

Introduction to Symposium on the Frontiers of Labor Process Theory

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Published online: 26 May 2009
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Although Karl Marx first conceptualized the labor process in *Capital*, the explosion of interest in labor process theory (LPT) as an entry point for the study of work did not occur until the last quarter of the 20th century. With the 1974 publication of Harry Braverman's landmark *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, Braverman demonstrated how the labor process was crucial to understanding capitalist accumulation and the production of surplus value in the late 20th century. By the late 1970s, LPT had blossomed into a flourishing field with numerous U.S. and British academics both extending and revising Braverman's theses. Thirty years later, LPT has taken off in numerous directions which were initially unforeseen by the field's early theorists. Along the way an established international conference and book series emerged which presented (and continues to present) the latest research and theoretical developments in LPT.

Thirty-five years after the publication of *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, this symposium on LPT surveys the developments in the field as LPT has matured, approaching middle age. In this symposium, three of the world's top LPT scholars have provided significant contributions analyzing the field's historical stages. In the first essay, Dr. Paul Thompson, Professor and Head of the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Strathclyde Business School and Dr. Chris Smith, Professor and Head of the School of Management, Royal Holloway, University of London, argue that LPT has continually revitalized itself when confronted by a number of practical and intellectual challenges such as the competition between capitals; the competition between workers as owners of labor power; the clash between technology and people; and the use of new and established employer strategies of extracting more labor power through such things, for example, as deskilling, upskilling, automation, movement of capital, substitution of labor, industrial engineering, and ideological or hegemonic struggles over identity, culture and/or values. In the second essay, Dr. Stephen Ackroyd, Professor of Organisational Analysis at the Lancaster University Management School, provides us with an interpretive history of the developments of LPT in Britain, with brief discussions of developments in the field outside

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of the United Kingdom, while demonstrating the resilience of LPT and how it has come to occupy a central position in social science scholarship at the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

Finally, this Perspectives section concludes with a review of J. Marques, S. Dhiman, and R. King's *Spirituality in the Workplace: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How to Make it Work for You* (Fawnskin, CA: Personhood Press, 2007). In discussing the major arguments presented in this book, Ms. Jamie M. Steele and Dr. Emily E. Bullock, Assistant Professor, of the Department of Psychology at the University of Southern Mississippi, discuss why workplace spirituality is a topic of increasing importance for both employers and employees and why it should be taken seriously throughout the world at this time.

Other symposiums on important employment relations topics are planned for future issues of the *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*. If any of the journal's readers have suggestions for symposiums on specific topics or would like to write reviews on books related to employment relations, please do not hesitate to contact me. I hope that you enjoy this symposium and book review and find them most illuminating.

Victor G. Devinatz, Editor of "Perspectives" Section