1. Introduction

An attempt to combine the conceptual premises of critical theory and emotion regulation may not appear to be an obvious choice, less so a compatible one for the dogmatic purist. After all, many readers will contend that critical theory and emotion regulation are largely embedded in sociological or psychological thought and history, respectively. This distinction goes beyond disciplinary boundaries; it is, rather, indicative of disparate ontological and epistemological assumptions about the world, as a comparison between key studies in each domain readily reveals (cf. Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Denny and Ochsner, 2014; Gross, 1998; Horkheimer, 1937/76). And yet, the combination of these traditions, and an exploration of the intellectual space between them, is what I attempt to explore in this book.

No matter how theoretically and practically exciting this exploration might be, it does come at a likely cost; there will be necessarily some scholars protesting that each domain – in its own right – has not received the prerequisite depth and scope to fully cover all angles of the extant literatures. I beg to differ from that criticism, since an all-encompassing treatment of the literature invariably implies traversing the same ground again, when in fact the exploration of the intellectual space between critical theory and emotion regulation offers – so I hope – fresh and stimulating ideas. Acknowledging that this reflects a more pragmatic approach, my aim in this book is to advocate the idea of emancipating emotion at work by enabling workers to regulate their emotions differently toward that end vis-à-vis the emotional repression they experience at work. In terms of emancipation, many critical theorists argue that it is one key intention of critical theory (Connerton, 1976; Geuss, 1981).

While I scrutinize the key constructs in much more detail in Chapter 2, in the spirit of greater conceptual clarity, it is important to offer a preliminary sketch of how I shall apply the terms ‘emancipation’ and ‘emotion regulation’ in this book. To begin with,
‘to emancipate’ (from the Latin *emancipatus*) refers to a setting ‘free from control’, or declaring ‘(someone) free’, or to ‘give up one’s authority over’, often in the context of parental control according to the *Online Etymological Dictionary*. Consistent with this, Alvesson and Willmott (1992) define emancipation as ‘the process through which individuals and groups become freed from repressive social . . . conditions, in particular those that place socially unnecessary restrictions upon the development and articulation of human consciousness’ (p. 432). Through this book I shall insist that ‘emotion’ constitutes a prominent tool of *repressive social control* in terms of how workers both experience and express it. It requires some groundwork to explain this idea in a way that is necessary and appropriate for an introductory chapter, so I hope readers will bear with me on the following pages.

By using critical theory as a guiding framework toward greater worker emancipation, I aim to move forward the conversation around the ‘so what?’ of emotion in the context of work. That is, it is only when we begin to think about how we talk about and regulate emotion at different levels of analysis within organizations that we can ask *why* and *how* emotion represents a tool of repressive social control. This is a pivotal question, as different levels of analysis (e.g., ‘management’ or the ‘organization’ versus the individual worker) entail different goals and different interpretations of outcomes, especially but not limited to the context of emotion research (Lindebaum and Jordan, 2012, 2014).

To explicate this point, consider the possibility of being shamed into better performance at work by co-workers or management placing a cabbage on your desk every Friday if you fail to meet your financial targets. As reported in the news, this practice was employed by managers at two HBOS branches in Scotland (BBC, 2005; but see also Fineman, 2003). Likewise, shame – or, more specifically, the avoidance thereof – is used in Japanese business settings to encourage extra effort and performance in managers. What we can see here is that some organizations aim for enhanced worker performance by using shame as a tool of social repression, while the failing worker incurs psychological suffering, for instance depression (see Martin et al., 2006). Thus, the same emotion generates different outcomes depending on the level of analysis considered.

But how exactly does this example (more are to follow for all emotions of interest here) constitute an act of emotional repression?
For this to be answered, we need to understand what the social function of shame is (both at work and in society). Felt shame is related to negative self-evaluations based upon actual or anticipated depreciation of valued others due to a violation of standards (Creed et al., 2014). From the social functional perspective, shame motivates behaviours that centre on dealing with endangered ‘positive’ self-views (de Hooge et al., 2010), often in the form of approach behaviours (e.g., reparative actions following one’s violation of moral standards). Sometimes, it may be that we have transgressed important moral principles held dear by co-workers. As a result, we can experience shame as self-accusation, and perhaps open up to offer a confession or apology to restore a damaged personal relationship with someone close to us (Solomon, 1993). However, shame can also (and more perfidiously) be employed by management or the organization to endanger one’s ‘positive’ self-view simply because one has not met performance targets at work, as the cabbage example illustrates. Behind this is the motivation (implicit or explicit) to ‘teach’ workers to be fearful of that shaming experience recurring. It is, therefore, evident that shame is one key emotion to maintaining social control. As Scheff (1990, p. 75) notes, we experience social control as ‘so compelling because of emotions’, especially the prospect of ‘punishment’ in the form of, for instance, being publicly shamed.

Because being regularly shamed by others incurs psychological suffering for the shamed ‘failing worker’ in the form of depression, an ability to regulate emotions differently to avoid this suffering from depression is an initial step of utmost practical importance. This becomes clearer once we consider how emotion regulation is defined, namely as ‘the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions’ (Gross, 1998, p.275; italics added). But it would be unfortunate to assume that emotion regulation represents one monolithic psychological mechanism. It is vital to remain mindful of the fact that there are several distinguishable emotional regulation strategies (and associated sub-tactics) that have significant bearings upon this book.

While I further detail the relevant sub-tactics in Chapter 3, suffice it to say that, at a broader level, Gross (1998) distinguishes between antecedent-focused and response-focused emotion regulation. These two sets of regulatory strategies can be differentiated by the temporal point at which they primarily (but not exclusively) affect how an
Emancipation through emotion regulation at work

emotion is generated. For instance, antecedent-focused strategies occur before a complete emotion and its associated patterns of cognitive, physiological and behavioural responding are induced. By contrast, response-focused regulation strategies are induced once an emotion has been experienced and the associated cognitive, physiological and behavioural responses have been completely generated. These two strategies are worth noting at this stage as they differentially inform subsequent theorizing presented in this book, especially in how they and (some of) their distinct sub-tactics apply to the specific emotions of interest here. I will revisit these strategies in Chapter 3, where their relevance becomes more evident in relation to each emotion examined in this book and how each of these emotions relates to the two pathways to emotional control depicted in Chapter 2.

In relation to the cabbage example and the experience of shame, the definition of emotion regulation stated above implies exercising a degree of choice in influencing whether or not workers follow the appraisal pattern associated with shame detailed above (i.e., negative self-evaluations based upon actual or anticipated depreciation of valued others due to a violation of standards). Since belongingness constitutes a basic human need (Gagné and Deci, 2005), the powerful effect of being shamed in this way is immediately evident.

Being able to regulate one’s emotions differently at work – as a result of better understanding its underlying processes – can then be enlisted as a guide toward an emancipated life. Key here is (and I shall revisit this point later) that the attribution of blame for the ostensibly failed performance is negated and that the accused worker understands the difference between shame elicited by legitimate blame – e.g., if he/she has violated a significant moral standard, such as the racist juror in 12 Angry Men see Lindebaum and Gabriel, 2016) – and shame elicited by purely artificial and external situations (i.e., illegitimate and maladaptive shame) that serves the interests of management by instilling fear not to underperform again at work. In other words, emotion regulation becomes the vehicle through which critical theory affords both an emancipatory quest away from and a close scrutiny of the repressive qualities of emotion when they are abused as tools of social control.

I shall argue that management scholars and others deprive themselves, both theoretically and practically, of considerable opportunity by ignoring what critical theory (with its inherent aim of
emancipation) can bring to the literature on emotion regulation, and vice versa. In a way, it is rather fascinating to note, from a more pragmatic perspective, that critical theory and the literature on emotion regulation have enjoyed such an enduring blind spot for each other. If there is under-explored potential for each tradition to inform each other, what, then, are the theoretical and practical arguments to support this claim?5

In terms of what emotion regulation can meaningfully add to the notion of emancipation, I wish to advance the thesis that remaining within the traditional confines of critical theorizing implies, by necessity, a lack of progress toward the emancipation of workers in contemporary workplaces relying so heavily on emotion as a repressive tool (or vehicle of social control). By remaining within the traditional confines of critical theorizing, I mean an over-appreciation of structural and relational concerns relegating workers largely to a life of passivity and paucity of agentic impulses (Geuss, 1981; Marcuse, 1968/2009). I would go further still by arguing that the notion of emancipation and the conceptualization of workers as passive pieces in a larger jigsaw of social relations are fundamentally at variance. In my view, the evidence demonstrating the capacity of individuals to act in agentic, self-efficacious and self-determining ways provides sufficient justification to underline this internal inconsistency. For instance, while Bandura (2000, p. 75) admits that we ‘are partly the products of [our] environments’, he adds that ‘by selecting, creating, and transforming [our] environmental circumstances, [we] are producers of environments as well. This agentic capability enables [us] to influence the course of events and to take a hand in shaping [our] lives’.6

However, it would be incomplete to suggest that only emotion regulation illuminates a hitherto underexposed angle in the theorizing around emancipation. I speculate here that we can gain a better and deeper understanding of emotion regulation if we were to appreciate emancipation as one (but not exclusive) moral endpoint as to why we regulate our emotions. This would appear plausible, since the ultimate end of emancipation is to enable individuals in society to modify their lives by nurturing in them a sense of understanding and self-knowledge of their social conditions which can then function as the foundation for such modification (Fay, 1987). However, on the surface, one might insist that the ability to regulate emotion adaptively presents a mere psychological buffer
Emancipation through emotion regulation at work

to protect workers from undue emotional strain and expectations at work. After all, to simply regulate emotions differently so as to limit the impact of the emotional event on the worker will not necessarily change that which imposes these emotional strains and expectations – e.g., service jobs requiring the display of a happy face (see Grandey et al., 2015; Hülsheger and Schewe, 2011). In fact, one might go further to argue that it might even be ethically imperative to foster that kind of better emotion regulation ability among affected workers. As an initial step, I am sympathetic to this contention, for in doing so workers can start working toward greater emotional emancipation at work. In the longer term, however, the viability of this perspective starts to disintegrate once we endeavour to ascertain the normative endpoints that guide and orient why we regulate emotion a priori. As Charland (2011) observes, ‘the “how” and the means of emotion regulation always logically presuppose certain ends, which in the final instance prescribe “why” emotions should be regulated one way rather than another’ (p. 84; italics added). With a keen eye on this why consideration, the question then becomes this: given those working conditions which impose the emotional strain upon workers, why would they voluntarily and continually cooperate in their own repression? Why should they – in the long run – regulate their emotions in one way (the detrimental one) rather than another (the beneficial one) to adopt the question raised by Charland above? The point I wish to convey is that, although workers cannot always quit their jobs due to a variety of reasons (sustaining one’s life or that of one’s family is surely a most pressing one), after prolonged exposure to emotional pressure there will be at some point the irresistible desire to change one’s situation, which in itself is already a way to regulate one’s emotions – i.e., by selecting another situation which is less emotionally draining (see Gross, 1998). In light of this, the theoretical utility of applying the aims of critical theory to the field of emotion regulation manifests itself. Critical theory does this by providing the end to which emotion regulation might be applied; that is, workers’ emancipation from repressive emotional conditions.

However, if critical theory wishes to remain faithful to its aim to emancipate, it must relax its conceptual faithfulness to social ontologies, for otherwise it remains a fancy intellectual edifice with reduced practical relevance and potential. Likewise, if psychologists are serious about emotion regulation as a predictor of health outcomes (Davidson et al., 2007; Denny and Ochsner, 2014; Gross and John,
2003; Gross and Muñoz, 1995), they must engage more with socio-
logical issues, such as socio-emotional norms and work patterns, as
causes of ill-health (see Mason, 2015, for recent first-hand accounts
of this). This has only been recently insinuated (Gross, 2013), but
requires much more careful consideration of the normative elements
reflected in critical theory.

1.1 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL
RELEVANCE

To better understand the theoretical and practical relevance of this
book, it is useful to briefly elaborate further upon the intersections
between the literatures on emancipation and emotion regulation. For
instance, Geuss (1981) states that a successful critical theory reflects a
transition from an initial state of delusion, bondage and frustration
(hereafter referred to generally as ‘suffering’) to a final state of
knowledge, freedom and satisfaction (hereafter referred to generally
as ‘liberation’). He continues that a typical critical theory comprises
three elements, succinctly summarized as:

1. an element showing that the transition between the initial and
final state is *theoretically possible*;
2. an element highlighting that the transition between the initial
and final state is *practically necessary*; and
3. an element asserting that the transition between the initial and
final state is feasible only *if the worker subscribes fully* to the idea
of emancipation as espoused by critical theory.

In relation to the aim and scope of this book, this entails that
emotion regulation can serve as the psychological construct to help
accomplish the transition between the initial and final state when
that which is repressive is emotion. That is, this focus shows that
it is *theoretically possible* to complete that transition. In addition,
the suffering of workers in response to emotional strains at work
renders it *practically necessary* to advocate the idea of emancipating
emotion through regulating emotions differently in order to alleviate
emotional suffering (see also Mumby and Putnam, 1992). By emo-
tional suffering, I mean the adverse psychological and physiological
consequences that workers experience at work as a result of emotion
constituting sophisticated vehicles of repression and social control. In so positing, I note that the adverse psychological and physiological consequences are not exclusively caused by the imperative to engage in ‘emotional labour’ and the associated suppression of emotion, which will be the presumptive ‘prime suspect’ for many readers. In Chapter 2, I expand further upon this. Finally, it requires the presence of workers who embrace the need for greater emancipation as a result of emotional repression at work.

In terms of timing, the initiation of this book project is not a whimsical or random act. Instead, synthesizing the disparate intellectual domains of critical theory and emotion regulation in the context of management studies now is germane for several reasons. First, I shall insist that there are emotional mechanisms now at play that constitute the very repressive social conditions that critical theory is typically concerned with. In addition to the cabbage example stated earlier, it has been known for some time that employees’ displays of ‘friendly demeanours’ are related to job descriptions and consequent rewards (i.e., wages). However, it is well documented that engaging in emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983), which requires workers to regulate their emotions according to the display rules imposed by organizations, can have detrimental consequences for them, such as the experience of burn-out and exhaustion (Grandey et al., 2015; Hülsheger and Schewe, 2011). However, a more recent and more ominous development is that failure to display such friendly demeanours entails that the entire shift in a fast-food restaurant might lose out on its bonus (as opposed to a single worker being reprimanded by management for failing to be ‘happy’ at work). Just because one worker was seen as ‘grumpy’, all co-workers would be punished (Mason, 2015), implying that the grumpy worker is likely to experience or is being subjected to intense emotional pressure (e.g., being faced by angry colleagues and the fear that might entail). Although this contemporary work example is testament to the highly repressive conditions that emerge when emotions constitute tools of control, prior studies on ‘concertive control’ offer similar arguments (e.g., Barker, 1993).

However, at the time critical theory was first articulated, and over intervening years, emotion research across disciplines and including critical theory was barely seeing the light of day. Indeed, the notion of emotional labour was not even given intellectual birth yet at that time (i.e., being first articulated in 1983 by Hochschild). Instead,
Introduction

original and subsequent critical theorists exhibited a keen focus on reason and rationality through which the emancipated state of being can be achieved (Geuss, 1981; Marcuse, 1968/2009; but see also Alvesson and Willmott, 1992). Of note, critical theorists like Horkheimer and Adorno struggled with the limitations of human reasons as drivers of emancipation, while they were aware of them (see Alvesson and Willmott, 1992).

Since emancipation is not a given, but involves an oftentimes painful struggle as workers negotiate more internal emotional processes (e.g., fear of being excluded) and external behavioural expectations (e.g., behaviour geared toward social acceptance), the exploration of emancipation through the lens of emotion regulation may hold important theoretical and practical insights for management research. Indeed, it appears rather curious that the role of emotion (and associated processes) does not feature more explicitly in the exegeses of critical theory (but see Fay, 1987, for an exception). Further to this, domination – as conceived by more contemporary critical theorists – rests upon, *inter alia*, the internalization of norms (with its implicit ‘emotive’ content) and emotional control (Murray and Ozanne, 2006). Further still, exploring the topic in the context of work is highly germane as we spend most of our waking hours during the day at work. In this respect, I have argued before that the expression of emotions is progressively cast into a simplified mould, reflecting the restricted range of those emotions whose display is desired by the organization (Lindebaum, 2012), adding Fineman’s (2001) observation that the scale of such organizational interventions is ‘grand’. This, in turn, has significant consequences for if and how we can lower our guards to let shine through how we really feel and think at work. I am reminded of the work by Cederström and Fleming (2012), who provocatively argue that ‘henceforth, our authenticity is no longer a retreat from the mandatory fakeness of the office, but the very medium through which work squeezes the life out of us’ (p. 36).

And finally, as I have already acknowledged in the Preface, it is only after having pored over myriad books and articles that I am now better able to see through how emotions can be enlisted as a means of social control, and the consequences that we experience at the individual level in response to this. But simply being better at this does not mean there are no lapses occurring any more. True to the spirit of critical theory, however, I am comfortable in noting
that the current state is concretely more preferable than the original one.

1.2 BOUNDARIES AND CLARIFICATIONS

Like many other ideas or topics before, the theorizing presented in this book is subject to a number of boundary conditions, or requires several points of clarification to delineate its theoretical scope. Appreciating these in the formulation of new ideas is pivotal to ensure that the conditions under which new theoretical ideas are supposed to hold are clearly communicated to the readership. Below I elaborate briefly on:

- the subset of critical theory that inspired this book;
- the scope and limits of emancipation;
- the way I employ the notion of ‘normative’ here;
- the preliminary range of discrete emotions that qualify as prime suspects for repressive/social control;
- the level of analysis at which I situate this book; and
- the writing style which I shall pursue in this book.

I note that the latter aspect is not a vain or idle addition, but rather a matter of significant theoretical and thought-generative ramification.

1.2.1 Which Subset of Critical Theory?

To begin with, critical theory has been influenced to a significant extent by members of the Frankfurt School. Although critical theory serves as the overarching descriptor, it is erroneous to presume that the critical theorists of that era have produced a monolithic corpus of intellectual heritage. It is neither within the scope of this book nor is it its purpose to contrast these distinctive positions. Interested readers can consult existing introductions on the evolving positions of major contributors within the School (Connerton, 1976; Held, 1980). Likewise, commentators suggest that critical theory lacks definite meaning, as it has been used in many different ways since the heyday of the School (Murray and Ozanne, 2006). Instead, I shall limit myself to exploring the notion of ‘criticism’ as one form or critique that emerged in the tradition of critical theory.
There are at least three characteristics of criticism that have a strong bearing on the contents that follow. First, it focuses on something particular and concrete, rather than something that is anonymous. Thus, it explicitly recognizes the existence of a subject. Second, this notion of criticism is applied to ‘objects of experience whose “objectivity” is called into question; [it] supposes that there is a degree of inbuilt deformity which masquerades as reality’ (Connerton, 1976, p.20). The aim is thus to remove this distortion, thereby permitting the liberation of that which has been distorted. It is for this reason that emancipation is inherently entwined with the notion of criticism and liberation. And third, criticism seeks to change or even remove those conditions of what is often referred to as false consciousness (Geuss, 1981; Marcuse, 1968/2009). In so doing, criticism seeks to render visible that which has been hidden previously. Therefore, it can be the catalyst for critical self-reflection to occur, whether for workers or groups. Throughout this book, when references to critical theory are made, it is this angle of critical theory that should be borne in mind.

1.2.2 Scope and Limitations of Emancipation

As far as the scope and limitations of emancipation are concerned, there are several possible angles to be explored. First, as stated before, for a critical theory to be confirmed it is crucial that workers must agree that their ‘former’ state was that of suffering (along the lines already defined). Also, the ‘present’ state must be one of increased (emotional) freedom and satisfaction, coupled with a more accurate view of the workers’ true interests and needs. So, while critical theory may try to help initiate the laudable goal of emancipation, it cannot be precluded that workers’ first taste of emancipation may be too terrifying for them to endure and, consequently, prompt them to conclude that they were better off in their original state (Geuss, 1981). After all, Sartrean thought holds that the burden of autonomy (emotional here) is not light (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992).

There is a second angle to be recognized here: rather than being a gift bestowed upon workers by management, emancipation is not a given, but requires the ‘(often painful) resistance to, and overcoming of, socially unnecessary restrictions, such as fear of failure’ (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, p.433). And while it is known that the lack of exposure to painful memories and events deprives individuals from...
experiencing both intrinsically valuable and important memories that are axiomatic for personal or emotional growth (Lindebaum and Raftopoulou, 2014), the fear of failing en route to emancipation might prevent some workers from accepting the emancipatory invitation in the first place. This comment is not offered lightly at this juncture; earlier critical theorists, such as Erich Fromm, had a keen understanding that it lies in a person’s innate nature that he or she does not want to be free. Writing in *Escape from Freedom* (1941), he argued that man wants to be controlled by a higher authority, and will be fearful of freedom.

Third, if workers are happy already at *this moment in time*, they are not a fit subject for a critical theory (Fay, 1987). In all cases, the goal of critical theory to emancipate would be disconfirmed. Therefore, for emancipation to be successful, workers must not be emotionally inhibited (due to fear of failure) to begin with, and must regard the new state of existence as preferable to the original one. What must be crucially borne in mind is that the emancipatory journey does not only represent a formidable struggle for the worker. Instead, unrestricted emancipation and free thinking stands in often stark contrast to present knowledge about effective and productive organizing (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992). If this assumption is correct, how then might dissatisfaction with the status quo prompt workers to alter their conditions both within and in relation to social structures? I will revisit this question later in Chapters 3 and 4.

As a further point of clarification, the way I enlist the term ‘emancipation’ should not be confused with the perhaps deceptive notion of existential liberation, where workers are encouraged to seek ‘opportunities for the fulfillment of their needs’ (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, p. 433) – for as long as this fulfilment coexists with desirable organizational consequences such as performance. Likewise, it should not be confounded with the notion of neo-normative control, where individuals seemingly have a choice to ‘be themselves’ and ‘have fun’ at work. This newer incarnation of normative control is often disguised as individual empowerment and freedom, which, in the end, are nothing but subtler ways of controlling individuals at work by way of ‘capturing their sociality, energy and “authentic” or “non-work” personalities as emotional labour’ (Fleming and Sturdy, 2011, p. 177). Instead, emancipation, as advocated here, aims to provide deeper insights into how emotions can be regulated differently in order to generate radical or assertive
worker action (cf. the case of anger in social movement studies – Jasper, 1998). It is a process – in the form of more adaptively regulating one’s emotions – that starts internally and unfolds through the sense-making processes of the workers (rather than being imposed or advocated externally by consultants and researchers, as in the case of ‘empowerment’).

Seen in this light, and bearing in mind how emotion regulation has been defined earlier, once workers understand the pathological nature of emotion repression (and how it is enlisted at work to make them behave in narrowly defined ways), they can potentially morph into ‘emotional deviants’; that is, those workers who fail or refuse to obey emotion norms. Consequently, they are often stigmatized and subjected to social controls (such as being shamed into conformity) even though, under some conditions, they can become agents of social change (Thoits, 2004).

1.2.3 How ‘Normative’ is Applied

Critical theory reflects normative aspirations; it combines empirical analysis (i.e., what is) with normative theorizing (what ought to be). The normative connotation of critical theory is most concisely expressed by Durkheim (1893/2014), who notes that only ‘because what we propose to study is above all reality, it does not follow that we should give up the idea of improving it’ (p. 4). Naturally enough, the very notion of normative theorizing is likely to prompt objections from empiricists or rationalists, who entertain the assumption of an ‘objective distance between research and practice and who believe that their research is largely free of political and moral assumptions’ (Suddaby, 2014, p. 2). But even considering how the notion of ‘normative’ is being played out among critical theorists themselves deserves scrutiny.

Let us consider, for instance, the argument that critical theory (being normative in kind) ‘claims to inform [individuals] about what interests it is rational for them to have’ (Geuss, 1981, p. 58). I argue that this thinking reflects another internal inconsistency of critical theory. With reference to facts, I can well relay to the reader what the current science says in relation to how emotion can serve as a tool of social control (and the consequent costs for workers). However, if I wanted to cast my theorizing consistent with recent works on normative theories in management studies, it is central to explicitly
recognize that there are natural limits in our role as social scientists in completing the emancipatory journey of others. We can initiate it but much less ought we to complete it, for this would run counter to the very notion of emancipation advocated here.

To elaborate: simply raising the awareness that the present repressive (emotional) condition for workers is unhealthy for them is very different from then prescribing to them what they should feel as a result of experiencing emancipation. The problem is this: we need to develop greater awareness of what ‘normative’ implies. My contention is that, as indicated previously, if normative is construed from the perspectives of researchers, then true emancipation may remain a laudable yet unfulfilled condition. To borrow from Suddaby (2014), theory can serve various ends, and normative theory may offer its own genre of theoretical claims, including examples where normative elements (such as perceptions of right and wrong and resultant action) form part of a construct’s definition. The key distinguishing feature of normative theories is that perceptions of right and wrong are reserved for actors based upon their ethical values, rather than pre-imposed by researchers (for a detailed theoretical example on ‘moral anger’, see Lindebaum and Geddes, 2016).12

Put differently, it seems imperative that we create space for workers to interpret the consequences of an initiated or ongoing emancipation through their own sense-making and life histories. I argue that both the challenge and opportunity to approach critical theory with renewed vigour is to be explicit in appreciating the ethics and values of employees at work as an engine that constructs reality rather than as a camera that captures it (MacKenzie, 2006). This has important consequences for critical theorists, for it illustrates the limits of their involvement in initiating, accompanying and concluding the emancipatory journey of workers. In the context of this book, I shall claim that the involvement of a critical theorist must be limited to the initial phase or, more exactly, to provide the catalyst inducing the kind of critical insights from which emancipation can then blossom. Although I am sympathetic to the ideas of some critical theorists, I am not convinced that there is sufficient differentiation in terms of these different stages in extant critical theorizing. For instance, Fay (1987, pp.82–3) argues that:

Critical social science arises out of, and speaks to, situations of social unhappiness, a situation which it interprets as the result both of the
ignorance of these experiencing these feelings and of their domination by others. It is this experience of unhappiness which is the wedge a critical theory uses to justify its entrance into the lives of those it seeks to enlighten and emancipate.

I agree in principle with the intentions raised by Fay, but I also point out that it does not indicate whether the critical theorist is supposed to conclude the emancipatory journey of repressed workers. Therefore, by placing the values and ethics of workers centre stage, we must exercise caution in professing to be able to exactly predict what kind of consequences that initial critical insight might entail for them. Therefore, the way I conceive emancipation here, and this is how I see emancipation providing the ‘moral endpoint’ (i.e., the why) of emotion regulation, is to raise awareness among workers that current emotional demands at work (e.g., whether a result of emotional labour or peer pressure) are to their detriment – psychologically, physically and socially. To raise this awareness is, in my view, the task of a critical theory. However, the ‘ought to’ frequently invoked as the normative element in critical theory can entice researchers to go beyond this initial yet fundamentally crucial step and advocate what workers should do as a result of these insights.

I disagree with this temptation, for it is presumptuous on the part of researchers to prescribe to workers what they should be doing as a consequence of having gained the insight that the emotional demands placed upon them are excessive. Consistent with this approach, I have refrained from offering precise predictions in terms of what workers might experience along their emancipatory journey, or indeed what the final ‘phenomenological’ outcome of it might be (though I admit to offering some speculations in terms of the latter in relation to structural changes). What I have done instead is to argue that insights gained along the emancipatory journey will lower the likelihood that workers experience the raft of adverse psychological, physiological and social consequences that they would experience had they not had these insights. This is very different from positing that either X or Z will be the consequence – in the phenomenological sense – of the emancipatory journey. As highlighted later in Chapter 4, what this approach permits is for the phenomenological world of workers to be shaken up, stirred or unsettled in order to settle thereafter in a new (and more advantageous) way.

Further to this, any prediction or advice in relation to the exact
outcomes of worker emancipation from emotional repression would seem to be diametrically opposed to the frequently invoked notion within critical theory of workers having the potential and need for creative, spontaneous and autonomous action (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Grandey et al., 2015). Instead, I advocate the position that the effects of emotion research more generally, and its effects in the context of this book, often do not immediately manifest themselves. Instead, they rather develop over time as the insights are applied to, or judged against, current or even future real-life situations. It is then the iterative and cumulative interaction between the insights offered in this book and how workers continuously apply these to their own life histories and situations that will create an ‘impact’ over time. Consequently, it is key to how we make sense of all this; and it is noteworthy that emotions are intimately entwined with our sense-making processes because emotions both initiate and are the outcomes of sense-making (Dougherty and Drumheller, 2006).

1.2.4 Range of Emotion Examined

Emotion researchers have produced numerous lists of emotions (see e.g., Kleinginna and Kleinginna, 1981; Lazarus and Cohen-Charash, 2001). It should be understood, however, that some emotions are more theoretically relevant than others in the context of this book. In consequence, I have based the inclusion of particular emotions upon their theoretical relevance to the articulation of the two pathways to social control as characterized in Chapter 2. To avoid distraction from the main arguments here, I only very briefly foreshadow these characteristics. Key for the pathways to social control is the literature on the social functions of emotions (Keltner and Haidt, 1999; Keltner and Kring, 1998; Lench et al., 2015), and it is in this light that I discuss the emotions of particular interest in this book – namely, shame, guilt, happiness and anger. While Pathway I relies upon an excessive exploitation of the social function of emotion (as I propose is the case with shame, guilt and happiness), Pathway II indicates that the ‘talk about emotions’ overrides its social function (as is the case with anger). Crucially, vis-à-vis the multi-dimensional nature of emotion regulation (as indicated above and further elaborated upon in Chapter 3), the various strategies (and associated sub-tactics) we can use to regulate emotion at work and beyond do not apply indiscriminately across both pathways.
In Chapter 2, I define each of the aforementioned emotions and illustrate both their relevance to the theorizing around these pathways and the ambition to initiate the emancipatory journey of workers. Since this book marks a fresh starting point in the debate, I am in no way insinuating that the theorizing presented here might not apply directly to other emotions as well. It may well, but since I wrote this book with a view to opening up the conversation around emancipating emotions – as opposed to settling or containing the issue – I hope that the reader is receptive as to why these initial choices had to be made from a theoretical point of view.13

Further to this, I understand that, unlike the primary focus on the four emotions identified, there is a case to be made for a secondary focus on how these emotions can lead to the experiences of other emotions, such as fear, further down the appraisal process. For instance, recent studies suggest that individual reactions to the experience of shame (elicited by negative evaluations by valued others) tend to correlate with the fear of negative evaluations – i.e., the fear we might experience in relation to negative evaluations (see Yoon, 2015). In addition, prior research has shown that the experience of shame can itself generate feelings of other-directed anger and hostility. For instance, studies have shown that an acute sense of shame can induce a sense of ‘humiliated fury’ directed towards the self and towards real or imagined disapproving others (Tangney et al., 1996). Because shame implies the perception of exposure to and disapproval from others, self-directed hostility is readily directed towards others who are part of the shame-eliciting event.

Lastly, given the range of so-called discrete emotions circulating in the literature (Lazarus and Cohen-Charash, 2001), broadening the range of emotions included would, I maintain, dilute the theoretical focus of this book. However, I find ample motivation here for future research on the topic by considering whether and/or how the theorizing presented here can be applied to other emotions as well – either in the primary or secondary sense detailed above – and I hope that other researchers also perceive this motivation to further engage with these ideas. Note that, for each emotion under investigation, I have written a vignette to underline the practical necessity of this book. Some characters were inspired by conversations I had with friends or colleagues in relation to their prior experiences (i.e., ‘John’ and his experience with shame or ‘Thomas’ and his anger episode in a hospital ward). In the case of guilt-prone ‘Jennifer’, I took inspiration...
from the relevant literature to come up with a realistic scenario. Doing so also enabled me to adhere theoretically to the definition of guilt and how it relates to other constructs. I have also examined the content of widely used questionnaires to inform the vignettes. Lastly, several newspaper articles (especially Noah, 2013 and Resnikoff, 2013) served as inspiration in developing the character of ‘Maria’ and her constant need to appear radiant when serving customers in a food outlet. Taken together, I am confident that these vignettes have representational character and breathe live into the theorizing presented in this book.

1.2.5 Levels of Analysis

The theorizing I present here is situated – in the first place – at the within-person level of analysis, even though these effects are often initiated by social cues consistent with the focus on social functional accounts of emotions (Keltner and Haidt, 1999). To elaborate on these social cues, emotions signal behavioural intentions of others to us (Van Kleef, 2014), while others add that ‘interpersonal factors are essential in emotion regulation, because emotion regulation develops within a social context and continue to include social relations throughout life’ (Hofmann et al., 2016, p. 342). As an indication of just how much social context influences the frequency of emotion regulation in everyday life, Gross and colleagues (2006) have shown that, within a sample of 91 young adults, 98 per cent of emotion regulation episodes took place in the presence of other people (each participant was asked to recall one such episode during the past two weeks).

Despite the prevalence of social cues, it is at the within-person level of analysis that I propose the theoretical and practical parameters presented in this book are being played out as a result of the self-efficacious or agentic capacities of workers identified. More precisely, I am interested in how the theorizing presented in this book affects the dynamic fluctuations in workers’ experience and expression of emotions, and their consequences (Ashkanasy, 2003). This is different from the ubiquitous focus among work psychologists on between-person variance (or individual differences in terms of cognitive abilities or personalities). For some scholars steeped in critical management studies more generally, and in emancipation more specifically, this focus may represent a theoretical inconsistency. After
all, critical management studies – and the specific reference therein to emancipation – adhere to more structural, social or institutional ontologies (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Geuss, 1981; Murray and Ozanne, 2006).

Critical theorists have been vocal in maintaining that, while changes in the individual’s (or agent’s) attitudes or beliefs may be sufficient in the psychoanalytical sense, they cannot be the final ambition of critical theory. Reflecting on the work of Habermas, Geuss (1981) argues that ‘if coercive institutions of the society are intact, it is not enough for the oppressed agents to have gained an inner freedom from compulsion to believe in their legitimacy’ (p. 86).

And yet, while I agree that structural/institutional changes ought to be the long-term goal of an emancipation that moves beyond the worker, the undue and persistent disregard for the possibility of agentic self-transformation and how the emancipatory process can unfold among workers within workplaces and society to form a larger ‘critical mass’ has, I propose, often rendered the emancipatory potential of critical theory impotent. This circumstance is regrettable, both theoretically and practically, because an undue faithfulness to dogmatic purity in the context of critical theory (in its own right and as applied to management studies) undermines that which it sets out to achieve (i.e., emancipation from repressive social conditions). While I will delve into greater detail later, workers’ capacity not only for self-transformation, but also for acting in defiance of social structures with a view to changing them is borne out, for instance, by the literature on emotional deviance. For instance, it suggests that:

> because individuals are not totally determined by the structures or cultures in which they live, but can exercise agency, creativity, and autonomy, they may, in unjust or oppressive circumstances, redefine their deviant feelings as valid and proceed to use these new normative understandings to persuade others to pursue social change. (Thoits, 2004, p. 374)

That social change or innovation can take many shapes and forms, such as new value norms and behaviours, as Thoits furthermore underlines. As I shall elaborate later, in the context of emotion research (in management studies and beyond), there is an intimate link between self-determination and the engineering of self-fulfilling prophecies (see e.g., Solomon, 2003).
1.2.6 Writing Style

Since critical theory provides one main source of inspiration for this book, and since the examination of this book’s aim necessitates a more unorthodox approach, I have adopted essayistic prose here. In describing the characteristics of essays, Adorno and colleagues (1954/84, p. 171) were quite clear that ‘the law of the innermost form of the essay is heresy. By transgressing the orthodoxy of thought, something becomes visible in the object which it is orthodoxy’s secret purpose to keep invisible’. Therefore, through normative reflections on and challenges to existing conditions, the essay enables us to sketch how the world might be. But this may necessitate a departure from what Habermas (1987) referred to as ‘scientism’, or science’s belief in itself, which reflects the conviction that we cannot grasp science as one form of possible knowledge, but must instead identify knowledge with science.

The essay permits reintroducing reflection and spontaneous insights and can, therefore, aid in the generation of new thinking in management and beyond (Delbridge et al., 2016). Taken further still, the essay constitutes an intervention both in terms of academic debates influencing political debates (see Gabriel, 2016) and in terms of actually making a difference to the readers’ professional and private lives. In some quirky way, this book represents a ‘counter-intervention’ to the interventionist sentiment in the West that we have to exercise a degree of control over our emotions (Gross, 1998; Mayer et al., 2000). With this counter-interventionist intention in mind, it is surely my hope that – in one form or another – this will crystallize over time. For the purpose of this book, this intervention is characterized by the use of reprise, a rhetorical device typical to critical thought implying a continual return to a motif or problem to prise open its aspects. For Adorno, the ‘technique of reprise was necessary to a mode of presentation aimed at filling-out of meanings; and it was by such indirections that he did not so much impart an achieved knowledge but enacted the processes by which insights are earned’ (Connerton, 1976, p. 14; italics added). This goes straight to the aim of this book to squarely identify that which causes emotional suffering, without being too prescriptive about what consequences workers may aspire to as a result of these insights being earned.

In sum, and to be very clear, I contend that the arguments presented above do in no way invalidate the theorizing attempted...
here; they are simply an honest recognition of the limits of generalizability that affects a good deal of management research (Dubin, 1976; Johns, 2006).

1.3 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The remainder of this book evolves along the following lines. In Chapter 2, I shall prise open in more detail how the social functions of emotion in itself, or deviations from them, can be co-opted to serve as a means of social control. To do so, I start by defining emotion consistent both with the key construct emotion regulation (as scrutinized in more detail in Chapter 3) and the notion of emancipation as featured in the critical theory literature. Second, I briefly touch upon the literature on the functions of emotion, and how these manifest themselves across levels of analysis. Third, I introduce the reader to the central arguments in this book appertaining to Pathways I and II and their purpose as tools of social control. The motivation is to show how the social functions of emotion (or a divergence from them) can be enlisted to serve as a means of social control. Fourth, having explicated and unpacked how these pathways operate, I then join these insights with the literature on critical theory to maintain that the social functions of emotion (or, again, deviations from them) constitute a sophisticated system of repression, the seeing through of which can potentially spark within repressed workers a desire to emancipate themselves from these conditions.

With the pathways to social control articulated, it is then opportune to examine more closely in Chapter 3 the theoretical parameters and the empirical findings associated with the emotion regulation literature. This leads me to offer first a general overview of the emotion regulation literature, including important and germane technicalities associated with Gross and Thompson’s (2007) process model of emotion regulation. These include:

- the role of appraisals;
- the scope of goals implicated in the emotion regulation process;
- the role of context and feedback loops;
- the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic regulation; and
- whether emotion regulation represents conscious and/or unconscious processes.
Because it is within the theoretical and empirical parameters of emotion regulation studies that I locate one potential catalyst to initiate the emancipatory journey of workers, it then becomes necessary to offer a more detailed examination of the strategies available to regulate emotion (i.e., antecedent- vs. response-focused emotion regulation strategies, and their various sub-tactics). Having laid this groundwork, it is then possible to join distinct emotion regulation tactics with the pathways to social control in order to show a potential avenue from a repressed to an emancipated existence of workers. More specifically, I provide a flowchart to indicate – for each pathway – the probable appraisals that currently entail adverse psychological, physiological and social consequences for workers (Figure 3.2). The flowchart then moves on to propose how these adverse consequences can be circumvented by way of appraising the emotion-eliciting event differently (i.e., either through reappraisal or the genuine expression of emotion). With this in mind, I propose that the preceding step can then create ‘new consequences’ for workers. Importantly, and consistent with my reservation to predict what these consequences are exactly in the phenomenological world of workers, I suggest that there will be a reduced likelihood that adverse psychological, physiological and social consequences for workers will actually occur.

It is necessary at this juncture to highlight in advance a distinctive feature in that flowchart. Even though the logic behind both pathways remains intact, when it comes to appraising situations differently, happiness branches out from Pathway I and points jointly with anger (Pathway II) to the genuine expression of emotion. Chapter 3 provides the theoretical rationale for doing so. In Chapter 4, the final chapter, I shall offer a synthesis of the main arguments developed throughout this book. This synthesis leads me to propose another flowchart (Figure 4.1), which illustrates the key premises and stages of the emancipatory journey of workers. That is, it illustrates the process from social control via regulating emotions differently now towards an emancipated existence of workers in the future. Note that Figure 4.1 does not represent a ‘model’ in the hypothetico-deductive sense, setting out propositions for empirical testing. Instead, it should be considered as an organizing framework to synthesize the contents of the preceding chapters.
NOTES

1. The preceding connotations represent, however, a passive voice (i.e., someone else as the active agent is doing something to you). So it is worth noting that the same dictionary also contains a reference to making ‘his or her own way in the world’. The difference here between the active and the passive voice is not merely an issue of semantics; it goes straight to the core of the theorizing I attempt to develop in this book – that is, who initiates, accompanies and concludes the emancipatory journey of workers. I will revisit this point later in the book.

2. This thought has enjoyed a prominent place in sociological studies for some time (Scheff, 1988, 1990), but it is also increasingly appreciated in management studies (Fineman, 2001; Learmonth and Humphreys, 2011; Lindebaum, 2012; Lindebaum and Ashkanasy, forthcoming; Murphy and Kiffin-Petersen, 2016).

3. The italics in the quote serve to underline the active role of workers in the process of regulating their emotions differently toward greater emancipation.

4. I offer this argument as strictly applicable to the shaming of individuals in response to failed expectations at work. Needless to say, I emphasize the important function of felt shame in response to moral standard violations when it induces reparative actions following violations of moral standards. The powerful effect of shame is lucidly illustrated in the movie 12 Angry Men, when – in a highly dramatic move – 11 jurors turn their backs on the 12th juror following his racial slurs (Lindebaum and Gabriel, 2016).

5. Pertinently, Gross (2013, p. 363) argues that ‘a more complete understanding of the causes and consequences of emotion regulation will be facilitated via cross-fertilization among affective scientists across disciplines’, including sociology, business and psychiatry.

6. This observation is offered in the context of studies on self-efficacy (see also Bandura, 1997, for more evidence on this). Bandura defines perceived self-efficacy as being concerned with our belief in our ability to influence events that affect our lives. Further to this, the question of agency vs. structure is one of the perennial puzzles in social sciences research, especially as we look for causal explanations or proofs. I am in no way suggesting that we can always exercise individual agency vis-à-vis structural concerns. However, given the evidence indicated above, it is important to appreciate that it is possible to exercise individual agency in some situations. Beyond the evidence already enlisted, there are such notable individuals who defy structural concerns and display highly agentic behaviours. In a recently aired obituary (31 May 2016), the German public broadcaster ARD showed a former interview with Rupert Neudeck, founder of Cap Anamur, a humanitarian organization whose goal is to help refugees and displaced people worldwide. In it he stated that ‘we could only do it [i.e., rescue Vietnamese ‘boat people’ in the late 1970s/early 1980s] by completely ignoring the rules of the world, the rules of bureaucracy, and the rule of governments. Only looking to save humans in danger.’ Equipped with this determination and the attitude to ignore rules, his organization saved the lives of more than 10000 boat people.

7. This ‘temporal’ argument paves the way for a more detailed treatment in Chapters 3 and 4 of the influence of time in the emancipatory journey of workers.

8. In the remainder of this book, I shall maintain that situation selection comes close to what critical theorists would consider along the lines of ‘structural changes’ as the ultimate manifestation of worker emancipation.

9. A content analysis of the American Psychological Association’s PsycINFO database on 7 June 2016 showed that the keyword ‘emotions’ featured 2851 times
in publications between 1930 and 1960. This period serves as an appropriate range to include, as many initial and subsequent key writings in critical theory were published then. By contrast, between 1960 and 2016, the keyword appeared 258,922 times in the same database, underscoring thereby the exponential interest in emotions as a scientific subject. I appreciate that these numbers are not organized by specific disciplines, but several reviews underline that this exponential growth also affected the study of emotions in management and the psychological study of emotion regulation (Ashkanasy, 2003; Gross, 2013).

10. The other form/critique is ‘reconstruction’, which attempts to grasp anonymous systems of rules which can be followed by any subject, provided that the individual possesses the necessary competence (Connerton, 1976).

11. This point must be taken with a pinch of salt, as it cannot be precluded that the workers’ ‘happiness’ is the result of the very veil of delusion of reality that critical theory seeks to lift.

12. There are several examples in the psychological literature where researchers have imposed their values on construct definitions, the constructs of emotional intelligence and coping being only two examples (see Gross, 1998; Lindebaum and Jordan, 2014 for critical appraisals on this).

13. Some readers might argue that an alternative lens through which to identify relevant emotions is the widely used, yet deplorably ill-informed, global description of so-called ‘negative’ (or positive) emotions and the associated notion of ‘valence’, a term borrowed from physics and chemistry (see Solomon, 2003). Solomon explains at some length that the positive–negative polarity (or the idea of ‘emotional’ opposites) has its genesis in ethics, and not in the scientific study of emotions. I argue that these descriptions are unfortunate at best, and at worst lead to inaccurate theorizing (and bad management practice). Partly as a result of this, I maintain that it is more expedient both theoretically and practically to focus on the utility of a discrete emotion as it relates to context (Lindebaum and Jordan, 2012, 2014), hence my preoccupation with functional account of emotions.

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Emancipation through emotion regulation at work

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Emancipation through emotion regulation at work


