

Article

# Enchanting Work: New Spirits of Service Work in an Organic Supermarket

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## Abstract

Drawing from a qualitative, empirical study of work experiences in a North American organic supermarket, we introduce the notion of 'enchanting work', a polyvalent concept referring to the aura found in certain forms of service work in contrast to the disenchantment commonly associated with it. Enchanting work, because of its unique stance vis-a-vis workplace critique and commitment, can inform the study of work by moving beyond the dichotomy of meaningful versus alienated work. Our findings show how enchanting work can be found on three different levels to (1) infuse otherwise mundane work processes with meaning, (2) obscure organizational control mechanisms and divert attention from precarious work conditions, and (3) recruit the participation of workers for creating an enchanted workplace. We discuss the implications of our results for understanding contemporary worlds of work and explore both the emancipatory and ideological ramifications of enchanting work.

## Keywords

alienation, authenticity, creativity, critical management studies, enchantment, retail, services, supermarket, work

Supermarkets, in their standardization and monotonization of work practices, seem to epitomize the modern 'disenchantment of the world' (Weber, 1922, p. 30). Products and labour are commodified, work is employer-controlled, and spontaneity is minimized, leaving room only for standardized

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interactions in an efficiency-focused work system (e.g. Braverman, 1974; Fineman, 2012; Korczynski & Ott, 2006; van Maanen, 1991; Warhurst, Thompson, & Nickson, 2009). Bagging groceries, stocking shelves or serving customers seem to provide little room for self-expression, autonomy and creativity, making supermarket work appear an unlikely candidate for 'enchancing a disenchanted world' (Ritzer, 2005). Such enchantment, increasingly invoked to describe the spectral nature of post-modern consumer culture, is largely absent from the study of work (Gellner, 1975; Korczynski, 2005; Ritzer, 2005). As we argue, however, changes in worlds of work draw together experiences of enchantment with formerly mundane work practices, a development whose consequences for understanding neo-normative control at work, among other things, are double-edged and complex (e.g. Fleming & Sturdy, 2011). Exploring these changes in a US-based organic supermarket chain, a setting replete with shopfloor enchantment, gave rise to the current reflection on service work and contemporary workplaces more generally.

The evolving relationship between disenchantment and new forms of enchantment has been attracting scholarly attention (e.g. Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001; Gellner, 1975; Landy & Saler, 2009; Ritzer, 2005). On the one hand, blurring work and non-work spheres (e.g. Ritzer, 2005) confers new meanings on work as a space for self-expression and enchantment. Additionally, critiques of traditional organizations as cold, mechanical systems (Ritzer, 2005, p. 89), and an emphasis on post-industrial forms of organizing as ideological control mechanisms (e.g. Fleming, 2009) open up workplaces as potentially 'enchanted' spaces (Boje & Baskin, 2011; see also Wasserman & Frenkel, 2015, on 'technologies of enchantment'). Finally, because service work involves relational, emotional and aesthetic labour (e.g. Hochschild, 2011; Warhurst & Nickson, 2007a), it may be difficult to separate consumer enchantment from that of service workers. Each of these aspects of service work link labour to the reproduction of social and symbolic, as well as material realities, and consequently to the potential for the (re)enchantment of the workplace (e.g. Graeber, 2004; Sallaz, 2010).

Linking these workplace changes to enchantment involves recognizing their ambivalent nature. Enchantment has been defined as an aura of authentic presence, resisting rationalization and promoting creative social connection (Boje & Baskin, 2011). Yet, enchanting customers and employees can also represent a form of symbolic manipulation, similar to seductive visions or branding, or the spiritual elevation of work (e.g. Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Bell & Taylor, 2003), constituting an 'illusion of worker autonomy' (MacDonald & Sirianni, 1996, p. 10). On the one hand, the techniques of enchantment evoke the personal, the socially meaningful, and even the sublime. On the other hand, enchantment comes with the double meaning of being 'duped' or fooled (Ladkin, 2006). These critical readings of enchantment suggest that its role is ideological rather than emancipatory, obscuring the realities of routinized service work. In short, understanding workplace enchantment requires examining the multiple layers of meaning within the concept, from the aesthetic and sublime to the ideological.

Below, we empirically explore the various layers of meaning by which enchantment works within the service sector. Enchanting work provides a framework that takes advantage of a word-play where the actors, actions and targets shift in empirically and theoretically important ways. Focusing on the enchanted *nature* of a particular job or workspace, enchanting as an adjective invokes the meaningful and seductive elements of a job or organization (work *is* enchanting). Focusing on the action *done* to a job, enchanting as a verb invokes organizational and managerial attempts to cast a 'spell' over otherwise mundane, low-prestige service work (work *is being* enchanted). Focusing on the work *practices*, enchanting in its gerund form describes what the work itself involves, i.e. the participative act of enchanting oneself, colleagues and customers (enchantment is the *objective* of the work). Each of these empirically grounded forms involves distinct visions of actors, conceptions of work, and critical possibilities regarding the workplace. The polysemic concept of 'enchancing work' can thus

account for the multiple interpretations of work, holding together different readings without reducing one interpretation to the others (Bourdieu, 1990).

The paper's contribution is threefold. (1) The concept of 'enchancing work', in its polyvalence, juxtaposes naturalistic, critical and performative readings of enchantment in service work. We show how, beyond the duality of enchantment/disenchantment, organizational members work constructively to co-create spaces of enchantment within organizational constraints. (2) We theorize, based on these findings, the role of service work as a form of social reproduction, where meanings and values are embedded in, and produced by, work practices. Seeing enchantment as part of the work role goes beyond contrasting enchanted worlds of consumption against disenchanted worlds of production and work. (3) We discuss enchantment's implications for understanding work more generally, focusing on enchanting work as representing the ambivalent nature of contemporary organizational settings. Enchanting work allows increased space for worker autonomy and creative expression, yet also entrenches such expression within efficiency logics, foreclosing opportunities for systemic workplace critique.

Our argument begins by tracing the evolution of contemporary service work from standardized efficiency approaches ('McDonaldization') to those stressing fantasy experience and emotional involvement ('Disneyfication') to enchantment within work, a theme reflecting the limits of strict administrative controls in the context of the 'new spirit of capitalism' (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005). We define our research problem in terms of the contours of this new spirit, where workplace enchantment facilitates rich work experiences on the one hand and new forms of exploitation and normative control on the other hand. Outlining our empirical setting and analytical strategy, we focus on three progressive levels of reflexivity that form the basis of our analysis. Constructing the enchanting work notion across these three levels, we empirically illustrate how enchantment is presupposed, critiqued and enacted. Finally, we discuss the implications of enchanting work for understanding workplace changes, above all within the service industries.

## The Commodification of Service Work

Service work has become a flashpoint for labour debates, especially around the question of whether services would 'free workers from the tyranny of industry' (Braverman, 1974, p.373). The transformation of work in developed economies toward services, some argue (e.g. Bowen & Schneider, 1988), fundamentally changes the meanings of work. Service-industry logics confound product and producer, employee and customer. Services are relatively intangible and demand active customer participation, and are produced and consumed simultaneously, blurring the distinction between worker and work output (Bowen & Schneider, 1988). Employees are in close relationships with customers, other employees and management. Finally, made-to-order services and customer input further integrate customers into the production process. These factors make it crucial to produce work environments where creativity and interaction create value in often unpredictable ways. According to Bowen and Schneider (1988), they also support employee role-making and autonomy.

Yet, as Braverman (1974) argued, the shift to services does not fundamentally undo the monotony and standardization of work (see also Warhurst et al., 2009). Many service jobs rival manufacturing in their repetitiveness and lack of autonomy (Braverman, 1974). Such jobs, particularly in retail, are low-paid, labour intensive and highly constraining (e.g. MacDonald & Sirianni, 1996). Labour process theorists note that, because it 'cannot take shape in an object' (Braverman, 1974, p.248), service work is not based on the production of an object, but is itself an object, a commodity 'like every other commodity' (Marx, 1861).

To the extent that services themselves are commodities, they may take on the charmed or enchanting aspects formerly reserved for commodities (Marx, 1906; see also Gellner, 1975; Ritzer,

2005). While work as disenchanted clashes with the enchanted aura of consumer products (Ritzer, 2005), the relational aspect of service enactments, simultaneously produced and consumed, create potential spaces for enchantment within the work role itself.

Although services retain many aspects of manufacturing labor processes, scholars have noted attempts to graft onto service work an air of authenticity (Fleming, 2009), aesthetics (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007a) and emotional connection (Hochschild, 1983), implying that new notions of value are at least *ostensibly* conferred upon service work, creating an appearance of enchantment.

## Disenchanted Production and Enchanted Consumption

Disenchantment, as the loss of a deeply meaningful relation with one's surroundings, has characterized workplace theorizing since Weber's (1922) 'disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) of the world' thesis, with enchantment slowly squeezed out by the lock-step advance of modern rationalization. Marx (1906) critiqued the loss of meaning associated with work and production, but retained the notion of enchantment as *delusion*, recognizing its persistence in commodities, which took on a quasi-mystical fetish quality. Contemporary theorists in the critical tradition note how 'modern attempts to disenchant nature inevitably re-create a new kind of enchantment' (Stone, 2006, p. 232), with rationalization and enchantment coexisting in an uneasy, dialectical relationship (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002).

Rather than describing modern rationalization as a story of disenchantment per se, it is more precise to view disenchantment as characterizing modernist views of *production*, with enchantment allocated to the sphere of *consumption* (e.g. Ritzer, 2005). This thesis resonates with Bell (1972), who notes a cultural incoherence between the rationalized nature of modern production methods and the consumerist demand for self-expression through consumption.

Descriptions of the standardization, monotony and lack of autonomy of workers (Braverman, 1974; Gortz, 1999) are juxtaposed against the fetishism of products, which take on quasi-mystical properties, representing object-substitutes for the social relations, which henceforth remain alienated (Marx, 1906). In this process, work is disenchanted while the products of work are enchanted. The enchantment of products rather than workers coincides with devaluing work as compared to consumption (Bauman, 1998). In line with this diagnosis, critical labour research has critiqued the monotonization and alienation of labour (e.g. Braverman, 1974), while illustrating how organizations attempt to make work meaningful without changing the underlying structural conditions of work (Applebaum, 1992). At once an expression of human self-realization and meaning and a system-reinforcing, instrumental, materially constrained practice (Grant, Morales, & Sallaz, 2009), it is no accident that critiques of modernity historically revolved around the question of labour, begging the question of the conditions under which work can be re-enchanted.

Thus, while most treatments concur in regarding work as disenchanted and consumption as enchanted, the 'rise of new forms of enchantment' edges the enchantment notion back towards work, rethinking the distribution of enchantment across social spheres (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001, p. 293). For instance, Boje and Rosile (2008) claim that organizations actively manage 'specters' as part of their strategies and discourses. Ritzer (2005) describes department stores as 'both highly rationalized and enchanted "fantasy" worlds', with enchantment covering employees and products alike. Taussig (2010, p. 21) notes the tight relationship between the 'phantom objectivity' of commodities and the meaning of work, claiming that 'the magic of production and the production of magic are inseparable'. These emerging perspectives posit the tight relations between work and consumption as characterizing all social systems, including contemporary ones (e.g. Graeber, 2004).

In this way, critical scholars have veered away from simplistic characterizations of enchantment versus disenchantment, exploring how enchantment is dispersed along social relations, objects and

spheres. They note the contemporary fluidity of the production/consumption distinction, with service work taking on aspects of consumption (e.g. Gellner, 1975; Ritzer, 2005). Going further, we argue that service work often involves a hybrid of consumer and producer elements, with implications for the experience of work. While critical social theory has targeted both workplace alienation and consumerism, these critiques may lie at cross-terms, the former focused on the disenchantment of hyper-rationalization and the latter on the fantasy of consumer enchantment. Integrating production and consumption thus requires rethinking critical perspectives at work. In particular, should critique be directed at the illusory nature of enchantment as ideology, or precisely at the *disenchantment* characterizing rationalization and managerialist efficiency, or is some combination of these critiques possible? We argue that service work, and a certain type of service work inspired by the new spirit of capitalism in particular, provides an ideal site for studying the fusion of rationalization and enchantment. Doing so lays the groundwork for exploring new modes of the production, negotiation and distribution of enchantment across different social spaces.

## The Enchantment of Service Work

To deal with the relational and product ambiguity characterizing services, organizations may experiment with novel forms of normative control (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011; Warhurst et al., 2009). Perhaps the most obvious managerial strategy is to use forms of de-skilling or standardization (e.g. Braverman, 1974; Fleming & Sturdy, 2011; MacDonald & Sirianni 1996), resisting or flattening the relational aspect of services into predictable and disenchanted routines (Frenkel, 2006). A second strategy involves imbuing service settings with pre-approved forms of fun or enchanting experience, through highly controlled organizational spectacles or images (Islam, Zyphur, & Boje, 2008; Sallaz, 2011) that create a simulacrum of relationality. Ritzer (2000) calls the first of these processes, which falls back upon industrial understandings of work, 'McDonaldization', while the second, focusing on fantasy and spectacle, is termed 'Disneyfication' (e.g. Boje & Baskin, 2011).

We believe that a third strategy is emerging in some organizations. This involves the recognition that avoidance of enchantment (McDonaldization) or fantastic dream-like enchantment (Disneyfication) misses the key aspect of enchantment, which is its ability to generate an authentic sense of presence while at the same time creating an aura of meaning (Boje & Baskin, 2011). This third strategy involves using cultural, interpersonal and artistic means to create the sense of reality and authenticity, while avoiding the 'brute reality' of low-paid service work.

We call this attempt 'enchanting work': to at once mystify and be real, to promote meaningful work relations that foster creativity and participation, and put customers, workers and wider community members in less formalized relationships with each other. Yet, we must keep in mind the material realities of the workplace, the long hours, low pay and precarious status that coexist with the enchantment strategy, and may be occluded so as to foreclose resistance and promote normative control. Holding together these very different workplace visions led us to search for a concept that itself allowed a series of interpretations on different levels, so that this versatility may be achieved without losing clarity.

## Empirical Case

Our research site, a high-end supermarket we refer to as Genuine Groceries,<sup>1</sup> is interesting because counter-intuitive as an enchanted world of work. As a retail context, our setting represents the understudied 'new generic form of mass employment in the post-industrial socio-economic landscape' accounting for approximately 10 percent of the total workforce in developed economies (Grugulis & Bozkurt, 2011, p. 2). Where the new spirit of capitalism emphasizes expression, creativity and authenticity (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005) it has focused on skilled and

professional labour, such as IT professionals (e.g. Ross, 2004), and care workers (Grant et al., 2009), with the notable exception of studying call centre workers (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011; Jenkins & Delbridge, 2014). Retail work, different than high-end knowledge work, has been critiqued for exploitation and precarity, and for lacking opportunities for self-expression and creativity (Grugulis & Bozkurt, 2011; Warhurst et al., 2009). A supermarket chain that seemingly turns this business model on its head, claiming opportunities for creative and artistic expression, begs further exploration.

Genuine Groceries began in the early 1980s as an alternative food market, growing to over 100 stores at the turn of the century, and currently operating several hundred outlets internationally promoting local, natural and organic food. The supermarket chain is currently among the ten largest public food and drug retailers in the US, and a Fortune 500 company, spending over a decade on the '100 Best Companies to Work for in America' list. Among other things, the supermarket chain employs store artists and sign makers who decorate the stores and produce artworks to evoke a unique store atmosphere.

## **Data Collection**

The data collection took place over four rounds beginning in June 2010, spanning over 41 Genuine Groceries stores in the United States and Canada, mostly on the east coast (New York, Washington DC, Boston and Toronto) and the west coast (Los Angeles metropolitan area) and three stores in London, UK.<sup>2</sup> We employed a range of qualitative methods, including unobtrusive observations, semi-structured interviews with employees, including team members and store artists, as well as supervisors, and naturally occurring talk with customers. We took photographs of the store's general look and atmosphere, collected public information about or by the company and artifacts (e.g. flyers, job descriptions, monthly/weekly newsletters, sales offers and promotions, internet blogs, and Genuine Groceries' homepage). We visited numerous conventional grocery stores and two of Genuine Groceries' main competitors and informally spoke to managers and employees to get a background sense of the field.

The present paper builds primarily on data from our extensive field notes and 47 semi-structured interviews, including 10 managers, 24 store artists and 13 team members from diverse areas such as meat department, customer service, or coffee bar (see Table 1 for summary of sample characteristics). Interviews lasted between 10 and 90 minutes. They were digitally recorded and transcribed. If recording was not permitted, we took notes during and/or after the conversation took place. Our original research focus was on career paths of creative and artistic workers, focusing on store artists. However, we broadened this focus to store employees generally, as we subsequently became interested in broader questions of workplaces as sites for self-expression and creativity, with a particular emphasis on meaning, value and exploitation in the realm of the new spirit of service work. As shown in Table 1, we differentiate among three groups: store artists (STA) who are hired to create in-store artistic works ('make the store look beautiful', etc.); team members (TM) who engage in more traditional store activities (cutting cheese, stocking shelves, etc.); and supervisor/managers (M).

## **Data Analysis**

As an analytical strategy, we used an iterative approach, moving between observation and theoretical constructs, which emerged and developed over the course of our analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The exploratory nature of the study meant that our main objective was to look for concepts and relations that could inform the literature, without claiming generalization to all settings. First,

**Table 1.** Sample information.

Pseudonym	Store <sup>a</sup>	Position <sup>b</sup>	Data type
Agnes	London	Prepared foods (TM)	Notes
Aiden	Area 1	Cashier (TM)	Interview transcript
Alexander	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Ali	Area 1	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Amber	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Andrew	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Ariane	Area 1	Meat, cheese and wine, later cosmetics (TM)	Interview transcript
Brandon	Area 1	Supervisor customer service & cashiers (M)	Interview transcript
Brian	Area 2	Meat department (TM)	Interview transcript
Cai	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Carey	London	Store artist (STA)	Notes
Carlos	Area 1	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Christopher	Area 1	Store manager (M)	Notes
Daniel	Area 1	Store artist (STA)	Notes
Deborah	Area 2	Assistant store artist (STA)	Notes
Diana	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Elizabeth	Area 2	Marketing team leader (M)	Interview transcript
Elizabeth	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Emily	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Emma	Area 2	Marketing team leader (M)	Notes
George	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Gregory	Area 2	Prepared foods (TM)	Notes
Jack	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Notes
Jacob	Area 1	Store manager (M)	Interview transcript
Jill	Area 1	Cheese department (TM)	Interview transcript
Jim	Area 2	Senior manager from headquarter (M)	Notes
Joanne	Area 1	Customer service (TM)	Interview transcript
John	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Julian	Area 1	Prepared foods (TM)	Interview transcript
Liam	Area 1	Store manager (M)	Notes
Lois	Area 1	Assistant store artist (STA)	Notes
Mark	Area 1	Team leader (M)	Interview transcript
Markus	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Mason	Area 1	Wine and cheese (TM)	Interview transcript
Nils	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Noah	Area 1	Wine specialist (TM)	Interview transcript
Paul	Area 1	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Peggy	London	Sign maker (STA)	Notes
Rico	Area 2	Cashier (TM)	Interview transcript
Susan	Area 1	Sign maker (STA)	Interview transcript
Tamara	Area 1	Bakery (TM)	Notes
Timothy	Area 2	Store artist (STA)	Interview transcript
Tom	Area 1	Store artist (STA)	Notes
Tom	Area 1	Store manager (M)	Notes
William	Area 1	Store manager (M)	Notes
Yao	Area 1	Store Disc Jockey (STA)	Interview transcript
Zac	Area 2	Coffee bar (TM)	Notes

<sup>a</sup>To protect anonymity, we report stores according to general area, including Los Angeles metropolitan area (area 1) New York tri-state area (area 2, including Washington D.C., Boston, Toronto) and London, UK.

<sup>b</sup>We provide the position and link them to one of three groups: store artists (STA) who are hired to create in-store artistic works; team members (TM) who engage in more traditional store activities; and members of the management team (M) who have a supervisor/management role.

we manually coded the interviews, using the software Atlas.ti, into work-related themes. In a second step, we linked these concepts to the literature on service work, particularly in the light of labour process perspectives (e.g. Braverman, 1974) and work around labour processes in service jobs (e.g. Grant et al., 2009; Grugulis & Bozkurt, 2011). This initial coding resulted in a series of categories describing content features of the work, such as creativity, authenticity, self-expression, or artisanal work forms.

At this point, however, we revised our coding approach, attentive to capturing nuances regarding the reflexive *standpoints* taken vis-a-vis the work experience, a central interest in our study. Specifically, because we were interested in how workers *reflected upon* work features rather than simply describing these features, we shifted attention to the reflexive positions members took, including their critical positions. In brief, studying enchantment involves not only objective work features but also *modes of reflexivity*; merely descriptive coding of data categories could not disclose these diverse critical formations. Such codes would result in a workplace characterized by previously described phenomena such as emotional, creative or aesthetic labour (e.g. Hochschild, 2011; Warhurst & Nickson, 2007b), where labour enters new domains, but where the dialectic between rationalization and enchantment is essentially flattened into a naturalistic description of job characteristics.

To capture the element of reflexivity (Bourdieu, 1990) beyond a list of ostensive job descriptions, we coded for the modes of relating to work itself. This coding involved three levels: a naturalistic description of work in terms of qualities (enchanting as positive, satisfying); a critical description of ideological action done to work (enchanting as a spell cast upon the work space); and a description of practices of mystification involved in the work role (enchanting as the goal or object of the work itself). Coding according to this tripartite vision of enchanting work allowed moving from empirically derived descriptive categories of work features to modes of reflexivity regarding these categories.

We thereby developed the *enchanting work* concept based on the tension we ran across involving these three moments of reflexivity. This tension then serves to characterize the ambivalent status of enchantment, as both a false, illusory social relation and as a meaning-giving, self-realizing process, the loss of which (disenchantment) is associated with alienation and oppression.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the data analysis and Table 2 summarizes the resulting concept of 'enchanting work' with illustrative examples.

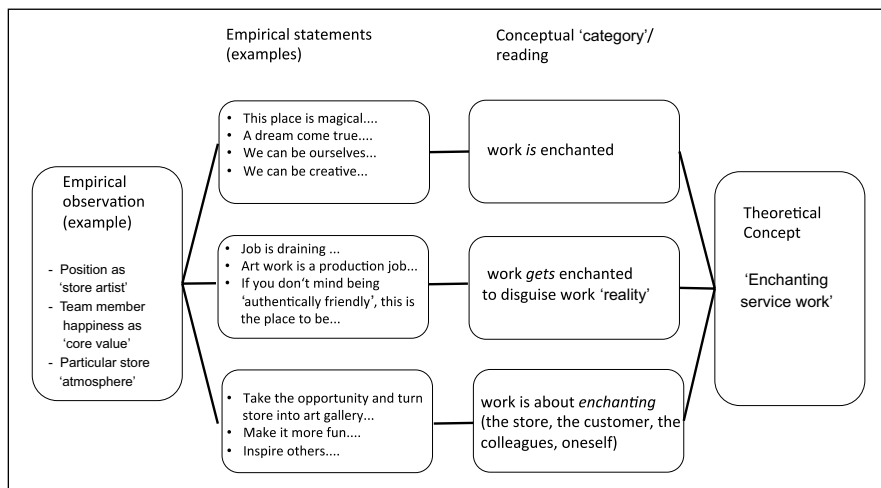
## Simply Enchanting – Enchanting Work as Positive Job Experience

This place is magical. This place gives you entertainment ... We are one big family ... One day, I realized that I had to work here ... I just went in. (Gregory, team member, Area 2 store)

At the most naturalistic level, enchanting work provides a sense of meaning and fulfilment, seen as inhering in aspects of the job or organization itself. While some reflexivity is necessary to recognize work aspects, the mission and values of the organization are read at face value, and the enchanting aspects of work are seen as signs of enlightened managerial practice and assumed to be in good faith.

At Genuine Groceries, enchanting work occurs in a context widely alluding to a pre-industrial world of work (e.g. manual work, nostalgic atmosphere). Store managers explained to us that the stores were inspired by traditional farmers' markets, a vision directing store design and food preparation. Accordingly, fruits and vegetables are carefully unpacked and manually piled in pyramids or other appealing arrangements, and meat is promoted as 'Cut by hand, right here





**Figure 1.** Overview of data analysis.

daily', with no sophisticated food processing technologies displayed and continuous manual demonstrations of food preparation in the stores. Enchanting work emerges in a 'world of making', builds on 'manual competences' and unfolds as a 'mastery of real things' (Crawford, 2009). Daniel points out: 'A lot of this stuff, I mean, we do make ourselves.' This ethic of handicraft emphasizes an aesthetic and participatory focus, embodied in the store artist's role and also distributed around diverse functions. For example Ali, a store artist in Los Angeles, claims that 'my job is to make the store look beautiful'. Yet similar sentiments are also expressed by Mason, in the cheese and wine department: 'It's like art in a way, pairing things like that ... I think it's the most artist thing to do ... To pair wines and cheeses and beer, because it's on the finer side of someone's palate.'

In the case of store artists, standardization gives way to a unique style or signature. This includes making hand-written signs, promoting specific products by installations and exhibiting artworks, giving rise to a romantic farmers-market feeling. The allusions to a pre-modern age of crafts and trades contrast starkly with the general 'cold' corporate atmospheres that employees associate with conventional retail environments:

The aesthetic of the store, the environment is so different than going into a [conventional supermarket], because they all have those white, slick floors, the lighting is a certain type, the shelving is a certain type. [GG] does this whole thing where they bring in coloured tile, and there's warm tones, and in the [cosmetics] department, all the shelves are wood. And, it's like all these natural elements to it, I think that creates a feeling of warmth. It feels so sterile sometimes going into the other types of grocery stores, and I think that that would affect my mood personally. (Ariane, team member, Area 1 store)

The interest and personal commitment further relates to a widespread emphasis on community and strong interpersonal bonds, replacing transactional with relational forms of sociality. Mark, who worked his way from a cashier to a management position, feels that GG is 'more than just a grocery store. We're here for the community and you see the community, you know.' Elaborating, he explains how the store is an important source of unconditional camaraderie and service that touches 'his nature':

**Table 2.** Enchanting work concept with illustrative data examples.

	When work is enchanting	When work gets enchanted	The practices of enchanting work
Characteristic of this notion of enchanting work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work provides meaning and opportunity for self-expression (freedom, authenticity) and creativity; they are seen as inhering aspect of the work or organization itself</li> <li>• Mission and values are taken at 'face value'</li> <li>• 'enlightened' managerial practices are carried out in 'good faith'</li> <li>• 'Things are as they seem to be'</li> <li>• Need to be able to recognize important work aspects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on enchanting as being something that 'disguises', producing 'dupes' on the side of the employees</li> <li>• Enchanting work as ideological control</li> <li>• Values such as creativity and self-expression are seen as a way to benefit the organization, as a 'marketing tool'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees co-construct enchantment</li> <li>• Enchanting work as an opportunity for 'making it work'</li> <li>• Enchanting work as seizing the opportunity to make work more meaningful, fun, creative</li> <li>• Reinterpretation/hybridization as a strategy for finding creative space</li> </ul>
Reflexivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance in order to be able to recognize</li> <li>• 'contradictions' between espoused values and 'lived' values</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance to recognize 'contradictions' (e.g. efficiency and self-expression)</li> <li>• Ability to identify 'room for manoeuvre'/latitude</li> <li>• Insistence on personal action/agency in the face of organizational constraints</li> </ul>
Data focus and source	<p>Expression of 'values' and work characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with employees (team members and managers)</li> <li>• Field notes based on observations (store visits)</li> <li>• Publicly available data (corporate information, such as website, job adds, etc.)</li> </ul> <p>Team members app. 50%; store artists app. 30%</p>	<p>Material that runs counter to espoused values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with employees (team members and store artists) and managers</li> <li>• Internet blogs (consumer and ex-employees)</li> <li>• Publicly available data (employer ranking, etc.)</li> <li>• Field notes based on observations (store visits)</li> </ul> <p>Team members app. 15%; store artists app. 10%</p>	<p>Expression of personal ownership, attempt to improvise around constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with employees and managers</li> <li>• Field notes based on observations (store visits)</li> </ul> <p>Team members app. 35%; store artists app. 60%</p>
Prevalence per employee type* Illustrative data example	<p>I love this store. This is one of the best stores ... people here, they have a lot of personality, they're very friendly and... Our store team leader, he's a very friendly guy. He's a great guy. All the management staff here is great. So I mean, it's a great store, I love working here. (Julian)</p>	<p>What they have, it's free and easy and cheap to have big signs and have exercise programmes and have big ra ra meetings and hand out free water bottles, and yes, team, yes. That doesn't cost anything, meanwhile the actual money, where the rubber hits the road, and gets real... And the team members, they recognize that factor more than the happy talk. (Jill)</p>	<p>We had a big art show as a fundraiser, to auction the pieces and all the money went to charity, so I did a painting and then I also did a shopping, one of those little... canvas bags, I decorated ... so did many other workers, and we had a little art show back in the wine department, we put little gallery walls up... A few thousand bucks, they made from selling, I mean, people didn't pay a lot for it, but it was a cool thing, because everyone got to see everyone's art and we changed the store a little bit, a more human touch, you know, me being an artist, it was enjoyable. (Yao)</p>

Table 2. (Continued)

Illustrative data examples (cont'd)	So to me, those are the things that are magic because it's someone taking a stand that is so important but that, as a culture, on the massive, we can't get everyone into that because not everyone's on the same wave or the way of thinking around it. (Ariane)	Right now, the World Cup, everybody on their break is in the break room, watching the World Cup. The soccer, we're cheering. There is a TV right there ... customers and workers were all gathered around and everybody was one unit. There might have been some rivalry between the two teams, but everybody's in the same spirit and, you know, it's fun. I don't know any other place that has a TV there for everybody to watch, while you're working. (Mark)	There's a good vibe, it's an up environment. I'm comfortable with the product, it's good quality, so I feel like I'm a part of something that's positive in the world. (Yao)	We have to promote certain things but at the same time I have the option to have room to express myself too. (Carlos)	So it's just a day-to-day artistic production type job, just producing everything from signs this size to signs that size ... sometimes you have to just get it done because it's a retail environment so you have to be flexible. Like I said the job might encompass other stuff as well; it's not necessarily an artist job, you know, it's the production. (Paul)	Your happiness really matters to them because it shows in the sales. (Mason)	Labour costs are the obsession of the higher-ups in the chain. Labour costs are, that's all you hear about, squeezing squeezing down. Less labour, less employees, you know, even full-time people who have worked there for a long time, there will be periods where they're not getting their full 40 hours, they're only getting 32 hours, and they're having to use up their vacation time to pay their bills, because labour costs are being squeezed, squeezed. (Rico)	There's always, somebody always needs something, whereas if I'm going outside of the store, and I'm doing work for, you know, another company outside of [GG], they'll give me a task and I can focus on that one task. You know, I can focus on one thing at a time. Here, I'm constantly multitasking. I always have a list of things that I need to do, and there's always somebody asking me to do something. (Nils)	When I first started this, you know, I wasn't quite sure how to get the local community involved so I just put a poster up and I said, you know, calling all local artists, if you want to have your work featured just email me or call me. (Alexander)	To really make this my store and when you look at the art on these walls you'll see [Ali], you'll feel my art. The same so we haven't been open enough for me to really completely transform this place, it's a work in progress I look for it to be consistent and that's my major thing, you know, so long as you can walk in and really get a feel for what I was trying to get across, that's my ultimate goal. (Ali)	Um, so part of my job is working the tasting bar, and I like doing those because I run events and what I really like actually, my favourite thing is when I suggest a wine to someone and they have no idea what it is ... But like this is a Grüner Veltliner (GV) and they have no idea, they come in for a Sauvignon Blanc, right; I'm like why don't you try something different, like something new and I give them like a GV or something ... So I can talk about it with them and they're so excited that they learned something new and then they come back and tell me how much they loved it. That's, like, my favourite part of it. Then they try that and love it, and now they're, like, now I'm kind of teaching them and they're expanding their knowledge, you know, I love that. Like, I'm kind of teaching people what I know, which I think is kind of cool. (Noah)
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\*Reflecting the approximate prevalence of each enchantment level (number of quotes in each 'category') adding up to 100 per employee type (team member vs. store artists).

I just fell in love with the culture. Everybody's very easy-going, we're all friends here. It doesn't matter who you are, or what part of the store you're working in, we all help each other out and I just enjoy that, that's my nature. I like to help whenever I can. And that's what this company is about. (Mark, management, Area 1 store)

The enchanting aspect of work is seen in the store's liberal body and appearance policy, and employees emphasize the team's diverse clothing styles. In contrast to the standardization norms of traditional retail work (Grugulis & Bozkurt, 2011), employees are able to wear their normal street clothes, and allowed to show their tattoos, piercings and dyed hair in order to 'be themselves' and feel 'comfortable' while being at work.

Commenting on the flexibility of personal style permitted at GG as compared to his previous retail employer, Jim, a senior manager, notes: 'Here, we are looking for individuals. Nobody is a number. Everybody is an individual.'

The focus around individuality and community is also conveyed by official HR brochures and core values that emphasize, among others, team member happiness. An advertisement for a position as shopfloor employee reads:

At [GG] you're part of something special. Something that will take you as far as your skills and hard work allow. And something that gives you the opportunity to enjoy all that you deserve. Here you're celebrated for who you are and what you bring to the table... (HR brochure, distributed in a New York store)

The job advertisement highlights the opportunity for meaningful work and leaving room for self-expression and authenticity. The focus on employee preferences and enjoyment of the work experiences reinforces the link between work and consumption, as work becomes an entertaining way to spend time. Noah, a team member, concludes: 'working here feels more like a 'hobby''.

The focus on healthy and natural products, both as producers and consumers, leads employees to frame themselves as agents of cultural change and vanguardship that contrasts starkly with the 'average' retail corporation. Inevitably, however, periodic conflicts between preferences and work roles arise; according to the first reading of enchanting work, these become dismissed as inevitable, or in the process of being worked out. Here, the work remains enchanted, but because people are realists, they understand that 'nobody is perfect' and that the exception does not alter the general positive atmosphere. Limitations are seen as incidental, rather than as fundamental contradictions or signs of the falseness of the enchantment. 'We work in a business context but have freedom to be creative. It's a good place' (Ali, store artist, Area 1 store).

## When Work Gets Enchanted: Enchanting Work as Ideology

I fully expected this to be a diatribe against the free market. I was very pleasantly surprised to be wrong. There was nothing anti-free market here at all, quite the contrary. (Audience blog comment, referring to a media appearance by a GG executive)

While GG's core values depart from a narrow, profit-driven vision of business, how much it departs from conventional labour processes is questionable. As some critical scholarship has suggested, the symbolic manipulation of enchantment may work as a form of neo-normative control (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011), whereby the material expropriation of value from workers and society is glossed over with a patina of corporate goodwill. Suspicious of naive readings of enchantment as the *opposite* of rationalization, the second reading sees it as an ideological cover for rationalization (Landy & Saler, 2009).

Treating enchantment critically involves questioning the face value of meaningful positive experiences, looking for points at which the ostensive ideals of the organization are distanced from daily practices, distances which produce the opportunity for critique (Boltanski, 2011). This can involve (1) showing where work aspects or practices seem inconsistent with purported values, and (2) finding moments in which organizational members *themselves* voice critiques or demonstrate ambivalence.

Despite the enthusiasm voiced by many, several interviewees were sceptical of enchantment, characterizing it as ‘hype’. The deliberate, and even forced, nature of organizational enthusiasm draws ambivalent reactions, noted by Brandon:

We have quarterly meetings and it’s almost like a pep rally...they get really energetic and give away prizes, and gifts, and it’s like going before a sporting event, trying to pump everybody up and boost their morale, so they try in a sense, but I feel like sometimes it works for a little bit, then everybody goes back to normal.

Similarly, the artistic ethos promoted across the stores is often in conflict with the profit-driven objectives of the store. Yao, an employee in charge of the store’s music describes the ambivalent relation between enchantment and sales promotion: I had one woman actually tell me, ‘I like this music so much, I’m staying in the store and spending more money because I don’t want to leave...’ While artistic expression and creativity are encouraged by the store, the ‘space’ designed for this expression is reduced (or even closed down) once sales slow down.

Yesterday, [my supervisor] comes to me and he says, we’re not selling enough, they’re starting to put pressure on me ... don’t know what happened in-between there, but that’s retail, that’s corporate America I guess ... someone up the chain from him is saying, you’re not selling enough to justify the use of that space. You know, in retail ... how much could that square footage generate in income, that’s what they think. Well, [this product] is not selling enough in terms of a can of beans would or whatever. So they’re putting pressure. (Jill, team member, Area 1 store)

During interviews, the tenuous and ambivalent nature of the positive atmosphere began to come to light, particularly its relation to profit as a priority. As a cashier wrote in an online blog about the store, ‘If you’re friendly and not fake, and realize that it’s easier to do a good job than be surly, this is the place for you.’ Authenticity is valued, yet only around being ‘friendly’ and ‘not surly’, calling into question what could be meant here by authenticity (Fleming, 2009). Further, the motivation for authenticity is productivity – it is *easier* to do a good job. Such statements hint at resignation rather than genuine belief. Put less subtly by another cashier on the same blog, ‘If you’re going to do menial labor, this is the best place.’

Others address their critique more directly. One team member from the meat department describes how work takes away his energy. Different from his colleagues who were quoted above, he experiences his work as anything but enchanted.

It drains me completely. Drains my spirit. Takes away from my time playing shows, sharing it ... By the time you are done, working under fluorescent light, pulled by customers, you don’t have energy left to put it into something creative ... If you put all your energy in an 8-hour workday. It doesn’t help your creative process ... I work like crazy and get 10 [USD] an hour, doesn’t feel right. In my body, it doesn’t feel right. (Brian, team member, Area 2 store)

He explains that while management stresses flexible working hours, in reality, flexibility is hard to achieve because, hired for the mid-shift from 11 am to 7 pm, he has little opportunity to get a

morning shift. He notes also that health benefits are good, but are limited to full-time workers. These examples suggest that despite the claim to freedom and flexibility, such flexibility is often used by management to allocate work according to a logic of efficiency.

Further, enchantment does not necessarily imply higher salaries or benefits compared to other low-wage retail work. Although we did not collect salary data from our respondents, publicly available aggregate data suggest that some positions are compensated slightly lower than at other prominent retail stores. While average salaries are above the minimum wage, they remain for most staff below the 'living wage' ([livingwage.mit.edu](http://livingwage.mit.edu)). Yet, according to the 2012 annual report, staff turnover was 10 percent, a figure notably low for this type of retail work (Frenkel, 2006). Although salary is distinct from positive working conditions, the persistence of below-living wage salaries in the presence of a rhetoric of progressivism and community spirit could signify that such rhetoric might have an ideological aspect. Among our respondents, we encountered complaints that increasingly fewer employees were being employed full-time and were being 'squeezed'. Despite the physical requirements of some of the positions, people come in starting at USD 10–11, which, according to one supervisor is 'nothing'.

In addition, critical stories are common from former employees, whose prolific contributions to post-employment perspectives can be found on job and career sites, consumer blogs and other internet platforms. Among those is a resignation letter by an ex-employee who claims that GG is more of a 'faux hippy Wal-Mart than an earth-and-body-friendly organic food paradise'. In his resignation letter, he identifies several of the 'fakeries' of the store. Among them are, for example, work practices that flout the organization's environmental responsibilities and management practices that mistreat and underpay employees, contradicting one of the organization's core values of supporting 'team member happiness at work'.

Oh, you sometimes intentionally order too much just to guarantee a full shelf, knowing full well the product will most likely be thrown out ... you push employees into greater responsibilities without compensation ... Often having them essentially do all the work of a higher position without the pay.

Within the store, however, such discontent was generally occluded by the pervasive air of positivity. Several interviewees, however, under the guarantee of anonymity, talked about a 'darker side' of the store's atmosphere:

Um, I guess I could be honest here, right? For the most part it depends on what department but, the front end and prepared foods there's a lot of people that are, um, in the back and stuff there's a lot of cheap labour. (Noah, team member, Area 1 store)

Sceptical about the possibility to 'express yourself' at work, an employee reflects upon the role of creative people who are able to provide service encounters that are enchanting for the customer. The store's policy of hiring artists is useful in this regard:

If they want someone to sell something they know they're going to get someone who's personable and like an actor who's used to delivering lines and being in people's faces. (Paul, store artist, Area 1 store)

Reflecting on the work itself as store artist, it becomes clear that store artists are not only there for self-expression and creativity but also for doing service work:

Oh, we need you on register four, we need you to talk to customers, we need you to do salad greens on the shelves. So they are always telling you in all directions. Working there as an artist has its merits but it also has its downside. (Diana, store artist, Area 2 store)

Doing store art turns out to be a 'day-to-day artistic production type job', a job that needs to get done, with time pressure, paid by the hour, and market-driven. Enchantment takes on a standardized, rationalized form.

## The Practices of Enchanting Work

Above, we presented internal critiques to the effect that work was the target of organizational enchantment, as in a managerial 'spell' to delude workers into ignoring the material facts of their work situation. However, following Weber and Dacin (2011) members are not only able to escape being 'cultural dupes' by launching critique from within, but they are also active in casting their own spells, taking an agentic role in the co-construction of enchantment. 'The concept of enchantment is a useful one for it implies active agency on the part of the enchanted' (Korczynski & Ott, 2006, p.912). The active practice of enchantment is ambivalent, as co-construction has been described as a form of normative control (Barker, 1999) and yet it provides (indeed constitutes) agency on the part of members. It is thus, in a sense, 'post-critical', enacting a social re-enchantment, not because members are under a deceptive spell, but because they choose to take ownership of the meanings created in the store.

The principle of enacting enchantment is that employees sense the opportunity to enchant a space that is ambiguously poised in between an unfeeling industrial logic and a lifeworld of meaning that could be animated by their actions. Thus, differently than the first reading of enchantment, members do not automatically buy into enchantment, but see their work as one of establishing it, often with the sense that the alternative is to reduce the organization to industrial monotony. The proactive nature of this aspect of enchantment is noted by Brandon 'the energy that you bring in is the energy that you give out, so just bring in a good energy.' Alexander, a New York store artist, explains:

I think it's the amount of liberties you take with what you're doing. Let's say I was making a sign for a pork chop that we have on sale, I could just write the text and just say, sale—pork chops ... Where, what if I said it's a pork chop, so I'm going to draw a pig and he's dressed in a karate outfit and he's doing a karate chop, you know, I think when you take more liberties and you get a little bit more creative with it ... to me that's more artistic than if I just had done text, so it's just limited by your imagination and the amount of time you have.

Team members recognize the store artists as contributing to a difficult-to-articulate sense of worth linked with personal effort and creativity. However, improvisation via small creative touches was not limited to store artists, but occurred in many mundane yet personally satisfying acts that seemed to locate personal agency within standardized routines. Being a team member of the specialty department, Ariane recounts:

We had the whole cheese case, and so you would slice the cheese on a cheese wire, and ... there was something from my experience about, like, doing things well. Or getting them so they looked really nice, so there was something aesthetic about it for me ... I think a lot of it was aesthetic actually. That's how I work ... another example of that would be in the line section. It's, like, turning all the bottles so that the artwork is facing out. Or pulling them forward, you know, it's like pulling the stocks forward.

Beyond artistically stocking shelves, service encounters serve as opportunities to express individuality while showing individualized attention to customers:

I meet a lot of people here too, people that are regulars, they would literally wait in my line, even though the person in front of them has a lot of stuff, and they would wait for me, so they can chat. Like, that guy just passing, and we just fist-bumped, he's been coming in for three years, and I know the certain value of a relationship in a way. (Aiden, team member, Area 1 store)

In other examples, organizational members attempt to cross social value spheres, creating links between work and life. For example, in one store we saw an exhibition featuring local artists. The store artist recounts how he came up with the idea to turn the store into a gallery space:

I have several friends who are artists in the community and throughout [the local area] and I just thought, we have this space, why don't we put some beautiful art up and reach out to the community and let's educate our customers about different artists that live in the community and work and give artists a place to exhibit their work for free. (Daniel, store artist, Area 1 store)

Despite the management's emphasis on sales per square, we found many similar cases, both among store artists and non-artists, of creative uses of store space. In one example, Brian commented 'There's musicians that work here that actually, on certain Sundays, they can actually bring their pianos here and play.' Similarly, Tamara noted that she had met colleagues from other stores via musical connections. 'He brought his tuba in one time, so then he played it. I said, let me hear it. So, you know, it's all good.'

These activities not only give employees space to display their outside creative talent, the organization also actively implements forms of recognition with prizes that are valued by employees, many of whom have artistic aspirations despite not working as store artists (for example, team members who participated in the music contest among employees).

The encouragement of everyday creative activities involves complicating, hybridizing or even subverting straightforward meanings through creative appropriations. The effect of rethinking store actions in employee-driven ways is to create an aura or distance between the 'naive' reading of, for example, a display or service interaction and its recontextualized meaning (e.g. Gellner, 1975). The effect of such enchantment does not have to be subversive, but can be consistent with organizational values; it highlights the polysemy of the work, and thereby creates both a sense of the complexity of the object and the authorship of the artist.

Similarly, the complexity and aura of authored works can arise as employees' ways to use limits on creativity productively, as ways to test new forms of expression and to frame their creativity.

I'm making things I wouldn't normally make in my own studio. I'm not going to build a carousel for the heck of it. I paint jellyfish outside of work, so ... I wouldn't normally be doing this type of work but it's exciting to push the boundaries and see, hey, if I have all the options in the world, what would I do to make this one wine display exciting? Or yams? You know, we have, I can't even say it, but, I want to hold your yam, it has, like, the Beatles, but as yams ... so you can get kind of quirky and fun with that kind of stuff. (Amber, store artist, Area 2 store)

Amber is simultaneously finding a space for expression, conforming to organizational limits, and creating a charming store environment. Store limits on creativity are ambivalent in cases like these, both constraining and facilitating creative events. Workers may be not only complicit, but authors of their own enchantment. As Tamara put it, 'In a normal supermarket you have to be a robot – here we can be our own robots.'

This astounding turn of phrase encapsulates the difficulty of theorizing alienation when work is both enchanted by and for workers. This team member was presumably not aware that the 'robots' usage had been previously used in organization theory, first in Hochschild's (1983) study of



emotional labour, and later in van Maanen's (1991) study of Disney. Both studies, crucially, frame 'going robot' as something *imposed upon* workers, reflecting traditional critiques of rationalization. A critical theory of emancipation at work would have to deal with difficult questions – 'emancipation from whom, for what?' – when workers take pride in being their *own* robots.

## Discussion

Emergent forms of service work can be understood as using enchantment, a polyvalent concept that both promises the restitution of meaningful work and yet begs a critique perspective. To maintain the dialectic quality of enchantment, rather than treating the multiple interpretations of the empirical material as competing theories, we juxtaposed them in a multi-layered reading, allowing their coexistence in the composite notion of enchanting work. This resulting concept thus reflects, as some have noted (e.g. Gellner, 1975), both a form of critique against a disenchanted modern workplace, and as a buttress that organizations build against such critique.

By locating enchantment in the work domain, as an aspect of production in addition to consumption, we distinguish three related moments of enchantment, influencing workers' meaning-making, enabling management control, and co-opting workers into producing enchantment for themselves and their customers.<sup>3</sup> These three levels, while analytically and theoretically distinct, interpenetrate each other in complex and nuanced ways. The notion of 'enchanting work' thus operates at distinct levels of agency, allowing us to describe the workplace accordingly at three levels, namely, that of meaning, ideology and co-constitution.

Enchanting work is characterized by the juxtaposition of what appears natural (i.e. meaning), what has been done to make it appear that way (i.e. ideology), and what performative actions reproduce this naturalized state (i.e. co-constitution). Social theorists have struggled with the question of whether to critique the illusion of enchantment versus taking seriously the magic often felt by participants themselves. For instance, while Gell (1999) adopts a 'methodological atheism', remaining disenchanted so as to launch critique, Taussig (2010) takes seriously enchanting processes without thereby claiming their authenticity. Our approach, following the latter, addresses enchanting work naturalistically, as fun work (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2014), as a form of ideological control veiling the brutal reality of mass retail (Grugulis & Bozkurt, 2011), and as a collaborative attempt by team members to weave meaning out of the ambiguities left in-between the first two standpoints. Thus, similarly to enchantment processes themselves, our concept of enchanting work operates at the levels of material object (the job), reflexive distance (the critique) and symbolic practice (the enactment of the work).

The enchanting work perspective offers interlinked contributions to the organizational literature on work. First, we offer a new construct that addresses seemingly incompatible readings of work situations, reflecting the ambivalence of felt experiences that characterize new 'worlds of work'. Second, we link work and consumption cultures, an interface whose neglect has made it difficult to tie work to the foundational social theoretic concept of enchantment. Finally, extending this last point, we address the extent to which, through contemporary work, notions of (dis)enchantment are *produced* from within contemporary organizations as forms of the marketization of social relations.

First, while recent literature has signaled a new era of capitalism based on knowledge, creativity, and self-expression (e.g. Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005), critical scholarship calls into doubt whether service work, mundane and efficiency-oriented, is really so distinct from industrial labour processes (e.g. Fleming, 2009; Warhurst et al., 2009), begging further research as to the nature of service work, beyond current approaches. For instance, emotional and aesthetic labour have been characterized as exploitation and inauthenticity (Hochschild, 1983, 2011), but also as potential

sources for genuine positive affect (Elfenbein, 2007), two very different interpretations. Alternatively, enchanting work holds out the possibility of coexisting positive and critical interpretations of work, highlighting the ambivalence of workplace mystification.

Enchanting work differs from emotional and aesthetic labour by focusing not on simply portraying images, but creating a holistic ethos that gestures toward subverting efficiency logics for relational and expressive values. As such, enchanting work elaborates, at the micro level, global changes in work ethics described by Florida (2002) as the 'creative ethos' or Lloyd (2010) as 'neo-bohemian culture'. Further, enchantment relates to the ambivalence of critique by showing how adhesion to organizational norms takes place through an ethic of performative proactivity, despite the presence of critique. Thus, moving from whether work offers 'true' self-expression, we explore how workers come to see, reflect upon, and performatively enact enchanted spaces. Work can be experienced, in the words of one worker, as 'a magical place' yet not be incompatible with exploitation, *even if* the worker is aware of this exploitation. Such is the irony of ideology that functions despite disbelief in the underlying truth of its claims (Zizek, 1983).

Second, we describe how enchantment, associated with consumption practices (Gellner, 1975; Ritzer, 2005) becomes transferred into the work sphere, affecting work experiences. The free interchange between consumption and work stands in contrast to views of service where management struggles to standardize work practices despite the 'social' nature of services (Bowen & Schneider, 1988). To deal with the ambiguity and potential autonomy of service roles, organizations impose standardized uniforms, distribute standardized interaction scripts, or select employees based on particular aesthetic looks. The standardization logic (the McDonaldization strategy) demands that employees act according to formalized patterns (Islam & Zyphur, 2007), rather than expressively or spontaneously. In the extreme, service aspects of work may be denied altogether, and work defined as purely mechanical (Sallaz, 2010). In such 'closed' strategies, deviations from a set image are discouraged, promoting conformity. In more sophisticated models, the standardization logic takes on spectacular or fantastic properties, where enchantment is directed at the customer, but the cold mechanistic reality remains for workers (van Maanen, 1991), left to conjure pre-established fantasies in ordered ways.

Some organizations, however, wager on opening up, rather than standardizing, behavioural and aesthetic norms for workers. The organization makes a bona fide attempt to create authentic, expressive forms of community, where identity and meaning are intrinsic to value creation (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001), and the business charges a premium for 'real' food and human interaction. In this way, *enchantment is the business model*. In such cases, smooth social relations are not only paths to efficiency; rather, a positive social atmosphere, a local sense of community and connection, are the products themselves, and this requires allowing the barrier between producers and consumers to become fluid. Seen this way, once consumption and production are considered as moments in the wider *social reproduction* (Graeber, 2004), it is difficult to uphold a strict dichotomy between the two. Enchanting work is precisely the attempt to use the fact of social reproduction itself as a source of value, monetizing the experience of authentic community. Putting the question as such reveals the paradoxical situation of trying to overcome an alienated workplace through, in effect, *selling non-alienation*.

Third, while focusing on a single organization, some recent work (e.g. Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Du Gay & Morgan, 2013; Fleming, 2009) points to wider social theoretic debates touched upon by the above point. Following Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), we suggest that, rather than challenging market logics, enchanting work extends markets into community spaces of mutual recognition and value. Enchantment may reflect firms' attempts to appropriate socially prestigious symbols and values, but because these may be valued precisely because of their non-market aspects, the organization must find ways to internalize these aspects. Acknowledging that such

attempts constitute new forms of control, it is conceivable that new forms of work may yet hold emancipatory potential for employees.

This dual aspect of enchantment lays bare ambivalences within contemporary labour scholarship. Critical management scholars argue that claims of authenticity and expression entrench managerial control (e.g. Fleming, 2009), leading to exploitation beyond traditional labour. Yet, Zelizer (2005) notes that marketizing social relations can signal social recognition and value, rather than alienation and estrangement, and can have both liberating and alienating effects. Some have claimed that immaterial labour holds emancipatory potential because workers embody the productive forces of labour directly, rather than being mediated by objects/commodities (Hardt & Negri, 2000). Enchanting work echoes this ambivalence in invoking critical perspectives while allowing that workers may find genuine self-expression in enchanting work.

## Limitations and Future Research

Enchanting work, however, involves conceptual and practical difficulties. First, our choice of examining levels of reflexivity in interpretation means that we attribute degrees of critical distance to employees themselves, important for combining critical perspectives with empirical research (Boltanski, 2011), and reflexivity among study participants is central to the new spirit of capitalism informing our study (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005). Yet, the role of sensitivity to participant reflexivity in data analysis deserves more treatment than we are able to provide here. Specifically, we have described the three levels as *moments* in reflexivity, invoking the term from critical theory to avoid framing the levels as either (1) independent readings with no relation to each other, or (2) competing counter-theories referring to an underlying 'true' reading. By referring to 'moments', we suggest a (perhaps dialectical) relation between the levels by which straightforward experience of meaning gives way to ideological critique, which in turn gives way to a kind of 'post-critical' approach where employees, not naive to the sources of enchantment, enact enchantment anyway. The notion of reflexive levels contributes to understanding reflexivity by showing how varieties of critical postures are possible within a given situation. Yet, developing these levels into a full-blown theory of the moments of critical consciousness at work is beyond the current paper, and demands further work to show how critique works 'on the ground' in its diverse embodiments (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; see also Boltanski, 2011).

Second, we focus on enchantment within a supermarket because of the radical change in this setting as compared to traditional supermarkets, whose business models are based on mass standardization, efficient logistics and tight management of low-wage, part-time workers (e.g. Frenkel, 2006). This contrast makes the current setting a salient and surprising example, yet begs extension into high-end professional areas (e.g. Yu, Kim, & Restubog, 2015), like medicine, law and cultural production. Indeed, the current case mixed store artists with mundane jobs, such that the boundaries between high- and low-end service work may be particularly blurred in our setting. We do not claim that enchanting work is *unique* to new organizational models such as Genuine Groceries, but that it represents an attempt to expand or redistribute enchantment *into new spheres of work relations*.

Relatedly, we also leave aside 'macro' differences regarding transformations of the service sector as a whole, focusing instead on an exemplary organization so as to illustrate the 'enchanting work' construct. Our introduction may suggest emerging views of services moving along an historical trajectory, from more traditional forms of control to symbolic forms, such as enchanting work. This trajectory seems consistent with some literatures, from the McDonaldization to Disneyfication concepts (Ritzer, 2000), to the renewed focus on normative control in services (e.g. Fleming, 2009; Fleming & Sturdy, 2011). Yet whether elements of enchanting work have been ubiquitous across the history of services, or the extent to which they cross-cut other, non-retail

service sectors, remains open for empirical exploration. Here, we present enchanting work as one instance of a qualitative shift in the emerging spirit of work.

Third, focusing on service work per se, we did not dwell on the sources of individual or group-based differences in reactions to organizational policies. Doubtless, some employees took more naturalistic views while others were more critical, and among the more critical, reactions differed between the despondent and cynical versus the more playfully ironic or improvisational. These differences are interesting, and deserve follow-up regarding the paths these individuals took in their responses to organizational enchantment. Further, it is likely that such differences depend on work specialization and occupational background, with some groups more quick to critique than others. While theorizing such differences is beyond our scope, we believe such work is important to theory-building around workplace enchantment.

More generally, we acknowledge the complexity of enchanting work across roles and functions, where the focus on multiple meanings creates opportunities to link service work to larger questions around the nature of enchantment and disenchantment in contemporary market societies. As discussion proliferates around the future of work, our wager is that forms of enchantment will play an increasing role in shaping our understanding of what work is, and whose purposes it serves.

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### Notes

The authors' names appear in alphabetical order, reflecting equal contribution.

1. Genuine Groceries is a pseudonym as are all respondents' names.
2. To protect anonymity, we report stores according to general area, including Los Angeles metropolitan area, New York tri-state area (Washington DC, Boston and Toronto) and London, UK.
3. We thank an anonymous reviewer for help in clarifying the current framing in these terms.

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