

**'It's Just a Job': Understanding Emotion Work, De-animalization and the  
Compartmentalization of Organized Animal Slaughter**

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**Abstract**

This article contributes to an understanding of the nexus between humans and animals by drawing on ethnographic research conducted in a British chicken factory and, more particularly, by exploring the emotional subjectivity of Meat Inspectors employed by the Food Standards Agency to oversee quality, hygiene and consumer safety within this plant. We argue that these Inspectors displayed a complex range of often contradictory emotions from the 'mechanized' to the 'humanized' and link this, in part, to the technocratic organization of factory work that compartmentalizes and sanitizes slaughter. This serves to de-animalize and commodify certain animals, which fosters an emotional detachment from them. In contrast to research which suggests that emotions switch off and on in a dialectic between violence and non-violence, (Pachirat, 2011) or that we are living in a post-emotional society (Mestrovic, 1997), we elucidate the coexistence, fluidity and range of emotions that surface and submerge at work. While contributing to the extant literature on 'emotionologies' (Fineman, 2006), we add new insights by considering how emotions play out in relation to animals.

**Key words:** Animals, Commodification, Emotion, Emotionologies, Ethnography, Meat Inspectors, Slaughterhouse, Subjectivity, Technology.

**Introduction**

Though the topics of emotion management and emotional labour are well-established in management and organization theory (Fineman, 2006; Hochschild, 1983; Miller, 2002; Tracy, 2000), the emotion work that infuses the relationship between humans and non-human animals has received limited attention. Outside of organisation studies, however, scholarship in sociology (Arluke and Sanders, 1996; Charles, 2014; Pachirat, 2011; Shapiro and DeMello, 2010), human geography, philosophy and inter-disciplinary science studies (Birke and Hockenhull, 2012; Buller, 2014; Charles, 2014; Desmond, 2010; Haraway, 1989; Singer 1975) has highlighted the emotional significance of human-animal relationships in a number of individual, domestic and organizational scenarios.

Such studies help to support a greater understanding of the meaning-making that pertains to workplaces where animals are central to the work. In our study of a poultry slaughterhouse, however, while animals were indeed central they did not appear to carry the emotional significance that other mixed species research has found (for example, police dogs and handlers; primatologists and primates). We therefore introduce the term 'de-animalization' to depict the socio-technocratic process through which workers may become detached from animals.

The chickens we discuss below became 'food-in-waiting'; anatomized (Dale, 2000) through Fordist production line technology. They were not merely objectified but *commodified*. As Dale points out, physical bodies are often absent from studies of organization in the sense that they are dismissed as 'mere material' (2000: 20). Whilst Dale is referring to academic accounts and mainly to human bodies, we address her concerns in the following case study by exploring how chicken bodies

were transformed into economic commodities and the implications that this had for the subjectivity of a particular group of workers.

In this article we focus upon a specific group of workers called Meat Inspectors who oversee the production process, check the standard of the meat on the production line and ensure that diseased or damaged chickens are not packaged for consumption. These Government civil servants work on behalf of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and have a professional obligation to uphold its stated aims and pledge 'to put consumers first....so that food is safe.' (FSA, 2015: 5). We focus on them partly because we were intrigued to establish how this professional demand for food safety and consumer advocacy was managed in the day-to-day context of the slaughterhouse.

In contrast to the highly routinized work of frontline employees who must remain at the production line, Meat Inspectors have a degree of mobility both within the organization and between organizations as they inspect at different factories. Inspectors are not employed by these factories and we believe that this facilitates 'role distance' (Goffman, 1959, 1961) whereby one separates oneself from the role that one performs. Hence, as civil servants they are distant from the factories where they work and from both frontline employees and management. Moreover, as Inspectors, many of them are also physically, visually and emotionally distant from live chickens.

These workers have been entirely neglected in the literature on slaughtering (e.g. Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990; Pachirat, 2011; Thompson, 1983) which has tended to

scrutinize direct workers. One explanation for this is that inspection is less 'dirty' and so, perhaps, less interesting to research. Another is that Meat Inspectors who represent the FSA do not exert strategic or policy-setting powers and so lack a public profile. From a practical research perspective, however, Meat Inspectors proved more accessible for their relative autonomy meant that they were more willing and able to engage with us.

It is possible to argue that any organization which sets out with the aim of mass slaughter is a space of 'dirty work' (Simpson et al, 2013) and de-humanization (Zimbardo, 2007) but the focus of this article is on emotions and, specifically, the way that emotions in relation to animals can be contradictory, overlapping and complex. With that in mind, we limit the scope of the present article to three core research questions: First, by what processes are chickens physically and symbolically de-animalized and how does this support emotional disengagement? Second, how do individual Meat Inspectors express, experience and manage their emotional responses to animal killing? Third, are there different, contradictory or competing emotional displays in regard to this work?

The article proceeds by explaining the context of our empirical study in relation to meat production and consumption and seeks to illuminate why this subject matter is both important and relevant to emotion work within organization studies. We then set out our theoretical understanding of emotion in relation to literature that pertains to slaughterhouses. Next, we elaborate the rationale for ethnographic fieldwork as our methodological approach. The empirical study is then introduced before drawing out our central arguments in a discussion and conclusion.

## **Meat production and consumption in context**

Meat production has been neglected by the recent organization studies literature (Pachirat, 2011; Torres, 2007) which is surprising when considering the size and scale of the industry. In the United States, for example, approximately ten billion animals are killed for food each year (United States Department of Agriculture 2010; Williams and DeMello 2007:14) and 50 billion chickens are slaughtered each year globally (Cudworth, 2011). In the United Kingdom, approximately 3.3 million cattle; 35,000 calves; 15.7 million pigs; 17.1 million sheep and over 800 million chickens are killed each year (Cudworth, 2011).

Wealthier countries generally consume more meat and the largest markets are the U.S., Europe, New Zealand and Australia. Britain's annual meat consumption, at 84.2 kg per person per year, is relatively consistent with its neighbours in Ireland (87.9 kg), France (86.7 kg) and Germany (88.1 kg) (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2014). Interestingly, the trend in meat consumption across the globe is inconsistent. In the UK, for example, the consumption of meat has fallen by 13% since 2007 (UK Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), 2015) and trends differ considerably between varieties of meat and meat products. Poultry or 'white meat' is a growth industry, for example, when compared to 'red meat' (beef, pork, lamb) which appears to be in decline in Britain. Consumers in the UK now purchase more chicken than ever before and 190g of chicken is consumed per person per week, compared to 115g in 1974 (DEFRA, 2015).

Demand for meat is influenced by economic factors that affect household income. In 2008, for example, households bought 11.5% less carcass meat than in 2007 while GDP also fell by 1% (DEFRA). Similar trends have been observed in periods of depressed GDP (notably 1981 and 1992). In periods of greater affluence (for example 1985 and 2000), meat consumption increased too (DEFRA, 2015). Given the connection between prosperity and certain types of meat consumption, it is arguable that the high volume, low unit-cost of poultry production methods enable a greater number of consumers to purchase chicken regularly.

Despite their relative affluence and food security, consumers in the West (and particularly Britain) are often described as living through an age of anxiety (Jackson, 2010) with regard to food. The health benefits of a diet rich in 'red meat', for instance (Beardsworth and Bryman, 1999) are related to concerns about obesity and cheap, fast food (McEachern and Schröder, 2005; Schlosser, 2012). These issues have tended to make food manufacture both a sensitive issue and an important (albeit neglected) one to research, which has been heightened by a range of food scares and farming crises in the red meat sector such as Foot and Mouth Disease, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), Tuberculosis and 'Horsegate'. As a result, manufacturers and retailers have recently struggled to re-establish consumer trust in food and Government bodies - such as the FSA - have faced growing pressure to address this (Stassart and Whatmore, 2003).

It is likely that this multi-layered 'anxiety' (Jackson, 2010) about food, and red meat in particular, helps to further account for the upward trend in poultry consumption. Although the chicken industry has had its own 'scares' too (Bird Flu, Salmonella,

Campylobacter), their impact appears to have been less profound (DEFRA, 2015). Nonetheless, the sensitivity around food safety combined with animal rights campaigns and investigative journalists seeking to expose malpractice or cruelty in the meat industry has made it difficult to gain research access. This has led some to engage in covert fieldwork (e.g. Pachirat, 2011) and we have had direct experience of access difficulties.

### **The slaughter work of 'fast-moving cogs'**

Although there is a small literature on large animal slaughter (Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990; Inkson, 1979; Meara, 1974; Pachirat, 2011; Schlosser 2012; Thompson, 1983) and butchery (Simpson et al, 2013; Vialles, 1996), the poultry industry has largely been ignored (Burch and Lawrence, 2007). The existing literature does not make for easy comparisons with the study to follow because it is often dated, relates to different economic or cultural contexts and contrasts with poultry production which - by its nature - deals with smaller animals and relies upon different labour processes than red meat plants.

Ackroyd and Crowdy's (1990) account of a large animal slaughterhouse explored the work of 'slaughtering teams' which had 'a high degree of autonomy from close supervision' (op cit: 5). A highly 'masculine' culture prevailed where operatives relied upon their physical strength to handle heavy carcasses (op cit:8; see also Meara,1974). This 'red meat' culture was deemed to have 'little to do with technological factors' (op cit:10) and managerial control was relatively unproblematic since the strong workgroups in the factory policed their own labour.

Ackroyd and Crowdy's findings chime with earlier studies that also identified 'a sense of unity' (Thompson, 1983: 233) and autonomy among slaughterhouse workers but it contrasts with the individualized culture that we observed.

The chicken slaughterhouse we investigated was organized along automated rather than manual lines, there was a mix of genders and the factory supported an experience of work that Ritzer has likened to 'fast-moving cogs in the assembly-line' (Ritzer, 2008:154). There was no sign of the 'horseplay' that Thompson (1983) highlighted or masculine displays, such as slaughtermen splashing blood on their chests, which Ackroyd and Crowdy (1990) found. The high proportion of economic migrants employed on short term, agency contracts further militated against cultural cohesion, particularly as there were language barriers between workers; a situation that is not uncommon in food production (Ipsos Mori, 2013; Scott, 2013).

Our study had a closer resemblance to Pachirat's (2011) ethnography of a high-throughput cattle slaughterhouse where work was meticulously planned, controlled and compartmentalized and which provided limited scope for employees to work together. The focus upon 'red meat' in a U.S. context limits the relevance of Pachirat's observations to our British case but we did find some parallels, specifically the way that highly routinized work distanced workers from the act of slaughtering thereby hiding 'uncomfortable realities' from view (2011:31). One consequence of this division of labour is to facilitate 'the maintenance of social worlds in which an undesirable situation, event, condition or phenomenon is unrecognized, ignored or made to seem normal' (Wicks, 2011:188).



The research focused on the subjectivity of Meat Inspectors and we depict greater complexity and overlap between differing emotional states than Pachirat describes. Inspectors perform official quality controls, handle carcasses and monitor systems for a degree of animal welfare. In exploring the complex and somewhat ambiguous demands of this role we found the literature on emotion work to be particularly useful and it is to this that we now turn.

### **Towards an emotionology of the chicken factory**

In this section we discuss the theoretical literature that is most relevant to the focus of our article; that is, the processes by which chickens are de-animalized and the ways in which Meat Inspectors express, experience and manage a range of emotions in relation to their work. The importance of cultural and organizational issues in understanding workplace experiences such as these can be related to the literature on 'emotionologies' (Fineman, 2008; Parrott and Harré, 2001; Stearns and Stearns, 1985; Wright and Nyberg, 2012), which are society's 'take' on the way certain emotions are directed and expressed (Fineman, 2008). According to Fineman (2008), 'While emotions may have biological roots, they are given meaning through disparate discourses; we are born into a world where emotionologies take a grip on our experiences and behaviours' (Fineman, 2008: 2). Emotions do not reside within subjects in isolation but are socially and culturally produced and reproduced through discourse, practises and interactions (Bolton, 2008). We support this view and add new insights by focusing upon a setting where different species come into contact for the express purpose of meat production.

According to Fineman, power resides 'in the way existing narratives of value and feeling are impressed on people, often in unnoticed ways' (Fineman, 2008: 3). The way in which humans exercise power over other animals is evident in slaughterhouses but it often goes unnoticed. This relates to the social normativity of meat eating or what Joy (2009) refers to as cultural 'carnism' whereby in different cultures, different species are seen as 'acceptable' to eat while others are not (Birke and Hockenhull, 2012; Fox, 2008; Joy, 2009; Singer, 1975; Stassart and Whatmore, 2003; Wilkie, 2010). Gary Francione (2008) depicts this as 'moral schizophrenia' – the paradox between our selection of some animals as 'pets' while rearing others for consumption.

The cultural normalization of chicken as food pervades the context of what is 'appropriate to feel and express' (Fineman, 2008: 1) in relation to their slaughter. The normalization of slaughter supports the 'social contours or biases that act like invisible hands on emotion – to privilege some forms of expressiveness over others; to silence or oppress some voices but not others.' (ibid. :1). In the chicken factory, while the role of the animal is admittedly limited in social interaction terms, their presence is nonetheless significant, paradoxically in ways that are 'unnoticed' because the factory is designed to obliterate the presence of both animals and killing. This is achieved through the division of labour and a degree of 'compartmentalization' whereby the 'ends' to which the factory is the 'means' becomes invisible or, at least, less visible to those working within it. We describe this overall process as de-animalization whereby the act of killing and the identity of other species (other than as commodities) is erased. By providing empirical

examples, we link together our observations of factory life with the idea that the de-animalization of chickens becomes 'normal' and slaughtering becomes emotionally neutral.

Wicks (2011) has suggested that the apparent lack of discomfort of workers who are regularly confronted with the death of animals can be explained as a state of denial that affords the opportunity to blot out or 'normalize' otherwise uncomfortable experiences. It is posited that through denial or distancing (Goffman, 1959), humans can consider even something as apparently emotive as killing in terms of tedious factory work. The organization of work plays a role in this, which has been explained in relation to the Holocaust when 'the division of labour within the death camps helped employees to remain sane and divorced them, to some extent, from the consequences of their actions' (Bauman, 1988; Burrell, 1997:144). It could be seen as insulting and widely off-the-mark to compare a chicken factory with a Nazi death camp and we are not suggesting that there is any comparison between murdering people and slaughtering chickens. Nevertheless, we are interested in how the organization of work relates to emotionality and in this way alone, we believe that Bauman's (1988) work, for example, is relevant when trying to understand such dynamics.

It is not only the organization of work that allows distancing and de-animalization to occur. Zimbardo (2007) has pointed to a number of organizational environments where emotional distancing is a pragmatic coping mechanism that 'serves an adaptive function for an agent who must suspend his or her emotional response in an emergency, a crisis, or a work situation that demands invading the privacy of

others.’ (2007:223) He cites examples of this, particularly jobs which require the processing of large case-loads and high volumes of customers or patients (such as medicine) which often demand a degree of ‘detached concern’ (p. 223) and involves ‘dehumanizing’ patients or, in our case, de-animalizing animals to get through the day.

The psychological compartmentalization afforded by a variety of distancing moves such as denial and delegation is supported in a meat context by Pachirat’s (2011) account in which slaughter is also physically organized to hide ‘away that which is too repugnant to contemplate’ (2011:30). This organization of work enables subjects to effectively deny or ignore the acts they are involved in. Our study provides support for this dynamic, reinforced by the distinctive finding that animals (other than those being slaughtered) were talked about in empathetic and even affectionate ways.

### **Meat Inspectors and emotion**

The literature has pointed to myriad examples of people managing emotions in ways which conform to social acceptability such as looking happy at a party and somber at a funeral (Tracy, 2008). Within the work environment, this is described as emotional labour (Fineman, 2006; Hochschild, 1983; Hopfl, 2002; Tracy, 2000); a performed repertoire of feeling or display that supports organizational strategy or values. The emotional distancing of Meat Inspectors from chickens can be understood in this way because it ensured that the work was done. Here, however, the emotional work

involves *not* displaying feelings at the sight of blood, guts or decapitation. De-animalizing chickens facilitates this emotional work.

It would have been unexpected and (arguably) socially 'unacceptable' for Meat Inspectors to exhibit particularly strong emotions; for example, by behaving in an overtly mournful manner or expressing pleasure when supervising slaughter. Added to this social requirement, the work itself militated against expressivity. Unlike a number of public-facing industries such as airlines (Hochschild, 1983; Wouters, 1989) and restaurants (Fine, 2006), there was no need or expectation for Meat Inspectors to display emotion and this facilitates 'role distancing' (Goffman, 1959, 1961) for both these and frontline workers.

At times, our participants displayed a 'hollow shell of emotion, which, beyond a fleeting exchange-value, is void of feeling and moral consequence' (Fineman, 2008: 4). This did not mean, however, that they lacked emotion but rather that it was inappropriate in this work setting and for *professional* Meat Inspectors to vent emotion. There is emotion work here but it concealed rather than revealed feelings. Mestrovic (1997) regards a shell-like appearance as the 'mechanization' of emotion, a function of the post-emotional society which perpetuates 'manufactured states devoid of human feeling' (Bolton, 2008). In considering the fragmentation and multiplicity of contemporary consumer capitalism, Mestrovic claims that people increasingly seek out their place in the world through consumption; personalities become 'saturated' by business cultures and markets which in turn de-centres social and emotional communities, fostering self-centredness, cynicism, inauthenticity and a lack of genuine empathy (points also echoed by Gergen, 1991). Post-emotionalism,

Mestrovic continues, occurs when individuals become 'blasé, allergic to involvement yet intelligent enough to know that events are significant' (Zembylas and Vrisidas, 2004: 111). He argues that whereas in the past, people displayed deep emotional empathy or antipathy to various events, in today's post-emotional society they respond with ambivalence and intellectual rationalization.

Mestrovic proposes that 'contemporary Western societies are entering a new phase of development in which synthetic, quasi-emotions become the basis for widespread manipulation by self, others, and the culture industry as a whole' (p. xi). The 'post-emotional type', according to Mestrovic, takes prompts from other actors, the media and internet communities as to when he or she 'should rationally choose to exhibit a vicarious indignation, niceness or other pre-packaged emotions' (p. xii). The resulting 'mechanization of emotions' (Mestrovic, 1997), leads to a situation in which there is a 'collapse of the sacred into the profane' (Bolton, 2008: 16) or, as Baudrillard (1988: 57) puts it, a 'cryogenization of emotions'.

In the context of the highly technological workplace we researched, the metaphor of mechanized emotion is particularly apposite in that we noted an apparent ambivalence to the processes involved in meat production as well as a degree of rationalization of slaughter. Yet we regard this as a temporary expression and part of a multi-faceted emotionology (Fineman, 2008) which is to emphasise the organizational and constructed nature of emotion work, rather than portraying this as a function of a wider social saturation (Gergen, 1991) by various social forces such as technology and information (ibid, 1991) and the proliferation of inauthentic signs and meanings (Baudrillard, 1988). Thus we do not share Mestrovic's argument that

our case is representative of the post-emotional society in which there is evidence of the 'deliberate manipulation of emotions' so as to promote harmony, avoid negative emotions and adopt a pre-packaged set of 'McDonaldized' sentiments (Mestrovic, 1997, p. xi; Zembylas and Vrisidas, 2004). Indeed, we support Bolton's (2008) argument that ethnographic immersion in social settings can shed light on the complexity and relevance of emotion rather than revealing its opposite (Bolton, 2008).

Bolton challenges Mestrovic by drawing on Goffman's concept of the interaction order and by suggesting that a combination of factors both external and internal work to prepare, 'the framework for action, interaction and moral ordering' (2008: 21). The 'self' and emotions are seen as multiple and sometimes fragmentary, but hold together coherently when one regards them ethnographically in interactional settings that have their own politics and moral categories. Like Bolton, we do not agree that the *appearance* of the unemotional worker on the factory floor supports a grim portrayal of a world devoid of fellow-feeling, empathy or sensitivity: evidence of the 'saturated self' (Gergen, 1991). Nor did it inform 'who they were' in an absolute sense. Ethnographic participation complicated any surface impression that Inspectors were 'cryogenized' empty shells wearing an artificial, mask-like veneer working as an imitation of genuinely felt emotions (Baudrillard, 1988). Instead, we noted a range of emotions from the apparently 'mechanized' to the deeply 'humanized'. The following section examines the methods we used.

## **Research methods**

As we were concerned with emotion, we adopted an ethnographic approach. For the reasons we stated at the outset, we identified the Inspectors as potential participants and interacted with them in their natural environment (Bednarek-Gilland, 2015). We did not pursue specific techniques such as participant observation or observation alone but sought to blend 'an array of interpretive techniques' (Van Maanen 1979:520) to develop appreciation for the meaning of conversations, events, issues, discourses and subjectivities as they unfolded. As a condition of the research access, the first named author (who conducted the field research) promised confidentiality to the research participants and so the identity of individuals and the organization have been anonymised.

Access negotiations were protracted but made easier by personal acquaintance with a senior-level Inspector who provided introductions and became a 'key informant'. He arranged for three days of observational research which included observations of work processes; tours of two factories; close work-shadowing of six Inspectors during their shifts and generally hanging around so as to talk to people when time allowed. There was no direct participation in slaughtering or animal-handling processes. The first-named author followed Inspectors around the plant while manually recording notes about their interactions with others, along with the production and inspection processes. There were also informal conversations that took place in the office, during work-shadowing, during lifts to and from the plant and on the phone. These interactions were recorded (sometimes digitally, others manually) depending on their duration.



Further interviews were also conducted away from the factory. We conducted formal and informal interviews with 20 Inspectors, one of whom was an area manager and all of whom had worked in the factory discussed below. Some were more familiar with it than others. This reflects that Meat Inspectors travel wherever they are needed on a weekly or sometimes daily basis. Six interviews were tape-recorded (off site) while 14 took place during the observational research and were ad hoc so hand written notes were produced during and after them. In some cases, where informants were keen to be involved in the research, follow-up interviews were conducted and so 7 individuals were interviewed more than once. During 2011, 5 interviews were conducted by telephone, 6 were conducted at participants' homes, and 14 were conducted at the factory. Two follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with Inspectors in May, 2015; both participants had been involved in the initial phase of the fieldwork.

An open and semi-structured research approach was followed (Karreman and Alvesson, 2004) in the sense that the research was not restricted to strict formulations of questions (Van Maanen, 1988). Instead, participants were encouraged to speak freely on topics that they felt were relevant to them and follow-up questions were often formulated on the basis of unexpected remarks (Dick, 2005). Throughout, the concern was to understand a complex, shifting series of emotions, values and judgements (Bednarek-Gilland, 2015) as well as the practicalities of the role.

From the interview and observational data, which was transcribed into a set of fieldnotes (Van Maanen, 1988), we manually coded the materials to identify themes,

which we have organized our findings around. This was important because, as Wuthnow (2008) suggests, emotions and values are abstract and difficult for participants to sum up with specificity. The main theme that emerged through the data reflected the contradictory and ambivalent ways that Inspectors talked about their lives that combined both impartial and deeply emotional narratives. This struck us as unusual and so we began to pay close attention to it during a close reading and 'fine-grained, line-by-line analysis' (Emerson et al, 1995:160) of transcripts. While influenced by a range of extant literatures on slaughtering (Pachirat, 2011) and the experience of discomfort and denial (Wicks, 2011), we began to theorize these contradictory feelings in terms of the expression of a diverse, complex and shifting emotionology (Fineman, 2008). We attempted to focus on examples of emotional ambivalence and ambiguity in the ways that the Inspectors described their roles. The article was developed, therefore, through a combination of emergent empirical findings and extant theorising of the subject. The process of data collection, analysis and writing did not 'occur as discrete, sequential, hierarchical steps'; instead it was 'iterative, interactive and non-linear' (Baptiste, 2001:2).

Inevitably, there are limitations to our approach that must be acknowledged. The development of our interest in (and reliance on) Meat Inspectors means that our insights are limited to this particular group. Moreover, as a British case study, this may well have limited extension to contexts where food standards, regulations and meat supply chains are different. While recognizing these constraints, we suggest that considering the views of a limited sample of 'powerful actors' such as Meat Inspectors is valuable because poultry is a growth sector – currently under intense

scrutiny by the media - and such workers have been neglected in the academic literature (Korica and Molloy, 2010).

Finally, as suggested by Alvesson (2003) we have to acknowledge our own role in the research process; we are employed in business schools and respondents were aware of this. Consequently, they may have sought to avoid expressing any reservations about slaughtering so as to appear 'professional'. They may have intentionally buried emotions or doubts reflecting that we can never be certain about the subjectivity of other people (or nonhumans). Nevertheless, listening to conversations between different individuals and encouraging participants to talk about their broader lives promoted a sense of openness. The outcome was that all of them talked about slaughtering, at least when we were there, in a dispassionate way whilst talking passionately about other aspects of their work lives (and indeed animals). This suggested to us that there is an issue here worth exploring. It is not that we expected them to be tortured by slaughtering but we were intrigued because it appeared to be a non-issue to them or, as we indicate in our title, that 'It's just a job'.

### **The case of Hen-cock**

Hen-cock (pseudonym) is a large UK food processor which supplies chicken to retailers and distributors in Britain and Europe. The plant is situated on an industrial estate at the edge of a small town, reflecting a long-standing tradition to locate abattoirs outside settlements (Vialles, 1994). The company employs over 7,000 managers, technologists and operatives across the UK and Ireland and approximately

500 people are employed at Hen-cock although primarily on a temporary basis through work agencies. The majority of these agency workers were economic migrants and were paid seven pounds per hour regardless of which zone of the factory they worked in. Meat Inspectors are responsible for quality control issues and remove carcasses unfit for human consumption. On average, eight Inspectors are present at each shift and are selected on the basis of their availability and location. Their task is to deliver 'official controls' on behalf of the Government. These controls require 'specified inspections of all animals, carcasses and offal through risk-based audits to verify that approved fresh meat premises comply with EU Food Hygiene Regulations' (FSA, 2012:7).

Inspectors are one step removed from the work of slaughter and while a majority (in our study, 70%) were directly employed by the FSA, there were also a substantial number (30%) of migrant workers among them – all of whom were qualified veterinary surgeons who were pursuing careers in the UK (but finding it difficult to gain employment outside the meat industry). These Inspectors were contracted to the FSA by an employment agency. The mix of nationalities, their employment status and the fact that they had to move between different factories affected their ability to form teams or groups. The conditions of work were, thus, individualizing.

### **The factory and organization of work**

In this section, we provide a brief account of the factory and the organization of the production process which is necessary to relate inspection work to the overall work process and explicate the type of work they do. Just as Ackroyd and Crowdy (1990)

demonstrated, in our case study there was little evidence of management supervision on the factory floor. At Hen-Cock, however, it was technology rather than cultural factors that regulated the speed and output of those on the line; an important distinction between the two cases. Along with the repetitive, solitary work processes, the high noise levels necessitated ear protection and there was limited conversation or joking that characterises other factories.

The factory includes discrete ante-mortem and post-mortem zones, which segregate the frontline staff into separate (often isolated) production lines. This compartmentalization creates several layers of 'optical separation' (Bauman 1988:492) between the workers, the living chickens entering the process and the dismembered chickens as they progress along the production line. In fact, it would be relatively straightforward to overlook chickens entirely here; to think of them as products or components rather than bodies (Dale, 2000). The ante-mortem zone is referred to locally as the 'dirty side' of the factory and includes the loading bay where the chickens are initially brought in by lorry, the holding area and the 'killing floor'.

Here, the colloquial term 'dirty side' does not refer to a space which is particularly filthy but rather to a zone where live animals are present and thus an element of physical pollution in the form of excreta, feathers and used bedding materials such as straw. The 'clean' post-mortem zone is separated from this 'contaminated' space and, as a food preparation area, is where the meat, feathers, feet, head and innards are removed, sorted and packaged for sale. As one would expect, then, hygiene standards are particularly strict in the 'clean side'. The language of 'dirty' and 'clean'

is redolent of Douglas's (1966) anthropological work on pollution and particularly her concern for those in a marginal state; that is people who are 'placeless' (p. 118). Chickens, on a journey to becoming meat, could also be described as 'placeless' for they are embedded within a process that transforms them from the uncertain category of food-in-waiting ('dirty') to recognizable food; whole birds, legs, wings ('clean').

Douglas (1970) also discusses how institutional processes, their languages and norms, produce a set of rational categories which have implications for human agency. Hence in the chicken factory – a space divided into discrete zones and described through the terminology 'clean' and 'dirty' - workers make sense of, normalize and sanitize the process of meat production (Vialles, 1994). In the 'dirty side', the production technology obscures the act of killing from the outset because the birds are gassed inside a metal chamber almost as soon as they arrive and only re-appear when they are dead. Thus, we can extend Douglas's argument by pointing to the immense power that categories have over animal agencies too: in this case, enhancing the power of humans to conceptualize live animals as a form of 'dirt' – sanitized by the gas chamber - within an otherwise pristine food production environment.

The majority of manual operatives and Inspectors, particularly those further down the production line, do not see live birds. Working in the post-mortem or 'clean' zone, the explicit sight of killing is restricted for Meat Inspectors, because their focus is on examining dead and eviscerated birds. The repetitive experience of this work prompted them to take regular breaks to preserve the sharpness of their senses.

They often claimed to find the work disheartening and dull, in contrast to work in large-animal abattoirs, where more exciting opportunities exist to use their professional skills and tools. The dominant emotion, then, was a pervasive sense of tedium or boredom which, in tandem with the compartmentalized factory design, appeared to physically and emotionally detach (Goffman,1959, 1961) the Inspectors from the animals. The following extract from fieldnotes underlines this:

At five thirty in the morning, a plastic crate of identically small, white birds begins to emerge from the gas chamber. The “hangers on” work silently and robotically in their red aprons and white wellingtons as they shackle or ‘hang on’ the lifeless chickens onto the slowly moving production line. Two Meat Inspectors are watching them do this. The birds have been gassed; a lethal cocktail of Argon and Nitrogen so potent that they are dead within seconds. It is a fast and silent process; neither the chicken nor the hangers-on make a sound. It is chilling to observe this manufacture of death and the apparent tedium with which dead birds are pegged out. No emotions are displayed and there is no observable reaction to the emergence of the dead birds from the gas chamber; it is as if the employees are hanging inanimate objects rather than animals.

Despite the sight and pungent smell of the factory floor, the highly mechanical, monotonous and repetitive nature of slaughter work appeared to obscure the fact of death thereby rendering ‘invisible what used to be a bloody spectacle’ (Vialles, 1994: 66). These processes and technologies appeared to make the chickens *as creatures*, as opposed to products, not only optically but ‘psychologically invisible’ (Bauman,

1988). The actual moment of death was hidden (see also Pachirat, 2011) which helped to facilitate their de-animalization and commodification.

Poultry production involves relatively little meat handling or butchery work and instead relies upon machines to carry out much of the preparation. Some Inspectors claimed that this made their work 'doubly boring'. Yet, from an outsider's perspective, slaughter and death were explicit: inscribed in the machinery. Hence, there were machines with emotive titles such as the "neck cutter" used to describe a sharp automated blade that removes the chickens' heads post-mortem. There was "the scald tank" where the birds were submerged in hot water (fifty two degrees) to open the pores and remove the feathers. Passing through machines like these, the chickens began to look (and smell) like food rather than animals. The lingering odour indicated what was going on but nobody appeared to be attuned to this or referred to it.

In both the 'dirty' and 'clean' zones, the only sound was the metallic clanking of the production line as it conveyed birds swiftly from one machine to the next. As in Pachirat's (2011) case, technologies of segregation and compartmentalization inserted physical and psychological 'distance' between humans and animals and worked on the animal bodies to commodify them, thereby turning them from living beings to food products made up of component parts such as wings, drumsticks and breasts (Vialles, 1996). This process of de-animalization began from the moment that the chickens arrived at the plant, technology progressively stripping them of their 'chicken-ness'; a process in which they were 'anatomized', 'subjected' and 'objectified' (Dale, 2000) as food. This is what we mean by 'compartmentalization':



the division of work in such a way that each stage of the de-animalization process is separated from the other. Just as Dale points out in the context of human dissection, (ibid.) here, the animal is broken down into components and worked on in different compartments which allows for a degree of disassociation and perhaps sanitization as they turn both physically and symbolically into food (Douglas, 1966). Inspectors are no longer viewing an animal but, instead, a part; a piece of something that one works on. We suggest that these processes of physical and symbolic compartmentalization help to displace emotion and the potential 'horror' (Meara, 1974) of slaughtering.

Providing insights into our first question (by what processes are chickens physically and symbolically de-animalized and how does this support emotional disengagement?), this section has underlined the importance of technology and the organization of work in the process of compartmentalization and de-animalization. In the following two sections, we focus specifically on the experiences and subjectivity of the Meat Inspectors and seek to explore our second and third questions.

### **A mechanized 'self' and the de-animalized animal**

The chicken factory is based upon an industrial model of rationality whereby the process of meat-making is 'uncontaminated by passions' (Zembylas and Vrasidas, 2004: 106) such that, as Dale (2000) points out, the application of the rationalist economic principle of efficiency disguises or defers a sense of 'repugnance' with the discourse of managerial success (Bauman, 1988; Pachirat, 2011). At Hen-Cock, the

volume of birds killed and converted to products cements this commercial 'success'. The efficiently zoned factory resonated with the way that the Inspectors exhibited a very limited range of emotions in relation to slaughtering. In fact, they displayed an intriguing, apparently unemotional and almost 'mechanized' disregard for the chickens they were indirectly involved in killing.

Indeed, Inspectors appeared to celebrate the efficiency of 'the kill' – not in a joyous or sadistic manner but through a pride in the scale and efficiency of the process. This led us to understand this aspect of their subjectivity as indicative of a 'mechanized' self, characterized by an objective, distanced and neutral subjectivity in relation to slaughtering. Hence Eddie (a Meat Inspector) referred to killing in an open, matter-of-fact, almost 'mechanical' way:

You can imagine the logistics on the farms rearing these birds, the artics [articulated haulers] come and collect the birds and there are catching teams....today's kill was planned some time ago. Is it twenty one days for an egg to hatch? So they have the twenty one days wait for the egg to hatch then either thirty or fifty odd days on the farm, which means that there is just over two months of planning for today's kill (Eddie, Meat Inspector).

While killing is clearly an emotive word, particularly in other contexts, here it is taken-for-granted and passed over without hesitation or embarrassment. Today's work is translated into 'today's kill'; the occupational short-hand of the factory. This suggests that Eddie has imbibed a discourse about killing which would be inappropriate in veterinary surgeries, places where death is also routinely present

but expressed less bluntly and far more empathetically (Dale, 2005; Swabe, 2005; Wrye, 2009). Referring to 'today's kill' is the norm and holds no negative emotional connotations such as shame, humiliation or pity. Indeed, the emotion that is evident in the following extract is pride:

**Researcher:** Does working here put you off meat?

**Kevin:** Nah, it's just a job at the end of the day isn't it? But a lot of people, when they think of a slaughterhouse, they think it is a dirty horrible place with blood and guts everywhere and when they actually see it, it's not like that. And because people like us are removing the bad stuff, or stopping the bad stuff from getting through to the food chain, in a way you're thinking 'that's OK that is'.

Kevin asserted that inspecting is 'just a job' and so, contrary to Ackroyd and Crowdy's (1990) findings and Ritzer's (2008) arguments, Kevin explained that a modern slaughterhouse 'is not a dirty horrible place with blood and guts everywhere'. It is a site of pride for him where *good* work is achieved and this belief along with the cleanliness' of the factory may facilitate 'role distancing' (Goffman,1959,1961) from the act of slaughtering. His comments convey what Mumby and Putnam (1992:480) describe as the 'emotionality of rationality'. These Meat Inspectors are not unemotional beings then, or hollow shells and so the 'simmer and flow of everyday emotions' (Fineman, 1993:14) coexisted with a curious disconnect in relation to slaughtering. On occasions, for example, they discussed

their favourite chicken products from the factory's on-site shop, comparing their preferred sauces and recipes. The dominant discourse, then, was not that Hen-cock is an organization where thousands of chickens are slaughtered but a place where good quality, healthy food is produced for the public good. This reflects the power of 'cultural carnism' outside the factory gates (Joy, 2008).

Hierarchical species relationships drawn from society at large enabled chickens to be viewed as end-products (commodities) in a technological production process. This meant that the Inspectors were (perhaps) further protected against the potential for negative emotions (Birke and Hockenhull, 2012; Yates, 2010; Young Lee, 2008). Rather than considering the animals being slaughtered, the process of de-animalization allowed them to focus on the technology and its efficiency:

**Researcher:** What do you find impressive here?

**Bobby:** It's the efficiency of the machinery...how can it work that quick? Apart from the guys hanging-on which is manual, there is very little labour here. What's good is with gas killing, they're dead. So they come out the gas chamber dead and they just hang them on. Whereas before, if the gas chamber is not working, they were alive and that's a bit more manual because you're picking up a live bird see? It's a bit slower.

Here, Bobby marvelled at the technology and this reflects a preoccupation with formal rationality or the impartial, value-free means of killing rather than the substantive end or value attached to it (Weber, 1946).

The factory employed 'sophisticated distancing devices' that made the transition from a living animal to its death seamless (Burrell, 1997:143; Pachirat, 2011). Enabling and reflecting de-animalization, animal bodies were literally and figuratively disassembled at Hen-cock while the technologies served to reinforce the categories of human and animal in a way that maintained a sanitized sense of distance from the 'othered' and de-animalized animal (Birke and Hockenhull, 2012; Douglas, 1970; Wilkie, 2010). This is evident in the following extract:

Then it [the chicken] leaves our inspection line to go through some other processes because nowadays they *harvest* absolutely everything on the carcass. Feet, livers, hearts, gizzards. Gizzards are a delicacy in some places. The factory would be more bothered about losing some feet, which they export to the Far East than throwing chickens away. They make a lot of money out of feet. This place, the only days it doesn't kill is Christmas Day and New Year's Day (Eddie; emphasis added).

In this extract, the word 'harvest' is used as if one were dealing with a crop of wheat instead of sentient beings and yet, at the same time, the emotive word 'kill' is also used without 're-coding' it into more sensitive terms. Although a powerful word, 'kill' is spoken neutrally; wiped clean of emotional connotations. The chicken is de-

animalized and becomes feet, livers, hearts and gizzards. Each is compartmentalized and commodified with its own processes and market value. As the quotation suggests, factory management are apparently unconcerned about diseased chickens that have to be thrown away because these 'faulty components' incur a minimal cost. This discourse, which is embedded in the technology of production, positively encourages an emotional disconnection to take place.

In the following section, we consider alternative subjectivities that contrast with the apparently 'mechanized' self by turning to episodes where Meat Inspectors revealed a far more emotional orientation towards different species of animals, work, life and death. At these moments, the 'mechanized' self coexisted with a deeply feeling self. This reflects that 'emotions and cognition are inextricably entwined' and that they are related to particular social settings and their demands (Fineman, 1996:547).

### **A 'humanized' worker**

It would be easy to conclude from our initial observations that the Inspectors exhibited a clinical detachment from animals when at work. There was, however, a consistent professional interest in maintaining welfare standards for the birds. Such concern was expressed in relation to the technologies of the production line, for example, ensuring that there were 'breast comforters' in place to maintain chicken well-being on the way to the gas chamber. This professional interest in animal welfare did not include an expression of compassion or pity for the birds beyond ensuring that their deaths were painless. Nevertheless, the following extract from an

interview suggests that they were, nonetheless, sensitive to non-humans, indicating a degree of ambivalence and complexity towards animals in a wider sense:

**Researcher:** Are you an animal lover then?

**Alan:** I love all animals. I am an animal lover definitely. People think you can't be an animal lover if you see them dead all day long but half the time with horses, they are better dead because people don't look after them properly. Often when they arrive at the horse abattoir they have been neglected terribly and erm... I would rather see them dead because I don't like cruelty. I hate anything in pain. I remember when we were at the Lakes and there was a sheep in a field, a little lamb. And my girlfriend thought it was on two legs, like it was just getting up off the floor, was just stretching. And I said 'ahhh isn't it lovely'. That was from a distance. And I was looking at it and it didn't get up. I said 'it's stuck in some mud or in a hole or something'. So I went into the field and the poor little thing's all paralysed at the back.....But I hate to see cruelty and I was looking for the farmer nearby, anybody really, but there was nobody.

**Researcher:** So you're not hardened to see animals in pain then?

**Alan:** Not at all, no. Right, I'll have to go back. [Alan leaves to go back to the production line]

In contrast to the dispassionate 'mechanized' self that failed to connect emotionally with the birds on the production line, Alan articulated a compassionate, 'un-hardened', emotional self that seemed to contradict his everyday ambivalence towards large scale slaughter. Thus, when responding to a question about 'loving animals', he made only a passing reference to those whose slaughter he is paid to inspect before moving on to discuss other animals in a compassionate way.

Chickens are seemingly passive or even inanimate and they are certainly de-animalized by the time they come to be inspected whereas the emotive language deployed in describing the paralysed lamb and the neglect of horses reveals a very different set of feelings; a more animal-loving self. This was an example of the co-existence of feelings within the emotionology, drawing upon the apparent vulnerability and attractiveness of animals, not as a source of meat but as 'lovely' creatures and, therefore, endearing or cute in the case of lambs (Ashcraft, 2007; Fineman, 2008; Muhr, 2012). At such times, the animal was not de-animalized or commodified.

This highlights the disconnection (or contradiction, perhaps) between two impulses. On the one hand is a mechanistic self that views the work and the factory through seemingly 'rational' (Dale, 2005) eyes, a 'blindness' or indifference to the animals being slaughtered providing they have a painless death. On the other, is an emotionally engaged self that is deeply compassionate, sensitive and loves animals (Bolton, 2008). In broader terms, this is indicative of a sense of self that is fluid and that co-exists with a contrasting set of values and meanings (Tyler, 2011). 'Right, I'll have to go back' Alan states, concluding the interview as if establishing a



demarcation; shifting seamlessly between the twin impulses of his work and non-work life. Alan's relationship with nonhuman animals shifts too – from one in which the small scale suffering of horses is voiced as an intensely emotional encounter - to one of routine acceptance of large-scale killing.

A degree of work-life distinction partly supported this ability to switch between the technical rationality of inspection work and more empathetic emotions experienced during one's leisure time, but there were also occasions – as with Alan's comment on horses above - when the work of slaughter itself elicited powerful sentiments. It seemed that Inspectors could be both attracted by the efficiency of the technology of death and repulsed by its outcomes in turn (Tyler, 2011). They did not articulate overly compassionate language when discussing chicken slaughter, but as the following extract from a semi-structured interview with Bobby reveals, there were exceptions in relation to other animals and different methods of slaughter:

**Researcher:** Are there aspects of meat production you feel are unpleasant?

**Bobby:** Not really, the standards are acceptable. But I suppose until you are there in the abattoir you don't know how you're going to feel about certain things. I did spend three days supervising some kosher killing [of cattle] at a small abattoir. That was very rough. A barbaric process. Not good. I think normal humane stunning is acceptable but not ritual slaughter... and the vets are powerless. They can't interfere with it because it's legal. Kosher and Halal meat... well they slit the animal's throat and let it bleed to death....I have been in meat all my life and I still don't get used to it. There's no need for

that to happen. The animal dies of massive blood loss and there is pain, and it thrashes about. They argue that it doesn't feel it because it's over so quickly but I don't think that's correct. When an animal is stunned its brain is switched off, so it's acceptable to kill it.

This interview demonstrated a level of emotional connection and empathy with nonhuman animals that further complicates a reading of these workers as violent, cruel, distanced or mechanistic. Whilst killing was taken-for granted in relation to chickens, distinctions were made between different *types* of animals and killing. It seemed that observable 'pain' provoked an emotional reaction whereas 'when the animal is stunned' its death is no longer emotional and – to use Wicks's (2011) terminology – death is 'normalized'. Bobby expressed strong views about religious slaughter and referred to the amount of blood and 'gore' that was produced. One explanation for these strong feelings was that the animal was not de-animalized during the process; its death was not compartmentalized or sanitized so that it was unseen, silent and painless. The animal was not commodified as it remained an animal and so its death was repugnant. This challenged and 'polluted' the mechanistic approach to slaughter, rendering killing impossible to disguise.

At Hen-cock, standardized killing of chickens was not an emotionally-polluting 'problem' for the Inspectors, but, on occasions, they exhibited intense feelings about the possibility of physical contamination. We heard this in their complaints about the factory, for instance in bemoaning the lack of showers. Kevin claimed that they were treated as 'the poor relations' of the factory and that – as FSA employed 'outsiders' – Hen-cock's management felt no responsibility to cater for their physical needs:

**Kevin:** At different points on the line, there is the potential to get splashed with blood and things and it's just... I don't like that. I'm very careful where I stand. It's horrible. There are no showers either for us.

Kevin appeared genuinely upset about being physically polluted by 'horrible' splashes of blood. This appeared to render the nature of the work visible in an unpalatable way. It threatened the de-animalization and commodification along with the mechanistic, distant, impartial emotions that were fabricated through the architecture and technology of routine production.

## **Discussion**

At Hen-cock, it is tempting to regard the emotional 'blankness' towards slaughtering chickens as a signifier of postmodern 'hollowness' (Mestrovic, 1997) or emotional saturation (Gergen, 1991) but we have suggested that a more complex picture of emotions emerges through ethnographic participation with those involved (Bolton, 2008). In our case, workers expressed and displayed often contradictory feelings about killing, about animals and about themselves. The range of emotional expressions presents a paradox between the indifference, boredom and sometimes pride of mass-killing of chickens versus the love, compassion and upset provoked by the slaughter and treatment of other species. We suggest that emotion work is ambiguous here, something which contrasts with previous research into meat work that has tended to present a rather static view of the self, linked to a single, collective, masculine identity among groups (Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990).

At Hen-cock, emotions were far from absent but Inspectors did not express pity or sorrow for the chickens that were being slaughtered. Yet when discussing ritual slaughter, Bobby could not simply switch his emotions 'off and on' (Pachirat, 2011). Likewise, Alan's feelings about animal neglect, suffering, cruelty and pain complicates a simplistic view of them as cynical civil servants who consider all animals as economic resources (Wilkie, 2010) or food-in-waiting (Francione, 2008; Joy, 2009). While the cultural norm that segregates humans from chickens as a 'meat' species remained firmly in place (Birke and Hockenhull, 2012; Haraway, 1989; Joy, 2009; Wilkie, 2010) it did not eclipse *all* emotions in relation to animals or indeed other forms of slaughter. How, then, can we understand these complex emotions? We consider this as an internally-logical and locally contingent emotionology (Fineman, 2008) which complicates a reading of these workers as unemotional, violent, or moral 'schizophrenics' in denial (Francione, 2008; Pachirat, 2011).

Using emotionology as a theoretical lens, it was possible to see how emotions emerge, coexist, contradict and overlap in relation to the micro-social setting in which they are expressed. In our case, the compartmentalized work itself was a powerful medium in eliminating emotional display from the factory floor. At Hen-cock, supply and production were carefully engineered to control the chickens from egg to product and this initiated the process of de-animalization through which animals are seen as commodities. The sterile and mechanized manufacturing process of the factory itself (Bauman, 1988; Burrell, 1997; Ritzer, 2008) further supported the commodification of chickens as food products. As a result of technology, work

organization, the lack of blood and 'gore', chickens physically and symbolically became de-animalized as passive 'things' or resources (Dale, 2000; Douglas, 1966 and 1970).

The identity of individual animals and feelings towards them were erased through the compartmentalized architecture, technology, system of production and the emphasis on efficiency. The Inspectors did not anthropomorphise animals as sometimes occurs in other contexts (Arluke and Sanders, 1996; Charles, 2014). Instead, the identity of chickens was 'dismembered' to create the conditions for (and the language of) the 'acceptable' kill. This relied heavily upon the wider social discourse of chicken as 'good' to eat and was evident in the ways that people spoke, for example, using the word 'harvest' and the unabashed use of the word 'kill'.

De-animalization allowed for 'role distance' (Goffman, 1959, 1961) as Inspectors separated themselves from the sense that they were working with animals. They were visually and psychologically removed from the killing process and instead were managing quality and 'good food'. The commodification of chickens necessitated very few empathetic emotional expressions in relation to them; it prepared the way for a 'mechanized' self that enabled them to get through the day, experiencing it as mundane and boring rather than horrifying (Meara, 1974).

In exploring the technological process of de-animalization in this setting, we have extended the arguments made by Fineman (2008), Bolton (2008), Tracy (2008) and others by illuminating the question of species. We have presented an *emotionology of meat inspection*; a way of feeling that was infused with the technologies of the

slaughterhouse and rested upon broader social standards of 'appropriate' emotional expression in regard to certain places (e.g. the slaughterhouse and not the vets) and certain creatures (e.g. the 'goodness' of chicken as opposed to cats as a food). While somewhat contradictory and initially puzzling to us 'outsiders', this emotionology was pragmatically 'right for the job' and gradually made sense in context.

In conducting such research, there are implications for developing a greater understanding of further settings in which individuals perform emotional or 'dirty' work, for example hospitals, prisons, social services and care organizations. Understanding some of the contextual reasons (i.e. compartmentalization, de-animalization) why people may display a degree of ambivalence towards human or animal others, for example, allows for a qualitative appreciation of the mechanisms by which people cope with, manage and understand their work. It may, for example, help explain the neglect of patients or the abusive treatment of people in care. This requires further research but it has both a theoretical and a deeply practical relevance for the ways in which people (such as patients) are managed and work is organized; at the very least it suggests that there is a need to provide those managing ambiguous and emotionally demanding roles with a means to empathize with others. Rather than compartmentalizing services and de-humanizing patients, it suggests that ways must be found to establish links between the 'means' and 'ends' of service delivery.

## **Conclusion**

This article has emphasised the significant relationship between the organization of work and the regulation of emotions (Dale, 2005; Fineman, 2008; Tyler, 2011). There is a degree of 'silence', 'denial' (Wicks, 2011) and sequestered 'violence' (Pachirat, 2011) at Hen-cock which is ingrained in the factory and its organizational processes. We have also shown that the compartmentalization of work organization means that Inspectors can assume a temporarily 'mechanized' self in relation to slaughtering which helps to account for apparent emotional disconnections between human and animals.

As consumers we are also implicated by symbolic and physical disconnections; shifts that vary between positive and negative feelings about the source of the meat that is consumed in daily life. As Burrell (1997) has argued, 'McDonalds is an organization dependent very much on death and that its organizational antecedents lie not only in modern factory farming but in the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Buchenwald' (1997: 138). It is this 'automated death' that allows us to consume animals relatively inexpensively and in a way that reflects and contributes to their de-animalization. Language also helps to make de-animalization powerful. Hence, consumers eat 'pork' or 'steak' but not 'pigs' or 'cows'; the animal is re-coded into its constituent cuts of meat. These labels support the normalization of meat.

Our findings generate broader questions for the way we think about animals and emotion as well as about emotions as part of identity work. The literature on the former is steadily growing (albeit outside organization studies, for example, Charles, 2014) although as Fineman has pointed out (2008), and despite some recent cases of note (see, for example, Wright and Nyberg, 2012) the role of emotion in identity

work remains under-researched and is deserving of much closer scrutiny. We suggest that the range and complexity of emotional displays we have outlined helps to refute the thesis that human beings are 'unitary, coherent and autonomous individuals who are separate and separable from social relations and organizations' (Collinson, 2003: 527). They also indicate that non-humans are integral to the emotions that are displayed or suppressed; something which has not been incorporated sufficiently in theories of workplace emotion.

We have highlighted that emotions are constantly renegotiated, displayed or buried as individuals engage with different discourses which leads to differing performances of 'self' (Ashcraft, 2007; Muhr, 2012). We understand this as a means to pragmatically navigate the boundaries between self and organization and, indeed, between self and animal other; an observation which is deserving of significantly more work than has been possible here.

To conclude, our findings indicate that Meat Inspectors can be both indifferent and passionate; distanced and engaged; at once 'mechanized' and 'humanized'. By exploring this subjectivity, this article has complicated a reading of slaughter-related workers as 'hardened' or unemotional. Instead, it has underlined the co-existence of multiple emotions, along with the transitory and socially constructed nature of emotionologies (Fineman, 2008). We conclude that these workers are not necessarily 'cruel', de-humanized or 'ambivalent to suffering' although the slaughterhouse often requires that they marginalize certain emotions and de-animalize the nonhuman 'other' so that killing becomes 'just a job'. We have highlighted a complex subjectivity whereby contrasting emotional states co-exist. In



this sense, we destabilize a number of simple categorizations of those in the slaughterhouse as dehumanized factory workers, animal lovers or, indeed, killers.

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