subjectivity and its effects upon the politics of production, but then inhibiting analysis and reflection upon this by imposing an a priori definition of what this subjectivity *is*. Rather than reproducing this humanist 'truth' of workers' subjectivities, Manchester school authors draw upon Foucault's writings to understand subjectivity as an ' "openness" to the possibilities of our relationship to nature and social life' (Knights and Willmott, 1989: 552). Drawing upon this Foucauldian privileging of openness, the authors thereby represent workers' constructions of their subjectivities/identities as attempts at closure, attempts to control and silence the existential angst which accompanies the ever-present alternative 'field of possibilities' for expressing one's relationship to self and others (Knights and Willmott, 1989: 553). Therefore, far from being reducible to objective class interests, workers' constructions of subjectivity, even the notion of subjectivity itself, needs to be examined and reflected upon in local social/political contexts (see, for example, Collinson, 1994; Knights and Collinson, 1987; O'Doherty and Willmott, 1998).

Second, the Manchester school's writings further resonate with the Foucauldian critique of sovereign subjectivity by reflecting upon the social/political *effects* of the particular constructions or understandings of their subjectivity that workers employ. For instance, Knights and Collinson (1987) argued that the (male) shopfloor workers they studied constructed and relied upon a gendered (masculine) sense of their own identity, which privileged 'masculine' themes such as a sense of independence, straight talking and honesty. Further, the authors argued that there were several problematic effects of the workers' construction of a gendered subjectivity. First, the workers were rendered complicit, even 'collaborators' (1987: 471), in their own oppression—the construction of a gendered subjectivity was 'a subjective position that could not

acknowledge the reality of labour's actual *dependence* on the company since this would deny the very autonomy which was the foundation of shopfloor dignity' (Knights and Collinson, 1987: 472, authors' original emphasis). Second, the authors argue that male workers' elevation of the importance of (a particular) sense of masculinity discredits and devalues that which they construct as 'feminine', with likely divisive outcomes and oppressive effects for women both in, and outside of, the workplace.

By so drawing upon Foucault to examine and critique subjectivity, the Manchester school opens up understandings of subjectivity as *fluid, as socially and self-constructed, and as inescapably interrelational and political* in opposition to the historical essentialization and/or problem-ization of subjectivity in LPT. In these ways, the school's LPT writings may therefore be seen to resonate with what I have suggested is a Foucauldian ethical critique of sovereign subjectivity.

Broadening Politics

The third Foucauldian ethical theme is the *broadening of what we may understand as political agency* to include behaviours and identifications (e.g. resisting compulsory monogamy) conventionally marginalized as 'only' ethical or personal.

Here, I suggest that we may understand the Manchester school's Foucauldian-inspired LPT as similarly drawing upon/reproducing this Foucauldian ethical concern to broaden what we may understand and relate to as political action or agency—specifically, to include micro, personal and local practices as potential, and necessary, sources of political agency and an effective challenge to oppressive relations.

First, having made connections between workers' understandings of 'sovereign' subjectivity and relations of self-subordination to oppressive relations within the capitalist labour process (see under 'Ethics as Politics' and 'A Critique of Sovereign Subjectivity' above), the authors highlight the historically marginalized arena of workers' identity constructions as a crucial location for workers' resistance to oppression. Willmott (1994) draws out this point explicitly when he writes that, to effectively chal-lenge modern power relations, people need to engage in a political process of 'de-subjection' that acts to 'dissolve the sense of sovereignty upon which, through the media of anxiety, guilt and shame, the powers of domination, exploitation and subjection routinely feed' (Willmott, 1994: 123).

Through such a focus upon practices of the self, the school's authors may be understood as engaged in a process of enriching and extending 'politics' in LPT by introducing a historically problematized focus upon a politics of identity/identifications into the traditional labour politics focus of LPT.

Second, the authors have researched the issue of workers' identity in actual/specific organizational contexts (Collinson, 1994; Knights and Collinson, 1987; Knights and McCabe, 1998a, 1999b, 2000), rather than

merely read off an assumed oppositional class identity from workers' objective position of subordination in the capitalist labour process. By so doing, these writings concentrate our attention upon local, everyday, micro-organizational practices as an important site for workers' engagement in, and our investigation of, political agency. As Knights (1997: 6) writes:

> It is not 'experts' at a distance representing problems on a grand narrative scale that are needed, but workers actively participating in producing context-related and localized responses to a set of political, ecological and social conditions with which they are confronted.

This endorsement to locate analysis and critique of this oppression within local/micro-organizational practices and an identity politics of 'de-subjection' may be seen to resonate with a Foucauldian ethical concern to broaden what we understand by 'politics' so as to also include historically marginalized areas of identity, the 'personal' and local/micro practices.

Permanently Problemize

The fourth, and last, Foucauldian ethical theme is the concern or broad commitment to *problemize (any/all) truth or authority claims*. This is based upon the understanding that such claims are unavoidably founded upon and reproduce the silencing and pathologization of other positions and people. This ethical concern could perhaps be summarized as a general antipathy towards, and attempt to subvert, closure and privilege openness. Here, I suggest that the Manchester school's LPT writings may be similarly understood as concerned with this ethic of permanent problemization.

First, the school's authors theorize and promote the subversion of closure in their articles (Willmott, 1998). For example, we are encouraged to 'cherish impermanence' (Willmott, 1994), and understand subjectivity as simply an 'openness' to the possibilities of our relationships with each other and life (Knights and Willmott, 1989). As I have argued earlier, such openness is to be embodied in problemizing ideas of sovereign subjectivity and embracing (political) practices of 'de-subjection' (Willmott, 1994).

Second, the authors seem to problemize what some would construct as some of the central defining foci of LPT (Martinez Lucio and Stewart, 1997; Rowlinson and Hassard, 1994; Thompson, 1993; Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). For example, through their introduction of subjectivity understood as a struggle with the existential openness of life, the authors challenge LPT's traditional privileging of 'class' struggle specifically located within the workplace over other forms of oppression and resistance (Thompson, 1993).

The Manchester school's empirical writings further risk the censure of colleagues, if not the possible accusation of embodying an anti-working class sentiment, by their problemization of the ways that working class

men resist the effects of the labour process. In particular, the school's authors represent (male) workers as constructing themselves and their behaviours in ways that: (i) are macho and sexist (Knights and Collinson, 1987); (ii) result in inhibiting 'real' resistance (Knights and Collinson, 1987: 465); and (iii) unwittingly result in the workers becoming 'collaborators' (Knights and Collinson, 1987: 471) in their own oppression. They further argue that these effects occur outside of the comprehension of the workers themselves who maintain the 'illusion' (Knights and Collinson, 1987: 472, 474) that they are resisting management (see also Collinson, 1994; Knights and McCabe, 1998a, 1999b).

Such problemizations of LPT orthodoxies and established ways of knowing are a central, perhaps the central, contribution of the Manchester school's post-structuralist informed writing. It is a contribution readily acknowledged and celebrated by the authors (see, for example, Willmott, 1993: 701). It is also a contribution that has been made explicitly and extensively enough for some to consider the writings as too far removed from LPT's core values to be properly understood *as* LPT (Martinez Lucio and Stewart, 1997; Thompson, 1993). Such a critique would suggest perhaps that the school's writings should not be seen as a form of Foucauldian 'permanent problemization', transgressing both the limits of workplace oppression *and* the normalizing boundaries and effects of nominally 'critical' literatures that claim a new and problematic authority for their critiques, but should more properly be understood as merely another branch of 'uncritical' management theory or bourgeois sociology. However, as Parker (1999) observes, the school's authors clearly represent their post-structuralist theory and problemizations of LPT orthodoxies to be within the spirit of furthering an effective critique of oppressive and subordinating relations (see also Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994). As such, they position themselves broadly within the critical spirit (though perhaps not always the letter) of a Marxist informed critique of the capitalist labour process (Willmott, 1993).

These writings may be seen to be reproducing what I have argued is a Foucauldian ethical concern to *permanently problemize subordinating forms of closure*, irrespective of whether they are conventionally represented as oppressive (e.g. the capitalist labour process) *or* progressive (e.g. the orthodoxies of LPT).

A Marriage of Convenience and the Divorce of Researcher from Researched

Above, I have drawn out resonances between what I have suggested as themes or feelings of a Foucauldian ethics and the Manchester school of labour process writings. I have been concerned, specifically, to argue that there *is* an apparent marriage (to use a metaphor that continues the monogamy/non-monogamy theme) between the concerns of this school and Foucauldian ethics. I now question, however, whether this may be

understood as more of an *abstract engagement* with Foucauldian ethics than an attempt to e*xplore and embody* these ethics, particularly in the context of the researcher's relationship with the researched. The marriage between Foucauldian ethical concerns and the Manchester school appears, I suggest, to be intellectual rather than embodied, in the head rather than the heart. In other words, it is a *marriage of convenience* and a marriage that ends in a positivist *divorce* of researcher from researched.[17] This divorce risks ending in an unequal settlement whereby the professional academic accrues cultural capital and resources and the researched are left poorer as a result of their engagement with the 'political' academic.[18]

I make these arguments by drawing upon the same four Foucauldian ethical themes or feelings drawn out in the first part of this article and threaded through the second part above. In this part, these themes translate as:

- a *disconnection* between ethics and politics;
- the *reproduction* of the sovereign and independent researcher;
- *neglected opportunities* for exploring politics;
- the author's problemization of others and *authorization of self*.

Disconnection of Ethics and Politics

Earlier in this article, I suggested that we could understand the Manchester school's focus upon workers' subjectivity in the politics of production as resonating with a Foucauldian ethical commitment to explore the intimate connections between the (marginalized) 'personal', individual, or ethical and the (privileged) 'political'. Here, I argue that, although the school's authors challenge the neglect of the 'personal' issue of workers' identity in theory; they then reproduce this neglect by producing *depersonalized,* 'realist' (Van Maanen, 1988), academic representations of the workplace. They compound this neglect by failing to reflect and act upon the problematic subordinating/silencing effects of producing such depersonalized 'authoritative' representations.

Van Maanen writes that, of all the ways of writing up empirical research, realist tales 'push most firmly for the authenticity of the cultural representations conveyed in the text' (1988: 45). Principally, realist tales do this by *depersonalizing* the representations they produce, by removing the person of the researcher from the account produced, removing the knower from the known:

> Ironically, by taking the 'I' (the observer) out of the ethnographic report, the narrators' authority is apparently enhanced, and audience worries over personal subjectivity become moot. (Van Maanen, 1988: 46)

Where the 'I' does figure in such realist tales, it is in:

> . . . brief, perfunctory, but mandatory appearance in a method footnote tucked away from the text. The only other glimpse of the ostrich-like writer

> is a brief walk-on cameo role in which he puts into place the analytic framework. The voice assumed throughout the tale is that of a third-party scribe reporting directly on the life of the observed. (Van Maanen, 1988: 64)

I argue here that the Manchester school's empirical LPT writings may be understood as reproducing this problematic realist form of representation.[19]

First, the authors' discussions of methodology in their empirical papers reproduce realist conventions by being brief, formal and serving to further authorize the particular representations they produce. Knights and McCabe's (1998a) recent article is illustrative of these points (see also Knights and McCabe, 1998b, 1999a, 2000; Knights and Murray, 1994). A one-and-a-half page discussion of 'Theory and Methodology' employs several typical realist devices to push for the 'authenticity of the cultural representation conveyed in the text'. Methodology is discussed as a series of unproblematic formal techniques (formal interview, documentary investigation, observational research, triangulation)—suggesting the authors are skilled researchers trained and experienced in the use of a variety of analytical techniques. The discussion stresses the time and depth of the research undertaken (six-months, 25 staff interviewed, 10-hour-long weekly team meetings, five meetings of 10 team leaders)—suggesting the authors possess a unique 'experiential authority' (Van Maanen, 1988: 46) to correctly interpret the culture. Finally, the discussion of 'Theory and Methodology' is clearly sectioned off from the rest of the paper—suggesting that the following representation is unproblematic, incontestable and authentic: matters of methodology (or how the authors came to 'know' what is 'known') have, it seems, already been dispensed with.

Second, the Manchester school's writings reproduce the realist myth of being 'third party scribes reporting directly on the life of the observed' by removing and obscuring their presence in the material they present. Thus, empirical material is typically presented without reference to the context of its production, the conversations that preceded or followed a particular quote, or the possibility of alternative interpretations other than that presented by the authors. Perhaps in anticipation of criticisms of such uncontextualized/unproblematized quotes being used as evidence of what those studied 'really think', Manchester school writings periodically include one or more sentences disclaiming the authority of their representations. For example, Knights and Collinson (1987: 458) put their faith in a 'consensus theory of truth' and the 'plausibility to the reader' of their analysis; Knights and McCabe (1998a: 175, 1998b: 777) acknowledge that all representations are social constructions; Knights and McCabe (2000: 1515) say in an endnote that 'this record of our methods is not intended as a claim to authoritative representations devoid of any human concern for the lives of those employees'; and

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Knights and Murray (1994: 130–1) state that 'we are not of the (positivist) school that believes it possible to eradicate values from research'. However, like the authors' brief, formal discussions of methodology, such sentences are spatially, and I would suggest emotionally, separated from the depersonalized, third-person and apparently objective and authoritative representations of the workplace produced in the rest of their papers and/or book. For example, such recognition (or disclaimers) of the socially constructed, and problematical, nature of representations of reality do not lead the authors to question their own interpretations, or seriously explore other possible readings, or make explicit their ethical/ political reasons for constructing their representations as they do, much less produce 'multivocal texts where an event is given meaning first in one way, then another' (Van Maanen, 1988: 52; see also Wray-Bliss, 2001). Rather, they implicitly claim a kind of 'interpretive omnipotence' (Van Maanen, 1988: 51) over the particular workplace studied, and present carefully selected uncontextualized quotes and descriptions as unproblematic evidence supporting their depersonalized authoritative analysis of workplace relations and even their analysis (and problemization) of other peoples' identities.

This depersonalized authority reproduces a skewed power relationship vis-a-vis the researched. The LPT theorist's social/professional standing becomes less vulnerable the more they authorize their research and the more they apparently remove themselves from that which they write. The researched, however, do not have access to this strategy. For:

> . . . to be vulnerable is an everyday hazard for 'the researched', for little research is done on those people powerful enough to force the non-publication or recantation of results they don't like. The researched are vulnerable in the sense that their lives, feelings, understandings, become grist to the research mill and may appear, in goodness knows what mangled form, at the end of the research process. And whatever mangled form it is, its form is unlikely to be subject to control by them. (Stanley and Wise, 1983: 180)

The problematic vulnerability that may result from the depersonalized authority of the academic text may be illustrated with the example of Knights and Collinson's (1987) 'Disciplining the Shopfloor'. In this paper, the authors use the typical conventions of realist writing (uncontextualized extracts as quotes, depersonalized reporting style, minimal 'formal' discussion of methodology) to problemize/pathologize the resistance *and* identities of the shopfloor workers they research and to authorize their own selective interpretations. For instance, despite the shopfloor workers spending much more 'time in the field' than the authors, and considerably more time constructing and living with their own identities than the authors did deconstructing them, Knights and Collinson present as being able to know that the workers' valued sense of identity and

dignity is 'illusionary' (Knights and Collinson, 1987: 474), that their resistance is not 'real' resistance (Knights and Collinson, 1987: 465) and that the men should properly be understood as 'politically docile' (Knights and Collinson, 1987: 474) and 'collaborators' in their own sub-ordination (Knights and Collinson, 1987: 471—for similar problematic dynamics reproduced in the Manchester school writings see Collinson, 1994; Knights and McCabe, 1998a; O'Doherty and Willmott's, 1998: 18 discussion of Sosteric, 1996).

Knights and Collinson's pathologization of the researched highlights two aspects of the depersonalized authority of the realist tale. First, as Stanley and Wise (1983) argue above, the removal of the 'personal' presence of the researchers can have subordinating political effects for those we research (see also bell hooks, 1989). Thus, not only could Knights and Collinson's problemization of workers' resistance and identi-ties be experienced as patronizing and dismissive, but it also carries the warranting force of 'realist' academic authority. Second, without extensive reflection upon, and discussion of how the authors came to know what they know, of the context of quotes and observations, and of the researched's own responses to how they were being represented, Knights and Collin-son's pathologizing 'realist' representation does not *in itself* contain suffi-cient material for us to accept their subordinating representation of these shopfloor workers. The fact that we *do* accept this representation (and that journals normalize such realist empirical articles) highlights a final problematic quality of the depersonalized realist tale. A realist tale is not accepted wholly, or even primarily, because of its internal content, rather:

> . . . a good deal of what is by and large the unproblematic quality of fieldwork authority rests on the background expectancies of an audience of believers. (Van Maanen, 1988: 46)

Thus, we, the wider audience of 'critical' academics and 'political' LPT writers, are a crucial complicit link in creating and sustaining the sub-ordinating authority of the depersonalized realist tale.

From the above, I argue that the Manchester school's 'Foucauldian' LPT does not seek to embody the Foucauldian ethical commitment to link the 'personal' (presence of the authors in all aspects of the research process) with the 'political' (LPT representations they produce). Rather, and in common with most LPT writings, the authors unreflexively reproduce a depersonalized 'realist' academic authority. As Willmott (1998: 87) reminds us, post-structuralist ethical critiques, like Foucault's, highlight how authority 'is founded upon forms of arbitrary, forceful exclusion or repression'. I have drawn upon such an understanding of Foucauldian ethical themes or feelings here to highlight the subordinat-ing 'exclusion' or 'repression' of the researched that is a consequence of

the mystification of the personal and its replacement with the deperson-
alized authoritative in the school's writings.

Sovereign and Independent Researcher

Previously I argued that the Manchester school's authors are explicitly
concerned to utilize a Foucauldian framework to problemize humanist
notions of independent, essential, sovereign subjectivity (see Knights and
Willmott, 1989; Knights and Collinson, 1987; Knights, 1997; Willmott,
1993, 1994). This task of problemization/deconstruction is founded upon
the authors' understanding that relating to ourself/selves as independent
from others (and their/our shared processes of continual social co-
construction) renders us vulnerable to reproducing social practices that
reaffirm our valued sense of self at the cost of our subordination to their
routine oppressive effects and knowledges. Thus:

> . . . resistance to the development of more rational, harmonious social
> institutions does not arise simply from vested interests in preserving the
> status quo but also, and no less fundamentally, from a modern, humanist
> belief in the existence and continuity of self-identity, the confirmation of
> which is frequently dependent upon sustaining prevailing power relations.
> (Willmott, 1994: 93)

The author's critique of such understandings of sovereign, independent
subjectivity is levelled not just at workers 'out there', but also at main-
stream and critical (especially LPT) academics who utilize and reproduce
such constructions in their writings (see under 'A Critique of Sovereign
Subjectivity' above). With regard to these writings, the authors are
'uncomfortable with a methodological strategy that involves a separation
of "objective" and "subjective" moments of social reproduction' (Will-
mott, 1993: 691; also Knights, 1992). In the place of problematic, 'human-
ist', dualistic constructions of (independent, essentialized) sovereign
'self' and (independent, essentialized) sovereign 'other', what is needed
is a process of practical 'de-subjection' or 'de-differentiation' of self and
other, subject and object, I and they:

> . . . the theory and practice of de-subjection can enable us to recognize and
> overcome the habitual desire to define and secure the sense of self as
> sovereign entity. (Willmott, 1994: 125–6)

While the school's critique of independent sovereign subjectivity and
advocacy of practices of 'de-subjection' clearly resonates with Foucault's
writings and ethics, an (ethical/political) problem with the work is that
the authors apply this critique only 'to problems of dualistic *theorizing* in
organization studies' (Knights, 1997: 2 my emphasis; also O'Doherty and
Willmott, 1998). They do not use this Foucauldian ethical commitment to
reflect upon their own dualistic and problematic research and scholarly
practices, but routinely separate themselves from those they study through
reproducing the depersonalized conventions of a realist representation.
In their empirical accounts, the research object/subject (the worker) is

rendered visible/vulnerable in the text while the researcher remains separate and aloof. The researcher and researched are constructed as independent, rather than interdependent, with the researcher revealing and commenting upon, rather than co-constructing and contributing to, the lives of the researched.[20] Such a (modernist/positivist) dualist construction of research relations reproduces problematic subordinating and silencing effects for the researched, and specifically the subordination to the depersonalized ('sovereign'?) authority of the researcher/LPT expert— bell hooks' words could have been written with just such a relationship in mind:

> Even if perceived 'authorities' writing about a group to which they do not belong and/or over which they wield power, are progressive, caring, and right-on in every way, as long as their authority is constituted by either the absence of the voices of the individuals whose experiences they seek to address, or the dismissal of those voices as unimportant, the subject–object dichotomy is maintained and domination is reinforced. (bell hooks, 1989: 43)

Interestingly, Knights and McCabe (1998b) seem to anticipate such a critique in one of their articles. The authors argue that publicly funded academic research should 'be for the benefit of the population' and that a crucial way to explore this is to 'give voice to those who are often the targets of power' (Knights and McCabe, 1998b: 777). Unfortunately, however, they then do not explore any of the ways academic research has been, and could be, constructed so as to facilitate 'giving' (?) voice to the historically silenced. Rather, they end up privileging one voice, their own, throughout their traditionally narrated text and even legitimize their (depersonalized) authority further by defining (their) research as '*the* voice of dissent and enquiry that challenges and questions taken-for-granted assumptions which those who relish power would sooner not have asked or exposed' (Knights and McCabe, 1998b: 778, emphasis added). Similarly, Knights (1995) discussing the politics of research and the politics of IT highlights the contribution that research can make by 'giving voice to dissent from the official line' (Knights, 1995: 233). He argued that senior managers' silencing of dissent in the case study organization was clearly problematic and was in need of 'disruption' (Knights, 1995: 247). His article 'recommends' (Knights, 1995: 248) case study research of the kind that he has produced as 'facilitat(ing) the processes of such disruptions' (Knights, 1995:248) through, for instance, having 'the practical implications . . . to disrupt the masculinity of practitioners in their aggressive and compulsive search for "correct answers" ' (Knights, 1995: 239). However, as in Knights and McCabe (1998b) above, recognition of such potential of research to 'give' voice or 'practically disrupt' local instances of silencing or subordination are un(der)explored in the text. Such potentialities for research remain a theoretical rather than embodied possibility.

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If Manchester school authors are to be consistent in their commitment to critique the dualisms of (sovereign) self–(problematized) other, then the expert/depersonalized *researcher/observer* and misguided/self-subordinating *researched* dualism too needs to be 'practically de-differentiated' (Willmott, 1994: 113). The 'independent sovereign' (even if well intentioned) researcher roaming imperially over the workplaces and identities of others needs to be practically 'de-subjected'.

Without wanting to constrain or limit, and without the space here to really explore, the multiple and diverse ways through which this project/process might be enacted, such practices of de-differentiation/de-subjection of the researcher–researched dualism might include exploring ways of trying to construct and conduct research 'with' rather than 'on' others (Reason, 1994). Thus, we could engage with and learn from traditions of participatory research and participatory action research (Griffin and Pheonix, 1994; Henwood and Pigeon, 1995; Reason and Bradbury, 2001), particularly as explored, reflected upon and debated within the personal–political traditions of (some) feminist literatures, where crucial issues of inclusion/exclusion, speaking for/speaking with, appropriation and emancipation are cogently and practically explored (Abbot and Wallace, 1992; Aitken, 1996; Opie, 1992; Lincoln, 1995). Further, we could seriously reflect upon what it means to understand our representations as our *relationship with others* (Jodelet, 1991), such that it becomes incumbent upon us to consider our writings as our shared ethical/political agency within the politics of production (see Collins and Wray-Bliss, 2000a; Wray-Bliss, 1998). Thus, we would write because of— and only because of—our understanding of the ethical/political effects of our writing (to start with ethics—Parker, 1999), and not to hide behind a discredited elitist/positivist assumption that we are writing to represent 'truth' or that we produce our particular/partial representations because of some kind of epistemological necessity. To paraphrase Willmott, the appeal and value of such disciplines, traditions and literatures that attempt to blur the problematic separation between researcher and researched would reside 'in their capacity to debunk and dissolve *practically* the dualistic illusion of individual sovereignty that is deconstructed intellectually by [the Manchester school's] poststructuralist forms of analysis' (Willmott, 1994: 90, author's original emphasis, my brackets/contents).

That the Manchester school's authors (and other LPT writers) do not explore such practices in their research relations raises questions about the authors' commitment to a Foucauldian ethical critique of sovereign, independent subjectivity. But, more importantly, the subordinating effects that the authors argue are a consequence of a 'sovereign' subject's relationship to prevailing oppressive power relations are likely reproduced and reinforced within research subjects' relationships with the nominally 'political' but in practice independent and expert labour process theorist.

Neglected Politics

I have argued in the last two sections that the Manchester school authors leave untheorized and unexplored their own reproduction of subordinating, and (according to my reading of Foucault) ethically/politically problematic, effects and relations in the research process. In this section, I extend this critique by arguing that, in addition to reproducing these 'negative' effects, the authors fail to reflect upon and explore the 'positive' political possibilities of their presence as researchers situated within the micro-politics of production.

A significant contribution of the school's Foucauldian-inspired writings has been to (re)introduce an appreciation of the political nature of nominally 'personal' or individual acts and understandings (see under 'Broadening Politics' above). In particular, the authors have highlighted workers' identity as a crucial fulcrum through which oppression may be reproduced and as an essential site through which effective resistance to such oppression must be mounted (Willmott, 1994; Knights and McCabe, 1999a; Knights and Willmott, 1989). Despite this theoretical recognition of the importance of transgressing the gap between 'personal' and 'political', the authors neglect to explicitly consider the political implications and possibilities of their own personal presence in the workplaces they study as a political issue or resource.

To illustrate, I draw upon the process of 'consciousness raising' historically privileged by feminists as an important personal–political process. Though sometimes maligned now as an outdated (according to 'new' women, spice girls, post-feminists) and/or arrogant, expert, practice, consciousness raising may be considered an explicit attempt to link 'political' understandings with 'personal' practices and identifications. As such, a variation of consciousness raising might be one process that the Manchester school could explore as a means of embodying their Foucauldian commitments to link the personal/ethical with political practices and knowledges.[21] In fact, given the school's authors' apparent ability to make authoritative (see under 'Disconnection of Ethics and Politics' above) pronouncements over what forms of resistance are or are not effective, will or will not fail (e.g. Knights and Collinson, 1987; Collinson, 1994; Knights and McCabe, 1998a), and their ability to divine when another person's identity constructions are tying them into unwittingly reproducing self-subordination, then sharing these insights with those they judge/analyse would seem an obvious process for the Manchester school to explore. This may then both help the workers not to fall into the traps the researcher can apparently uniquely 'see', and/or the schools to have their ideas explored or exposed in practice. This might be one way to enable the school's authors to avoid being what Knights problemizes as ' "experts" at a distance representing problems on a grand scale' and to explore what it means for an academic to 'actively participat(e) in producing context-related and localized responses to a set of

political, ecological and social conditions with which they are confronted' (1997: 6). However, despite this call by Knights for 'context-related and localized responses', exploring the researcher's presence as a political resource or process is presumably too local for the school's authors to consider in their labour process research—or so the glaring omission of *any* explicit exploration of the political possibilities of their presence in their writings would suggest. Instead of serious reflection upon or evidence of any attempt to 'actively participate in producing context-related and localized responses' to the politics of production, Manchester school authors have instead responded by: (i) signalling a 'hope' that 'on reading this alternative insight into the impact of BPR at work, both managers and staff may be persuaded to reflect on the practices they adopt' (Knights and McCabe, 1998a: 188)—this hope is mentioned without any discussion in the text of how or whether the research *was* made available to staff and managers, or discussion of any effects of the researched's readings and reflections upon the text (see also Knights, 1995; Knights and McCabe, 2000);[22] and (ii) by privileging other experts as the *only* ones capable of making sense/use of their work. As Knights and Collinson say of their research:

> Its only potential then must lie with the audience of academic accountants who, in recognising the enormous disciplinary power of accounting knowledge, may give more attention to the moral and political consequences of their practice. (1987: 474)

I am aware that outside of these problematic, limited, published responses, colleagues who have not sought to explicitly address issues of the ethics and effects of their research in their writings and public academic practices sometimes privately confess feelings of disquiet or anxiety about the lack of relevance of their work for the lived politics of production. However, I would argue that such private expressions of guilt are not an acceptable or adequate response to these concerns. Given that other academics and researchers (e.g. Aitken, 1996; Aitken and Burman, 1999; Henwood and Pigeon, 1995; Lincoln, 1995; Marks, 1993; Opie, 1992; Reason, 1994; Seidman, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1983) have done and do continue to explicitly explore and publish ways of reconstructing the research process as more participative and political, the marginalization of these issues to private guilt, or the 'real ale bar' as one author advocated (Jackson, 1995), suggests that once more malestream/mainstream 'critical' academia is silencing or individualizing voices, challenges and concerns that it finds uncomfortable.

Problemize Others, Authorize Self

Under the heading 'Permanently Problemize' above, I argued that the Manchester school may be understood to be engaged in a Foucauldian ethical process of problemizing normalized conventions and assumptions in LPT. However, throughout this final part of the article, I have argued that the authors direct this problemizing gaze at others rather than
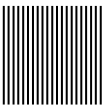
at themselves. Thus, I have suggested that the Manchester school: (i) draws upon conventions of the realist tale to authorize its own deperson-alized representations; (ii) problemizes others' 'sovereign independ-ent' subjectivity, but then enshrines this in its own relations with the researched; and (iii) problemizes workers' forms of resistance but does so at a distance without exploring the possibilities of participating/researching with others, and so exempts its own understandings of 'effective' resist-ance from any similar critique. These effects combine to make the school's authors ever more invulnerable and seemingly authoritative the more the researched are rendered vulnerable and problemized.

A possible rationale or defence that could be made of this inequity is that the authorization of the critical academic's voice is an unfortunate necessity if our critique is to be effectively heard and taken note of by our wider community. I explore this position as my conclusions to this work.

Rationalizing the authority of the researcher as a necessary political device or resource *might* be a tenable defence if labour process theorists were able to persuasively show that their voice *is* heard and that they *do* have positive effects in changing oppressive political practices in the workplace. However, in the context of recent critiques of LPT's 'lack' of impact (Martinez Lucio and Stewart, 1997; Rowlinson and Hassard, 1994), and in the complete absence of research that I am aware of that explores the effects of our writings and research upon the politics of production, this argument risks appearing more like a self-interested legitimation. The glaring lack of study of the effects of our 'critical'/ 'political' research, writings and resources seems to suggest four possible implications.

The first is that we *don't actually care* about the effects of our work for others. If this is the case, then (like Parker, 1999: 41) 'my engagement with (and sympathy for) the papers stops here, because I can see no other very convincing reason for practising critical organization studies'.

Second, we don't conduct research into the effects of LPT because *we are confident* of its progressive political effects upon the politics of pro-duction. I have argued in this paper that this confidence is premature at best and seriously misplaced or delusional at worst.

Third, we don't explore the effects of our research because we have an uncomfortable and unsilenceable suspicion that we *don't have* appreci-able positive effects. While I empathize with the sentiments, I have argued throughout that this private 'guilt' response is not sufficient, but rather should be mobilized as a resource to explore ways of conducting research with others into the practical resolution or mitigation of sub-ordinating and oppressive relations. Some of the references contained within this paper might provide one preliminary starting point for this process.

Finally, we don't explore the effects of our research because we (say that we) *do not want to have* effects, perhaps seeing such a desire as an

arrogant masculine drive for mastery, out of place in the 'modest' and 'diverse' postmodern academy (Knights, 1997). This justification or legitimation for not exploring the effects of our research seems the most significant to me, for several reasons, and I make some comments on these to end this paper.

The charge of heroic masculinity is significant because it is a charge that has already been used to criticize (or marginalize) another organizational studies author's attempts to raise questions about the ethics and effects of our academic practices. For instance, Jackson (1995: 571) labelled Parker's (1995) attempt to stimulate reflections upon our practices as the 'chest thumpings' of the 'angry young man of organization theory'.[23]

Further, Foucault's writings and ethics have also been criticized for failing to differentiate enough from an individualistic discourse of heroic masculinity and self-mastery (McNay, 1994; Simons, 1995)—a discourse that I deliberately and visibly reproduced, rather than hid or mystified, in my discussion of the ethics of the male characters 'resistance' of female sexual advances in the first part of this article. For instance, referring to the initial quote from the male character in *Betty Blue*: clearly the ability to effectively 'resist' sexual advances and/or expectations is differentiated around an axis of gender. The male character refuses sexual advances purely by the force of his speech and, further, can use this encounter as an opportunity to 'impart' his own 'wisdom' or philosophy to/upon the other, female, character. In stark contrast, we as a society still have organized campaigns to limit male sexual violence against women and to make men understand that when a woman says 'no' it means *no*.

Relatedly, what some critics have understood as the heroic individualism of Foucault's ethics may also be seen as gendered (McNay, 1994). Arguably, it is easier for a man to conceptualize and create his life as an individual 'work of art', and to transgress boundaries of normalized acceptable behaviour, because: (i) generally men have more latitude in society and are subject less to the control of others than women; and (ii) women are still primarily constructed as 'carers', as principally social rather than individual, and as primarily responsible for, and tied to, the lives and welfare of others. To resist and transgress in overt, explicit ways might therefore be understood as more risky and dangerous for women, in that it will likely subject them more readily and harshly to the official disciplinary powers of medical, social and legal authorities. Foucault's ethics of explicit transgression might therefore be constructed as potentially liberating for men (including those in the, male-dominated, LPT profession and the male workers whom they principally study), but is in need of considerable reworking if the ethic is to speak to or be useful for the majority of women.

Finally, throughout this last part of the paper I have proffered one reading, one tale of LPT. Through this process, I might have been experienced as reproducing a (masculine) form of closure: closing off other

possible interpretations of the LPT writings that I cite in my masculine drive and desire to make my own narrative appear superior and authoritative. In other words, I might be *legitimately* accused of reproducing relations of silencing and subordination vis-a-vis the writings I represent —relations that contradict the paper's, and my own, explicit ethical/ political positions and commitments. As I am critiquing others' texts, I am aware I may be experienced in part as problemizing other people('s labour). And, worse still, potentially elevating myself and my voice further through this process of problemizing others, a process that I have highlighted as ethically problematic. In a number of ways I have tried to mitigate this effect (for instance, I have presented these and similar arguments at conferences in the presence of the main authors I cite; the main authors I critique have each received a copy of this paper well in advance of its publication; I have edited the paper in the light of referees', reviewers' and others' comments; I have tried to convey an argument I feel passionate about while still representing generously the papers I critique; and I have tried to write this paper in a spirit of what *we* need to start exploring as critical organization researchers rather than pretend that I am somehow exempt from my own critique). Despite these attempts to mitigate some of my authorial power, I cannot, nor should I seek to, wish away my responsibility as researcher to the 'researched' of this paper. However, neither do I feel that we should forget the significant or qualitative differences between the 'researched' of this paper (i.e. senior academics with the opportunity, resources and record of having their voice authorized in national and international publications) and the 'researched' of the majority of ('Foucauldian' or other) LPT papers, namely working class employees of organizations who historically and continually suffer from having their voices subordinated to those of academic, managerial and other authorities. In short if, as I have argued, I owe a responsibility to 'the researched' of this paper—people who undeniably have far greater access than I to having their versions and voices authorized and heard—then this is also a marker of how under-explored and under-acknowledged our responsibility is to our 'normal' community of researched people, those who are so much more likely to be 'represented' by us without 'representation' by them.

Throughout this paper, I have highlighted why I am not confident that 'Foucauldian' (or indeed other) LPT has yet sufficiently explored these issues. I am convinced, however, that these are *crucially important concerns*, concerns which must figure centrally in any attempt to construct research as simultaneously more (consciously) political, more participative, and less exclusionary and subordinating. Like Aitken and Burman (1999), Henwood and Pigeon (1995), Lincoln (1995), Opie (1982), Marks (1993), Seidman (1992), Spivak (1985), Stanley and Wise (1983) and other writers outside of our management studies community who debate and attempt to work with and through these issues while holding onto an idea of a different way of *doing* research or *being*

academic, we too as an academic community and discipline need to have these debates in (*our*) public*ations*. If we do not then we risk privatizing and marginalizing politics or assuming, without public debate, that exploring alternative ways of understanding and conducting research is necessarily oppressive and silencing. Such a nihilistic 'everything is bad' conclusion is one that I understand the Manchester school of LPT writers to have been arguing against in relation to Foucault's work for the last decade.

To end, I encourage us to discuss, debate, reflect, learn, and undoubtedly make mistakes and silence some while we privilege the voices and concerns of others, while exploring less depersonalized and authoritative, and more participative and political research relations and practices. My concern at present is that it might be more comfortable for us as 'critical' academics not to try and work with and through these concerns and our ethical/political commitments, but to instead apply easy labels (e.g. modernist, heroic, masculine, etc.) as a way of marginalizing the felt need to explore such an unfamiliar, uncertain, and personally and professionally challenging process. Such labels, I would argue, are being cynically misused if they serve as a ready-made excuse, legitimizing our collective failure to explore other traditions and as justification of our *espousal* rather than *embodiment* of our 'critical' ethical/political commitments.

Notes

1 Thank you to one of the reviewers for drawing my attention to the different ways that 'critical' may be used within 'critical management studies' (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Fournier and Grey, 2000). When I use the term in this paper, I am assuming some commitment by the 'critical' academic to explore the emancipatory potential of (their) academic work, however loosely or differentially defined (see also Fournier and Grey, 2000: 19).

2 I use the term 'Manchester School' to signify a loose community of labour process writers who use Foucauldian frameworks to reintroduce and explore subjectivity in LPT. Not wanting to gloss over the dissimilarities and differences between members of this comprehensive 'school' (as one of the reviewers rightly asked me not to do), I concentrate principally upon the texts authored and co-authored by those who might be characterized as its 'head masters': principally David Knights and also Hugh Willmott (see O'Doherty and Willmott, 1998; Parker, 1999 for discussions of differences between these authors' texts). I still use the collective term of the 'Manchester school' throughout, however, rather than, for instance, Willmott's (1993) use of the more individualizing phrase 'Knights et al.' and 'Knights

and his co-authors' because the feeling that I wish to convey in this text is not one of singling out specific authors for individual criticism (even though I appreciate that this text may be read by some as doing this). Rather, I hope that the examples I use encourage us to reflect further upon our own texts and practices, as I feel that the criticisms that I make apply across much 'Foucauldian', as well as 'Marxist', other, and my own, LPT research.

3   I feel it is important to note that a similar critique of the ethics and effects of academic research relations that I make here through a Foucauldian framework could equally have been made by drawing upon other ethical/political traditions. In particular, I have drawn heavily upon, and been inspired by, feminist writings and concerns to re-connect the personal, political and academic (see, for example, Aitken, 1996; bell hooks, 1989; Henwood and Pigeon, 1995; Lincoln, 1995; Marks, 1993; Opie, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1983). These literatures and concerns could have been used to explore and critique LPT's disembodied focus upon 'gender' (Collins and Wray-Bliss, 2000b). Further, I am inspired/informed by Marxist ethics and commitments (Wray-Bliss and Parker, 1998). And might have used Marxist ethical themes to critique the alienating effects of more self-consciously 'Marxist' LPT. Similarly, the critiques that I make of our 'critical' management research in the third part of this article resonate with critiques made within queer theory and post-colonial writings (for example, Morton, 1996; Spivak, 1985; Ware, 1992; Williams and Chrisman, 1993; Young, 1990), and therefore might have been more explicitly organized around these labels and resources (Wray-Bliss, in press). Rather than organize the paper around these other traditions, however, I choose to explicitly use a Foucauldian ethical label and framework in this paper purely for strategic reasons. I hope that by so using a Foucauldian ethics the critique I make and issues I raise might be more likely heard, and less easily marginalized, by those who draw upon Foucault in their own writings. However, I also hope that those critical management writers who do not use Foucault in their work will still engage with and reflect upon the critique I make here. Finally, I recognize that there is a danger that, by drawing upon insights and arguments also raised in these other traditions, but organizing this work around Foucauldian themes, I might be understood to be contributing again to the appropriation and marginalization of feminism, queer theory and post-colonial writings within mainstream/malestream academia. Without denying this danger, my hope is that this work inspires the readers to commit to read and engage with these literatures' critiques and explorations of the issues I begin to raise here.

4   The problematic heroic masculine/self-mastering nature of this quote is explicitly acknowledged and considered in relation to similar critiques of Foucauldian ethics in the section headed 'Problemize Others, Authorize Self' in the third part of this paper—see also McNay, 1994 for a critique of the under-explored, unacknowledged masculinity in Foucault's ethics.

5   Foucault may be understood as directing some of his strongest criticism at social relationships where institutions and authorities extended and reproduced power effects by codifying, defining and controlling knowledge that people draw upon to understand their hitherto private lives or personal practices and decisions (Best, 1995: 123). Thus, for instance, Foucault criticized the church and psychiatry for extending the power of religious authorities and medical professionals into the 'private' realm of a person's

sexuality (Foucault, 1992). By codifying and disseminating 'authoritative' knowledges about sexuality, these institutions normalized (literally constructed as 'normal') some sexuality (e.g. heterosexual) and problemized other sexualities (e.g. homosexuality) as a sin, pathology, crime, or moral failing, and other people (e.g. gays, lesbians and bisexuals) as criminals, perverts, or mentally/physically ill.

6 While Foucault wrote extensively on issues of sexuality and ethics, I am not claiming to represent in this part of the article what Foucault's views were, or divine what they would have been, about non/monogamy. Rather, I am trying to conjure up a 'feeling' for what I understand, or how I suggest we may use, a Foucauldian-inspired ethical critique. I merely use the example of non/monogamy as an ethical issue many or most of us have made (do make) choices about as a 'way in' to explore and engage with often (unnecessarily) complex/abstract discussions of Foucault and ethics.

7 'I would more or less agree with the idea that in fact what interests me is much more morals than politics or, in any case, politics as an ethics' (Foucault, 1984b: 375).

8 Though I have argued that Foucault's writings concentrate out attention on the intimate connection between identity/identifications, the ethical, personal and the political realms, other writers have argued that Foucault's aesthetic ethics risks reproducing individualistic apolitical relationships. McNay (1994: 160), for instance, argues that the absence of an 'explicit commitment to a set of normative goals' means that Foucault apparently privileged 'the act of aesthetic self-creation per se, regardless of normative content, that seems to constitute the only basis for an ethics of the self'. Foucault himself in certain passages also apparently argued for the divorce of ethics and politics: 'For centuries we have been convinced that between our ethics, our personal ethics, our everyday life, and the great political and social and economic structures, there were analytical relations, and we couldn't change anything, for instance, in our sex life or our family life, without ruining our economy, our democracy, and so on. I think we have to get rid of this idea of an analytical or necessary link between ethics and other social or economic or political structures' (Foucault, 1984a: 350).

9 The ideas of transgression, refusal and revolt against limits were centrally important points for Foucault's writings and ethics: 'Perhaps one day it [the idea of transgression] will seem as decisive for our culture, as much a part of its soil, as the experience of contradiction was at an earlier time for dialectical thought' (Foucault, 1977: 33 in Best, 1995: 120). 'It is through revolt that subjectivity (not that of great men but of whomever) introduces itself into history and gives it the breath of life. A delinquent puts his life into the balance against absurd punishments; a madman can no longer accept his confinement and the forfeiture of his rights; a people refuses the regime which oppresses it' (Foucault, 1981 in Bernauer and Matron, 1994: 153).

10 The importance to Foucault of embodying our ethical/political or 'critical' academic commitments is clear in the following passage: 'The key to the personal poetic attitude of a philosopher is not to be sought in his ideas, as if it could be deduced from them, but rather in his philosophy as life, in his philosophical life, his ethos. Among the French philosophers who participated in the Resistance during the war, one was Cavailles, a historian of

mathematics who was interested in the development of internal structures. None of the philosophers of *engagement*—Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty—none of them did a thing' (Foucault, 1984b: 374, author's original emphasis).

11 Foucault's writings, like those of other poststructuralists, have (in)famously problemized a modernist privileging of, or faith in, 'truth'. Truth, wrote Foucault, 'is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power' (Foucault, 1980: 131).

12 A focus upon what is created through our actions and relationships to others and self, and a refusal of notions of essential or static truths of self, is a central strand of Foucault's 'aesthetic' ethics: 'What strikes me is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something which is specialised or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life?' (Foucault, 1984a: 350). 'For me intellectual work is related to what you could call aestheticism, meaning transforming yourself . . . you see that's why I really work like a dog and have worked like a dog all my life. I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my own transformation . . . Why should a painter work if he is not transformed by his own painting?' (Foucault, 1983b: 14).

By privileging metaphors of 'art' and 'aesthetics', however, Foucault has also been criticized for writing an ethics of 'dandyism', or as appearing as a modern apologist for an ancient Greek (elitist and male) ethics of pleasure and virility. Such criticisms are worth holding in mind when using and interpreting Foucault (see, for example, Wray-Bliss, 1998). McNay (1994) is perhaps one of the best examples of how we can interpret and use Foucault's writings, yet remain wary and critical of such effects.

13 There are strong similarities between this interpretation of Foucault's ethics and interpretations of Marxist ethics (see, for example, Brenkert, 1983; Wray-Bliss and Parker, 1998).

14 McNay writes: 'Foucault's whole oeuvre is orientated to breaking down the domination of a fully self-reflexive, unified and rational subject at the centre of thought in order to clear a space for radically other ways of being' (McNay, 1994: 4).

15 Critics' fear that Foucault's permanent problemization necessarily leads to a kind of 'political paralysis' applies not only to Foucault's work but also to the key concepts of other 'post' writers. As Derrida comments on the sentiment and practice of deconstruction: 'deconstruction . . . should seek a new investigation of responsibility, an investigation which questions the codes inherited from ethics and politics. This means that, too political for some, it will seem paralyzing to those who only recognize politics by the most familiar road signs. Deconstruction is neither a methodological reform that should reassure the organization in place nor a flourish of irresponsible and irresponsible making destruction, whose most certain effects would be to leave everything as it is and to consolidate the most immobile forces within the university' (Derrida, 1982, quoted in Culler, 1989: 156). The similarities between 'deconstruction' and 'permanent problemization' suggest that it is very possible to draw jointly upon both Foucault and Derrida's

writings to construct a passionate and reflexive ethics, despite some authors' representation of chasms between the two authors' works (see, for example, Norris, 1987: 217). Thank you to the anonymous reviewer who highlighted these similarities of concern between Foucault's and Derrida's works.

16 Readers who are not familiar with the British labour process debates generally, and the contribution of the 'Manchester school' in particular, can find useful, and quite different, summaries in Willmott (1993) and Thompson and Findlay (1996).

17 I use the term 'positivism' here in a broad sense to signify the relations of strict separation between those who do the knowing and that which is known (Reason, 1994; Stanley and Wise, 1983). I understand this separation to be a condition of possibility of more traditional or narrow understandings of positivism as, for instance, a methodology that is defined by 'the provision of laws and predictions' (Fournier and Grey, 2000: 13). (Social) scientific research that produces such laws and predictions would seem to be (normally) based upon an understanding that the phenomena studied exist 'out there' independent from the one doing the predicting. The underlying, broader understanding of positivism as defined by relations of strict separation is the one I call upon when representing LPT texts that clearly separate the 'knowing' researcher from the 'known' researched as positivist.

18 In critiquing, in this part of the article, the Manchester school's reproduction of what I argue are subordinating and oppressive relations between researcher and researched, relations which cut across the school's Foucauldian commitments, it is not my intention to deny the school's theoretical 'Foucauldian' contribution to LPT (see the second part of this article). To borrow Foucault's (1984a) phrasing, I do not understand it to be necessary to say that 'everything is bad' about the Manchester school because some of its practices are 'dangerous'. Such either/or, good/bad, all-for/ all-against dichotomies are, though popular in British LPT at the moment, probably less than helpful (see also Parker, 1999). I *celebrate* the school's introduction of Foucauldian ethics/ theory into LPT, and ask the authors to *take this further* by seeking to embody these ethical commitments in their research practices and relations.

19 It is not just the 'Manchester school' authors who reproduce this realist form of representation, or indeed the other problematic relationships that I critique in this part of the article. Rather, such forms of representation and research practices might almost be understood as the normalized convention of empirical LPT writing, irrespective of whether such writings are informed with Marxist and/or Foucauldian theory. If readers do know of published LPT works that challenge these conventions and would like to collaboratively explore such possibilities, or have had difficulty publishing such writings, I would love to hear from you.

20 Interestingly, Knights (1992) levels a similar critique of the objectifying and positivistic practices of treating the research subject 'whether this be an individual, a group, or a class of activities (such as an organization) as if it were no different from an *object* in the natural sciences' (Knights, 1992: 514). He goes on to critique: 'representational approaches to knowledge production [that] rest on a privileging of the consciousness of the researcher who is deemed capable of discovering the 'truth' about the world of management and organizations through a series of representations' (Knights, 1992: 515). And argues that these forms of research reproduce a problematic 'dualism

between the subject or agent (e.g. researcher) and the object or subject matter of knowledge' (Knights, 1992: 515). Again, my critique in this section, and indeed the whole paper, is not with the theoretical or 'abstract' arguments Knights makes here, but rather in the apparent lack of 'embodiment' of these in the empirical work that he and other LPT writers produce.

21 Rather than use this paper to attempt an in-depth exploration of 'consciousness raising', participatory or emancipatory action research, or other possible processes through which we might seek to embody our 'critical'/political commitments in our academic work, I aim for it to be an 'incitement' to the 'critical' management studies community to explore these processes for your/ourselves.

22 Endnote (3) of Knights and McCabe's (2000) paper on teamworking again illustrates the expression of 'hope' that somehow critical academic research might have some effects somewhere: 'our accounts may strengthen the resilience of our respondents and perhaps students to refuse the subjugating aspects of teamworking' (p. 1515). Similarly, Knights' (1995) endnote (9) describes his research as 'a political act in support of subordinates and a theoretical challenge to the norms of hierarchy'. Again, rather than merely voicing a hope or stating that one's research is *by definition* political, if this is a felt ethical legitimization for 'critical' academic research then I argue it warrants rather more serious and central consideration in our research practices *and* texts.

23 As one reviewer of this paper highlighted, Jackson also invokes here the accusation (?) of youth to marginalize Parker's concerns. Thus, we might be forgiven for reading into Jackson's comments the patronizing 'everyone wants to change the world at your age' put down, which can serve as legitimization for a speaker's own lack of political engagement.

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