NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

ARAN - Access to Research at NUI Galway

Provided by the author(s) and NUI Galway in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite the published version when available.

Title	De-collectivism and managerial ideology: towards an understanding of trade union opposition
Author(s)	Dundon, Tony; Harney, Brian; Cullinane, Tony
Publication Date	2010
Publication Information	T. Dundon, B. Harney and N. Cullinane, 2010, De-collectivism and Managerial Ideology: towards an understanding of trade union opposition, International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy. 4(3/4): 267-281
Publisher	International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy
Link to publisher's version	http://dx.doi.org/10.1504/IJMCP.2010.037812
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/2088

Downloaded 2020-12-06T01:16:39Z

Some rights reserved. For more information, please see the item record link above.

De-collectivism and managerial ideology: towards an understanding of trade union opposition

Tony Dundon
J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics,
NUI Galway Ireland,

Brian Harney
Dublin City University Business School,
Dublin City University,

Niall Cullinane
Queen's University Management School,
Queens University,

Abstract

Employers have long preferred to manage without the incursion of a trade union in company affairs. Much of the extant literature views managerial opposition to unions in terms of discrete typologies of union suppression and/or substitution. In this paper we present a conceptual analysis that questions the efficacy of such approaches. Given the limitations identified, the paper argues that managerial ideology provides a deeper theoretical and historically grounded form of analysis to explain hostility towards collective forms of worker representation. The paper explores the antecedents of managerial ideology and the logic to how and why trade unions are opposed. It concludes that as ideology drives managerial decollectivising strategies, lessons can be learnt for future union organising.

Available to be cited as:
Dundon, T., Harney, B. and Cullinane, N. (2010) 'De-collectivism and managerial ideology: towards an understanding of trade union opposition', *International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy*, Vol. 4, Nos. 3/4, pp.267–281 [DOI: 10.1504/IJMCP.2010.037812].

1. Introduction: union opposition and new managerialism

Donald Roy (1980) eloquently articulated some time ago that management generally have an inherent dislike of collective forms of worker representation. He realised that managers will sometimes be benign and supportive of worker needs, but only in so far as it helps avoid trade unionism. When the 'sweetness' of such managerial actions fail, they quickly revert to subversive and hostile strategies: what Roy termed the 'fear' and 'evil stuff' of union avoidance. In this context managers, as a social and cohesive group, refers to senior managers acting as the agents for and on behalf of owners. In many ways management practice has moved on considerably. Debates abound concerning so-called good non-union employers, new managerial strategies, human resource management, people-centred practices, social partnership or varieties of stakeholder capitalism. Much of this new wave of managerial thinking is claimed to place the worker centre stage while simultaneously enhancing better company performance and organisational effectiveness. This is the language of 'win-win'; a scenario is envisaged whereby the sharing of authority replaces the conflicts and tensions of a by-gone era.

In this paper we present a conceptual argument that much of this new managerial language is a chimera. The paper argues that in reality management have found new and innovative ways to avoid unions, yet the ideological antecedents of managerial theory remains anchored in hostility towards unionism. To advance this argument requires, in part, a polemic in order to unpick and weave through the difficult task of debating management ideology, itself an awkward and tricky concept to pin down. Equally important is the intellectual contribution the paper seeks to make. It argues that managerial ideology is itself a conceptual rubric that helps explain the growth in both overt and covert hostility towards collective forms of worker representation. The paper alludes to limitations in much of the extant research and literature. When referring to ideology, many scholars often leave the concept unspecified, deploying it merely as a descriptive label than a heuristic device to guide analysis. Little has been achieved in the way of fostering a

systematic elaboration of the mechanisms and dynamics of non-union managerial intent. This is even more striking given the prevalence and spread of non-unionism as the main form of organisational structure in most developed economies around the world (Dundon and Rollinson, 2004).

The article proceeds as follows. In the next section we highlight the limitations of structural explanations for trade union decline and expose the deficiencies of discrete managerial typologies of union avoidance. We argue that such typologies tend to by-pass the deeper meanings and multiple interpretations of managerial values and beliefs which serve to consolidate power and disadvantage workers (e.g. inequitable share of wealth, wages and a continuing gender bias in the workplace). In addressing this deficiency the third section utilizes the lens of managerial ideology to re-conceptualise opposition to trade unions within a political economy framework of capitalism. In particular, we note the endurance of a ubiquitous search for surplus value and purposeful control that underpins a complex web of actions to resist unionisation. In sections four and five analysis turns to the ideological lens previously considered to assess how and why management continually strive to resist trade union encroachment upon their 'prerogative'. By showing a greater appreciation of the foundational beliefs of managerial ideology, socialisation and education along with discourse treatments of management theory, we are able to better locate the thought processes, content and purpose of managerial decollectivist practices.[i] The final section provides a summary and conclusion to the argument of the paper.

2. Union Resistance: Ideology, Substitution and Suppression

Trade union membership has been in severe decline in most westernised economies since the early 1980s. In the UK, trade union membership has declined from its peak of 54 percent of the labour force in 1980, to 27 percent density by 2008 (Barrett, 2009:6). Decline has been more severe in the US, currently standing at 12 percent (Dixon and Fiorito, 2009). Whereas industrial relations scholars once regarded non-

unionism as an outliner, suggesting it was but a matter of time before unorganised workers became collectively represented (Bain and Price, 1983), non-unionism is now considered the more conventional form of employment relations regulation. Nonetheless, considerable attention has been devoted to charting and explaining such decline, often by seeking to measure the relative importance of various contributory variables: economic cycles, type of sector, occupation and labour market fluctuations, company size or various anti-union laws (Disney, 1990; Dundon, 2002; Slaughter, 2007). Running alongside this explanation is the idea that union representation is now somehow unnecessary as the demand for unions has changed as a basic social value among workers (see for example D'Art and Turner, 2006: 168). Notwithstanding these positions, there remain other important aspects that are less easily identified and argued. Significantly, the function and role of management itself is an important mobilising force in shaping union recognition outcomes and worker demands: evidently non-unionism is not a matter of luck but rather it is perpetuated and manifested on active managerial intent. It is thus equally if not more plausible that opposition to trade unions can be determined by management choice rather than by changes in the composition of a labour force (Bryson et al., 2004: 139–41). Firms do not oppose union representation just for business reasons; they do so because they have an inherent revulsion towards the idea of sharing power with worker representatives (Dundon et al., 2006). Arguably, work rules and managerial claims of the demands of business efficiency are buttressed by an ideological attachment to a neo-liberal (union-free) environment (Logan, 2006b: 6). In taking this line of enquiry further, considerable variability can be found with regard to the nature of managerial approaches when dealing with the 'union threat' (Roy, 1980; Guest and Hoque, 1994). Typically, these approaches involve polarising managerial opposition into either/or strategies that *'substitute'* or *'suppress'* unionisation. The substitution approach is often linked to so-called 'good' human relations type exercises that substitute any demand for collective worker representation through paternalistic company policies. Examples include firms

such as IBM, HP or Marks & Spencers. In contrast are firms that 'suppress' the triggers to unionization through more brutal or aggressive resistance tactics. Examples include likes of Wal-Mart, Ryanair or exploitative/sweatshop firms often operating on the fringe of the economy and dominated by familial control (Findlay 1993). The characteristics of these opposing union resistance strategies are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Classification of Managerial Union Resistance Strategies

Strategy	***Suppression*** *Iron Fist* *(Anti-Union)*	***Substitution*** *Velvet Glove* *(Non-Union)*
Based on:	• Control • Intimidation • Atmosphere of fear and trepidation	• Avoidance • Supplant union role • Depict union as unnecessary
Tools/Levers 'tactics':	• Dismissals/redundancies (or threats of them) • Suspension • Harassment • Intimidation • Monitoring of work	• Resolving grievances • Employee Forums • Higher wages • Individualisation • Improvement in work conditions • Corporate Culture
Targeted at:	• Lay officers • Union activists • Union members • Potential union members	• All Employees • Or those groups it is believed may have a propensity to unionize
Examples	• Wal Mart • Ryanair • Sweatshops	• IBM • Google • HP

Source: (adapted from Gall and McKay 2001; Gall 2003; Logan 2003)

However simple dichotomies such as these can be problematic. Managerial actions tend to be uneven and contradictory in practice with considerable variation in terms of the actions deployed to achieve the goal of non-unionism. Gall's (2003) finding of the *'good cop/bad cop'* routine played out at Borders is a case in point. In this situation

management sought to maintain a union-free workplace not only on the direct and coercive use of bullying tactics, but also by emotionally blackmailing employees through 'tugging at their heartstrings'. Similarly, Nissen (1998) found that while management were actively engaged in a partnership agreement with unions at NCR (a subsidiary of AT&T), at the same time NCR activated hostile 'union busting' measures to keep them out of other parts of the business. Thus despite the relative value of typologies such as those depicted in Table 1 which allude to greater variation in managerial action, they are unlikely to be an accurate representation of union avoidance dynamics in the workplace, whereby mutually suppression and substitution can co-exist within the same organisation (Dundon, 2002; Gall, 2004).

To an extent other writers have alluded to the simplification of such established typologies. Peetz (2002), for example, shows how employers incorporate both 'material' and 'symbolic' dimensions in seeking to achieve de-collectivist outcomes. The material is the action, policy or practice, while the symbolic conjures up rhetorical language to project a distinctive corporate or cultural identity reminiscent of Orwellian control (see also Willmott, 1993). However, as Peetz acknowledges, this account "does not seek to explain why these strategies are adopted in the first place" (Peetz, 2002: 257). Indeed, while the focus of this paper is employer opposition it remains evident that employers do accommodate unions, either because they are coerced to or, more recently, because of legislative regimes for statutory trade union recognition. In this way managerial intent remains a dynamic if not contradictory dynamic mediating pressures of accommodation and opposition to unionisation (Dundon, 1998). This weakness of current theorising about managerial non-union behaviour stems from a preoccupation with seeking to depict the 'form' of employer hostility at the expense of understanding its antecedents. To overcome these concerns there is a need for deeper analysis of managerial intent and corresponding action (Towers, 2002). To this end the next section scrutinises the 'doctrine of managerial prerogative' in the

context of the political economy of workplace control and resistance (Storey, 1983: 100).

3. Managerial Ideology and the Political Economy of Workplace Control

Defining ideology is problematic. The notion of ideology largely finds its intellectual heritage in Marx, where the concept appeared to have a dual usage – one revolving around notions of mystification and false consciousness, the other as vehicle of legitimising the interests of the ruling classes (Giddens, 1979: 182). This second connotation has dominated subsequent analytical developments (Bendix, 1956; Fox, 1966, 1973; Geare et al., 2006). In this way ideology serves the interests of one group (e.g. capital) at the expense of another (e.g. labour). This can be seen to link ideas with interest mobilization that functions as an analytical core of ideology (Giddens, 1979; Purvis and Hunt, 1993: 478). More specifically, an understanding of its antecedents can help unpick the value-laden basis of managerial prerogative that constitutes the employment relationship (Kelly, 1998). Crucially, as will be illustrated later in the paper, this form of analysis alludes to an exploration of *how* and *why* managerial interests are reproduced and sustained as a system of control and domination. Ideological analysis therefore involves an appreciation of the antecedents of management thought. While contemporary accounts of managerial resistance to unions often cite the neo-liberalism of global economics (Bain and Taylor, 2002; Findlay, 1993) there is also a deeper historical and structural root to managerial ideology (Fox 1974).

Problematically, our understanding of hostility and opposition to organized labour has been very one dimensional, focused on typologies and empiricist readings which are typically divorced from the underpinning structural relationships between capital and labour. Arguably, in order to overcome the deficiencies of extant explanations, and to account for the widespread and historical enduring nature of managerial opposition to trade unions,

any plausible explanation must be theoretically rooted within the context of a political economy of workplace relations (Fox, 1974; Storey, 1983; Willmott, 1987). This requires locating managements' ideological orientation within the dynamics of the capitalist relations of production and its attendant contradiction between private appropriation and socialized production (Giddens, 1979; Willmott, 1987).

Ultimately, it is senior managers who are the agents of capital, formally required to manage organisational resources in the pursuit of surplus value for and on behalf of owners[ii]. In performing this role management's task becomes one of forestalling or checking any resistance to their authority or capacity to direct resources as they see fit (Willmott, 1987). Maximisation of control and maximisation of surplus value are here complementary facets of a single strategy (Hyman, 1987: 34). From this perspective, any recognition of separate worker interests and the means to serve these are symbolic of a threat to managerial legitimacy. It is perhaps only where we find workers collectively organised in trade unions that employers are confronted with a counter-mobilising force (Kelly, 1998). Managerial awareness of this necessitates strategies of control that minimise or negate the potential challenge which this formally offers. However, the way opposition actually becomes manifest will be contingent on, amongst other factors, institutional arrangements, cultural trajectories as well as the general balance of power between managers and workers. Hence all forms of control will be temporary: non-unionism may well be the preferred form for management but it is by no means exclusive and all-enduring.

In simple terms, ideological opposition to trade unions rests on the concepts of ownership and the prerogatives of managerial control derived from the notions of property rights. These have their historical roots in the numerous Master-Servant Acts that punctuated the embryonic stages of mercantile capitalism (Harris, 1982). The historical significance is the use of legislation as a 'disciplinary weapon' deployed by employers to oppose the very idea of collective mobilisation (Haynes,

1988:243). From this has stemmed a preoccupation with the 'right to manage' and attempts to infringe upon these fundamental principles is met with suspicion and hostility (Hurvitz, 1977: 510). The subsequent legislative evolution of this assumption is manifest in the contemporary employment contract. In many countries workers and unions have been severely restricted in taking industrial action or challenging employers which has limited the capacity of workers to engage in lawful strike action, among other restrictions (Gall, 2004; Smith and Morton, 2006). This belief in managerial rights was crystallized with the formal devolution of authority from owners to managerial elites within large corporations (Galbriath, 1967; Willmott, 1987). Here ideological opposition to trade unions has a dual purpose in that it maintains the (presumed legitimate) right of ownership while simultaneously serving managerial interests. Through an ideological prism, managers are able to defend their interests and present existing social relations as both natural and inevitable (Purvis and Hunt, 1993; Sharpe, 1974: 55). In considering managerial 'intent' in terms of the political economy of class relations, opposition to collective forms of worker representation can be seen in a broader analytical context than simplified typologies depicted under the rubric of managerial strategy or human resource management models. In addition to this is a recognition that managers themselves are guided by what Freeden (2003: 13-14) suggests are *psychological manifestations* of ideology which can incorporate conscious distortions of meaning and reality. For example, the often presumed managerial assumption is that 'what is good' for the company must, by default, be good for workers. Yet the basis of 'good' tends to be predicated on the rights and values of ruling elites.

4. Why Managers Oppose Trade Unionism

Ideological opposition to trade unions operates at both the level of society through its institutions and structures and also through senior managers as the agents

of owners. One of the classic depictions of why ideology serves ruling class interests at the expense of workers can be found in the work by Fox (1966, 1974). Fox alludes to three main ideological functions: "ideology is at once a method of self-reassurance, an instrument of persuasion and a legitimization of authority" (Fox, 1966: 372). These require some elaboration.

First, in terms of '*managerial self-reassurance'*, ideology provides a degree of security and control when faced with uncertainty (Thomas, 2001). Given that workers and unions are agents of counter-control, the social relations of production are always 'potentially' conflictual. Even when employers recognise unions, they have for a long time done so grudgingly (Haynes, 1988: 249). Ideology therefore protects at both the societal and workplace levels. For example, in some instances managers may explicitly articulate the desirability of change but will reject such change in practice because it threatens their own stability (Pech 2001). For Fox this resulted in managers consciously tolerating collective or pseudo-collective structures in the workplace while remaining fundamentally opposed to unions: "paying lip service to pluralism while behaving in ways clearly motivated by unitary attitudes and principles" (Fox 1973:205). Ideology is thus an instrument of self-reassurance so that the basis of any organisational malaise or failure can be directed elsewhere (Fox 1966:375).

Secondly, ideology is by no means isolated to a self reassurance role, as it also serves as an '*instrument of persuasion*'. Managers often appeal to employees (and shareholders and owners) by creating the image of a unitary or happy family enterprise. Consequently, unions are depicted as a destabilising force seeking to disrupt the harmony of the firm (Fox, 1966: 373; Barley and Kunda, 1992). To this end, managers will be aware of their capability to mask true intentions and thus manipulate others (Hamilton, 2001). As an instrument of persuasion ideology is also manifest at the societal level, typified for example in the neo-liberal economic approach portraying union leaders as troublemakers who destabilise the 'natural'

market equilibrium, or depict unions as mythical 'reds under the beds'. In effect the role of management becomes a 'self serving political ideology' (Whittington, 2001:29)

This leads to the third related function in conferring the *legitimisation of managerial authority*. Historically, unions have had to counter the legal force of the judiciary created and maintained for a landowning class. Agitators and workers often faced the penalty of criminal conspiracy for seeking to mobilise employees as a collective body. The legacy of 19th Century capitalism and its property rights lineage remains a facet of contemporary juridification. For example at the drop of a hat and with only minutes notice, employers can obtain injunctions and impose sanctions on unions at the slightest sign of possible mobilisation in response to management. Unions are seen therefore as much as a direct threat to the ruling classes' perceived right to control as much as an encroachment on profits (Hurvitz 1977:510).

This section has examined 'why' managers may have an inherent disposition to oppose trade unions. Importantly, the precise impact of managerial ideology will be intertwined with managements' particular attempts to legitimize *their* authority and *their* ways to seek self-reassurance as the dominant actor in the employment relationship. The next section considers how ideological opposition to trade unions is diffused and maintained.

5. How Managers Oppose Trade Unions

Thus far we have presented a critique and review of the way managerial opposition to unions can be conceptually understood. In addition to this there is a need to show how ideology operates on regular enough basis to have validity as a form of analysis (Giddens, 1979). Akin to Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony, dominant managerial ideologies are maintained through a series of social and cultural norms based around values that perpetuate the interests of dominant actors. Ideology as construed is likely to have some institutional basis in a society (or workplace). In this respect managerial

ideologies are more than engineered: they are also *consumed* as 'lived experiences' (Thompson, 1989: 154). This points to the role of socialization, education and discourse as a medium of legitimisation and communication.[iii]

Socialisation, Education, and Class Structure

Managers are socialised to believe in the inviolability of free markets and property rights. Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction would suggest that such beliefs have been transmitted from one managerial generation to the next through differential access to education (Sullivan 2001:893). At its heart, managerial education endeavours to normalize certain aspects of social life, promoting a unitarist and monolithic view of organisational purpose. These ideas are further buttressed by the fact that the modern and progressive companies which are studied as 'best practice' cases are largely predicated on the maintenance of a non-union workplace (Dundon et al., 2006). The practices inspired and developed through socialisation and education therefore reinforce a class-based divide to secure control and domination (Barley et al., 1988:26). Take neo-classical economics as advanced by Nobel Prize winners and leading theorists (e.g. the Chicago and other monetarist schools of thought). Its educational value is to present trade unions as some supply-side impediment that distorts a natural equilibrium to the market, resulting in inefficiencies. The fact employers accumulate their surplus value from the labour of others seems to be ignored in such modeling. As Nolan and O'Donnell explain: "not only is the conclusion predetermined at the outset by the assumptions of the model, it is generated without any consideration of the dynamic properties of the system" (2003: 491). For workers and trade unions the reality is stark: socialisation, education and cultural symbols perpetuate a class-based meritocracy which is premised on avoiding the incursion of external (union) influence on economic property rights.

Significantly, academics and centres of learning are far from neutral in this.

Some have questioned the values espoused by many universities and business schools as propagating anti-union and anti-worker sentiments: referring to them as 'Bible Colleges for the American Way' (Monks, 2003)[iv]. Others have argued about the subordination of education to the needs of US businesses with a 'managerialist mindset' becoming a potent force in academia (Calori and De Woot, 1994). Add to this that managers are part an upwardly mobile middle class with extended social networks then the messages and symbols of a presumed ideological superiority are almost ubiquitous. Indeed, one common connection among the leading industrialists at the heart of recent high profile economic scandals and failures (e.g. Merrill Lynch, Enron, Royal Bank of Scotland) is their educational prowess of having successfully attained a Harvard University MBA (Broughton, 2008). Parallel to the affects of socialisation and education are the institutions of change who actively promote a vested interest agenda.

Vested Interests: union busters and social institutions

The focus on managerial socialisation and education alone is to ignore the role of other industrial relations actors: principally managerial consultants and government institutions in furthering the ideological bent of a dominant interest group over another. In the US especially, the union busting or managerial consultant sector is a multi-billion dollar industry (Logan, 2004). These 'other' actors shape the dynamics of workplace social relations to such an extent that they have had a detrimental impact on the capacity for employees to exercise their legal rights to workplace representation (Logan, 2002: 199). Managerial tactics include spying on workers suspected of being union sympathizers, the sacking of union activists and propaganda depicting factory closures because of union organizing (Greenhouse, 2004). According to Logan (2002:199), *"Consultants have actively created demand for their services among employers, who often had little ideas that such services existed and have helped popularise a union free ideology among*

managers". Recently, the uneven and contradictory nature of managerial ideology can be witnessed in the actions of the retail multi-national Tesco. In the UK Tesco espouses the virtues of worker involvement and stakeholder legitimacy with a formalized and embedded union-management partnership model. At the same time, in the US, Tesco advertised for a Chief Executive with experience of union avoidance (Dundon et al., 2006).

Ideological opposition to unionisation also finds support from the broader institutions of society. Kaufman (2004) has referred to a growing government disdain for collective systems of labour regulation, with a cosy relationship between business lobby groups and government institutions. The largest private sector employer in the US, WalMart, has been found to violate American employment laws with virtual impunity (Greenhouse, 2007). This has two immediate implications. First, there is the *direct* impact of laws that governments pass which often favour the interests of capital over labour, such as the anti-union legislation passed by the former conservative government in the UK: laws that restrict even the most simplest of union activities that remain on the statute books under New Labour (Smith and Morton, 2001). Second is the *indirect* impact of government policy and action, which means worker rights are often minimally enforced. For example, European Directives for collective worker voice and representation have been watered down by the British government by implementing regulations that favour practices of individual communication rather than collective worker consultation (Gollan and Wilkinson, 2007). Arguably, therefore, ideological opposition can be found in the continuation of neo-liberal values of 'new labour' through its legislation and policy objectives (Smith and Morton, 2006: 402). New Labour's model of collective partnership is confined to the level of a business unit and predicated on the commercial value a union can add to the relationship, not on the function of worker representation and protection as a principled position. Smith and Morton contend the end result is "reduced scope for workers to challenge the

terms of the pay–effort bargain" (2006: 405). In turn, a discourse of language creates and sustains meanings and interpretations concerning the wage-effort bargain that reinforce dominant social groups.

Ideology as Discourse

Discourse serves as a way in which senior managers (as the agents of employers) legitimise their opposition to unionization by presenting a commonsense message that is difficult to counter (Thomas, 2001). As an example, consider the following view of unionisation: *"This company is my company. I started it, I built it and I own it. I'm not prepared to tolerate their (unions') intrusions. They've got nothing to offer."* (Gall and McKay, 2001: 110). This portrays unions as alien to the values of property and ownership. The language used by managers frequently depicts unions as something malign to both workers and company interests. Logan's (2006a) research about union avoidance firms in the US shows how managerial consultants articulate a powerful message that depicts workers who support unions as a 'contagious disease' to which the firm has to be inoculated against. In Nissen's (1998) study of NCR, management stressed that unions create unnecessary feelings of conflict and tension as part of their normal modus operandi. Importantly, the messages and communications by managers alienated a crucial segment of 'middle' voters from the unions (Nissen, 1998: 29).

Discourse can also become overtly political. On the one hand, any merit in class struggle against capitalism is countered by the rhetoric of shared interests and mutual gains to argue unions are slow, backward and an impediment to competitive advancement (Hamilton, 2001). The language is akin to a rally call for modernization and progress that requires innovation and managerial creativity to break the shackles of collectivized employment relations in favour of a more flexibly responsive 'human resource management' (Black and McCabe, 1996: 535). Yet on the other hand, discourse is also mobilized in a battle to win the 'hearts

and minds' of employees in the interests of the 'customer'. In the NCR case, for example, a managerial communication campaign was used to portray pro-union values as contrary to the needs and demands of the customer (Nissen, 1998: 11). 'The customer is always right' mentality has been further reinforced through economic pressures which enable managers to articulate an image that they too are victims of global recession. This victim discourse can be used to minimise worker resistance by finding blame to forces allegedly beyond managerial control. In situations where unions are recognised the customer-recession discourse may also be used to realign activist identity away from worker interests and more focussed on the objectives of higher management. As a result the capacity for union stewards to resist management ultimately becomes defused as activists find themselves increasingly distanced from the constituency they represent (Michels, 1915). Thus the politicization of an ideological hegemony fuses the interests of workers to the realisation of managerial goals through the seductive use of language: concepts such as 'teamwork', 'quality', or 'empowerment' consolidate managements' underlying objective of control (Barker, 1993). Terms like 'innovation', 'lean production', 'partnership' or 'high performance management' are simply the latest fad for an older and more purposeful form of ideological command and control (Ramsay, 1977: 495).

6. Conclusion

This paper has presented a conceptual analysis of management ideology as potential force resulting in de-collective employment relations. What has been argued is that management ideology, in different ways, is an instrument of both persuasion and control. From the so-called scientificity of Taylor to the quality excellence movement of Peters and Waterman (1982), management theories present a discourse which has excluded and marginalized trade unions. In itself this is not new. Fox (1966, 1973) described three implications for unions arising from the

ideological basis of unitarism. In this unions may be seen either as an 'historical carry-over' who have legitimacy only because of short-sighted and weak employers; unions are 'an unwelcome by-product' of worker greed; or viewed as 'a latent power source' capable of destabilizing the social order. What is different is a new managerial order espousing different fads and concepts but which remains true to the philosophical belief of a dominant group seeking control and manipulation. Newer managerial ideas thus relegate any harboring for a collectivist plural past as old fashioned and discredited (Ackers and Payne, 1998: 544). The rise of normative management models espousing ideals such as 'innovation, creativity, culture or human resource management' symbolizes sophisticated actions intent on de-collectivizising worker identity and solidarity (Keenoy, 1990). For management, this allows for the perpetuation of a 'monoculture that excludes unions' (Peetz, 2002). The propagation of an ideology suggesting that the interests of capital and labour are one and the same further legitimises control while employees internalise such notions as normal (Cullinane and Dundon, 2006).

The analysis in this article contributes to a deeper and more historically informed assessment of managerial ideology in helping to understand opposition to trade unions. In much of the extant literature union avoidance typologies tend to focus exclusively on depicting either/or forms of employer resistance without understanding broader root causes. Advancing ideology as a conceptual lens through which to assess managerial opposition may provide a fruitful way to account for the variability of union avoidance strategies. The merit of ideology is that it illuminates previously neglected or taken-for-granted dimensions, such as foundational beliefs, socialisation, educational processes and societal institutions along with individual management intent. The constant over time and space is managements' search for purposeful control. Even when union recognition is conceded, management remains committed to minimising interference. Moreover, the dynamics of

union exclusion and subordination must be considered within the context of a political economy of workplace relations while its mechanisms should be understood in relation to the discourse of communication and persuasion.

Above all, managerial ideology acts as an instrument of persuasion, a basis for managerial self-assurance and a means to legitimise authority while its impact is diffused through social values and practices. Ultimately, although managerial ideological opposition to unionization cannot be seen as a one way street of manipulation, its lexicon and discourse do appear to be increasingly ubiquitous.

A final addition to this assessment is that the deeper understandings of ideological opposition to trade unions considered here can form the basis of a necessary prerequisite to articulate and debate future worker mobilization strategies. Arguably, the challenge of analyzing ideology as a root of managerial opposition remains central to both national and international trajectories of contemporary union organising campaigns. Given the prevalence of (and managerial preference for) non-unionism across the globe, future union strategies ought to have the capacity to challenge ideologically-opposed managers. The union movement has to transcend a corporate economic self-interest and engage in a counter discourse that speaks for the needs of those unorganised and disenfranchised in society.

References

Ackers, P. and Payne, J. (1998). British trade unions and social partnership: rhetoric, reality and strategy. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 9 (3): 529-550.

Bain, P. and Taylor, P. (2002). Ringing in the changes? Union recognition and organisation in call centres in the UK finance sector. *Industrial relations Journal*, 33 (3): 246-61

Barker, J. (1993), 'Tightening the iron cage: concertive control in self-managing teams', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38: 408-37

Bain, G.S. and R. Price (1983), 'Union growth: dimensions, determinants and destiny', in *Industrial Relations in Britain*, G.S . Bain (ed.), Blackwell, Oxford

Barley, S., & Kunda, G. (1992), 'Design and Devotion: Surges of rational and normative ideologies of control in managerial discourse', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 37(3), pp.363-399.

Barley, S., Meyer, G. and Gash, D (1988). Cultures of culture: Academics, practitioners and the pragmatics of normative control*. Administrative Science Quarterly, 33*: 24-60.

Barrett, C., (2009), Trade Union Membership 2008, *Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform*, London

Bendix, R. (1956). *Work and Authority in Industry*. New York: Wiley.

Black. J. and McCabe, D (1996). Mobilizing consent: paternalism and cellular manufacturing. *International Journal of human Resource Management,* 7 (2): 534-441.

Broughton, P.D. (2008), *What They Teach You at Harvard Business School: My Two Years Inside the Cauldron of Capitalism*, London, Pengiun Books.

Bryson, A., Gomez, R. and Willman, P. (2004). The end of the affair? The decline in employers' propensity to unionize'. In J. Kelly and P. Willman (eds.), *Union Organization and Activity*. London: Routledge, pp. 129–47.

Calori, R. and De Woot, P. (1994). *A European Management Model: Beyond Diversity.* London: Prentice Hall.

Cullinane, N. and Dundon, T. (2006). The psychological contract: A critical review. *International Journal of Management Reviews,* 8 (2): 113-129.

D'Art, D. and Turner, T. (2006). Union organising, union recognition and employer opposition: Case studies of the Irish experience. *Irish Journal of Management,* 26 (2): 165-183.

Disney, R. (1990). Explanations of decline in trade union density in Britain, *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 28 (2): 165-177.

Dixon, M and J. Fiorito (2009), 'Can Unions Rebound? Decline and Renewal in the US Labour Movement', in *Union Revitalisation in Advanced Economies*, G. Gall (ed), London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Dundon, T. (1998), 'Post-Privatised Shop Steward Organisation and Union Renewal at Girobank', *Industrial Relations Journal,* Vol. 29 (2), pp 126-136.

Dundon, T. (2002). Employer opposition and union avoidance in the UK. *Industrial Relations Journal,* 33 (3): 234-245.

Dundon, T. and Rollinson, D (2004), *Employment Relations in Non-Union Firms*, London: Routledge.

Dundon, T., Cullinane, N. and Harney, B. (2006). The ideology of union-busting *International Union Rights Journal*, 13 (2): 5-6.

Findlay, P. (1993). Union recognition and non unionism: shifting fortunes in the electronic industry in Scotland. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 24 (1): 28-44.

Fox, A. (1966). Managerial Ideology and Labour Relations. *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 4 (3): 366-378.

Fox, A. (1973). Industrial Relations: A Social Critique of pluralist Ideology. In J. Child (ed), *Man and Organisation*, London: George Allen and Unwin.

Fox, A. (1974). *Beyond Contract*. London: Faber and Faber.

Freeden, M. (2003). *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Galbraith, J. K. (1967). *The new industrial state*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Gall, G. (2003). Employer opposition to union recognition, In G. Gall (ed), *Union Organising*. London: Routledge.

Gall, G. (2004), 'British employer resistance to trade union recognition', *Human Resource Management Journal*, 14 (2): 36-53

Gall, G. and McKay, S. (2001). Facing 'fairness at work': Union perception of employer opposition and response to union recognition. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 32 (2): 94-113.

Geare, A., Edgar, F. and McAndrew, I. (2006). Employment relationships: ideology and HRM practice. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 17 (7): 1190-1208.

Giddens, A. (1979). *Central Problems in Social Theory*. London, Macmillan.

Gollan, P. and Wilkinson, A. (2007), 'Contemporary developments in information and consultation', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol 18 (7), pp.1133-1144.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers.

Greenhouse, S. (2004). How do you drive out a union? South Carolina factory provides a textbook case, *New York Times*, December 14: A26.

Greenhouse, S. (2007). Report assails Wal-Mart over unions, *New York Times*, May 1: A24.

Guest, D. and Hoque, K. (1994). The good, the bad and the ugly: employment relations in new non-union workplaces. *Human Resource Management Journal,* 5 (1): 291-314.

Hamilton, P. (2001). Rhetoric and Employment Relations. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 39 (3): 433-449.

Harris, H. J. (1982). *The Right To Manage: Industrial Relations Policies of American Business in the 1940s*. Madison, Wis: University of Winconsin Press.

Haynes, M. (1988), 'Employers and Trade Unions, 1824-1850', in *British Trade Unionism 1750-1850: The Formative Years*, J. Rule (ed), London: Longman.

Hurvitz. H. (1977). Ideology and Industrial Conflict: President Wilson's first industrial conference of October 1919. *Labor History,* 18 (4): 509-524.

Hyman, R. (1987). Strategy or structure? Capital, labour and control. *Work, Employment and Society,* 1 (1): 25-55.

Kaufman, B. (2004). *The Global Evolution of Industrial Relations: Events, Ideas and the IIRA*. Geneva: International Labour Office.

Keenoy, T. (1990). HRM: rhetoric, reality and contradiction. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1 (3): 363-384.

Kelly, J. (1998). *Rethinking Industrial Relations- Mobilization, collectivism and long waves*. London: Routledge

Logan, J. (2002). Consultants, Lawyers and the 'union free' movement in the USA since 1970's. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 33 (3): 197-214.

Logan, J. (2004). The fine art of union busting. *New Labor Forum,* 13 (2): 77-91.

Logan, J. (2006a). Editorial: Union avoidance consultants are looking to export their services. *International Union Rights Journal*, 13 (2): 2.

Logan, J. (2006b). Union free- or your money back. *International Union Rights Journal*, 13 (2): 6-7.

Michels, R. (1915), *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of Oligarchical Tendencies in Modern Democracy*, English Edition, London: Free Press.

Monks, J. (2003). Reported in *The Economist*, 7th June.

Nissen, B. (1998). Fighting the union in a "union friendly" company: The AT&T/NCR Case. *Labor Studies Journal*, Fall: 3-33.

Nolan, P. and O'Donnell, K. (2003). Industrial Relations, HRM and Performance. In Paul Edwards (Ed.) *Industrial Relations*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Pech, R. (2001). Reflections: Termites, group behaviour, and the loss of innovation: conformity rules!. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 16: 559-574.

Peetz, D. (2002). Decollectivist strategies in Oceania. *Industrial Relations, 57 (*2): 252-281.

Peters, T. and Waterman, R. (1982). *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies.* London: Harper & Row.

Purvis, T. and Hunt, A. (1993). Discourse, ideology, discourse ideology, discourse, ideology…. *The British Journal of Sociology,* 44 (3): 473-499.

Ramsay, H. (1977). Cycles of control: worker participation in sociological and historical perspective. *Sociology*, 11 (3): 481-505.

Roy, D. (1980). Repression and Incorporation: Fear Stuff, Sweet Stuff and Evil Stuff, Management's defensiveness against unionism in the south. In T. Nicholas (ed) *Capital and Labour: A Marxist Primer.* Glasgow: Fontana.

Sharpe, R. (1974). Ideology and ontology. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences,* 4: 55-64.

Slaughter, M. (2007). Globalization and the declining unionization in the United States. *Industrial Relations,* 46 (2): 329-346.

Smith, P. and Morton, G. (2001). 'New Labour's Reform of Britain's Employment Law: The Devil is not only in the Detail but in the Values and Policy Too'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 39 (1) :119-138.

Smith, P. and Morton, G. (2006). Nine years of New Labour: Neoliberalism and Workers' Rights. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* , 44 (3): 401-420.

Storey, J. (1983). Managerial Prerogative and the Question of Control. London: Routledge

Sullivan, A. (2001). Cultural Capital and Educational attainment. *Sociology,* 35 (4): 893-912.

Thomas, P. (2001). Ideology and the discourse of strategic management: Critical research framework. *Electronic Journal of Radical Organisation,* 4 (1): 1-16.

Thompson, P. (1989). *The nature of work.* London: MacMillan.

Towers, B. (2002). 'Editorial: Employment rights and union Avoidance', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 33 (3): 180-2.

Whittington, R. (2001). What is strategy and does it matter? London: Routledge.

Willmott, H. (1987). Studying managerial work: A critique and a proposal, *Journal of Management Studies*, 24 (3): 249-270

Willmott, H. (1993). Strength is ignorance; Slavery is Freedom: Managing Culture in Modern Organisations, *Journal of Management Studies*, 30 (4) : 515-552.

Notes

[i] De-collectivism encompasses all employer activities and practices aimed at de-unionizing (removing union membership from presently unionized workplaces), reducing the influence of unions so that they are in effect derecognized for bargaining purposes, or at maintaining an organizations' non-union status (Peetz, 2002: 252).

[ii] The focus here is senior or top managers. While middle or lower managers can and do express distaste for collective forms of worker representation, it is top managers who make decisions on behalf of owners and disseminate these ideals down to lower managers in the organisational hierarchy. In this paper 'manager' and 'managers' refers to senior managers as a social group of agents acting for and on behalf of owners.

[iii] By discourses we mean texts, language and forms of communication that serve to signify specific meanings (Purvis and Hunt, 1993: 485). Meaningful analysis will stem from locating analysis of discursive practices and texts to the social and structural contexts which condition their production, distribution, consumption and interpretation. One cannot be analysed in isolation from the other (Thomas, 2001).

[iv] John Monks, a former head of the of Britain's Trade Union Congress (TUC) and now General Secretary of the European Trades Union Congress (ETUC), Brussels. Cited in the Economist, 7th June 2003.