Understanding and Analysing Resistance to Management Ideas

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Abstract

This Chapter presents three influential and widespread approaches towards analysing workplace resistance to management ideas. The first (industrial relations) has primarily focused on union resistance. The second (labour process) considers individual and collective resistance to management ideas in a context of antagonism between labour and capital. The third (post-structuralism) has sought to introduce subjectivity and identity into the analysis to further enhance our understanding of resistance. The Chapter begins with a brief contextual sketch of resistance to management ideas as a means to situate the subsequent discussion of these issues. Then, after presenting the three approaches, we consider 'productive/facilitative' resistance, which suggests that resistance can facilitate organizational change and can be beneficial for both organisations *and* employees. We examine whether this position can be considered to constitute a fourth approach towards understanding resistance. Our argument is that, at the current stage of its development, it would be premature to do so because (1) it is still quite recent, and, by necessity, under-explored (2) it contains different strands and (3) it shares similarities with previous approaches. Nevertheless, we believe that productive/facilitative resistance does raise some important questions and opens promising avenues for future research and so finally, we conclude with some thoughts about directions for future work on resistance to management ideas.

Keywords: identity, industrial relations, labour process, power, post-structuralism, resistance, subjectivity, unions.

Introduction

Any discussion of the adoption and consumption of management ideas would be incomplete without some consideration of resistance. This is because managers are not omniscient or omnipotent and are often divided among themselves (Knights and Murray,1994; Watson,1994). Indeed, those who initiate or implement management ideas, such as consultants and managers may not be entirely supportive of them (e.g. Larson and Tompkins,2005). Moreover, those subject to management ideas, be they managers or employees, are not passive (Clark and Salaman,1998; Sturdy,1997; see also Kieser and Bort in this volume) and so resistance is apt to arise from numerous quarters and in multiple ways; it has therefore „been and continues to be a key - perhaps defining – thematic of organizational life" (Mumby et al 2017: 1160). Thus both the development and ultimate

impact of management ideas cannot be understood without considering the ways people may resist. However, whilst resistance has been a subject of study for many years and there have been edited collections (Courpasson and Vallas, 2016; Jermier et al,1994) and special issues of Management Communication Quarterly (2005; 2008) and, more recently, Organization Studies (2017) dedicated to the topic of resistance, an overview of resistance to management ideas, is still missing.

The meaning of resistance has widened in recent years to include more subtle and less overt acts of dissent (e.g. Knights and McCabe,2000; Thomas and Davies, 2005), which has, however, also attracted some criticism. Fleming and Spicer (2008), for example, ask whether „there is a risk of reducing resistance to the most banal and innocuous everyday actions" (op cit: 303). Deetz (2008: 387) likewise refers to resistance as „a catchall term" (op cit: 387). Similarly, others (e.g. Hodgson, 2005) observe that „resistance" does not always fully capture the ambiguous and often contradictory actions of organisational members who can engage in shifting oppositional practices that entail both consent and dissent (see Burawoy,1979; Collinson, 1994; McCabe, 2014; Ybema and Horvers, 2017). While we do not subscribe to a strict acceptance-resistance dichotomy (McDermott et al, 2013) which often places resistance within a negative paradigm (Thomas and Davies, 2005), for the purpose of this chapter, we use the term resistance to describe non-conformant acts and subjectivities in relation to management ideas. In line with Prasad and Prasad (2000) and Mumby et al (2017), we see resistance as a situated and social practice, the meaning of which needs to be understood in relation to the context in which it is enacted.

Scholars have explored many different forms of resistance including formal (Hyman,1972) and spontaneous wildcat strikes (Gouldner,1954; McCabe,2007). Attention has been given to „fiddles" (Mars,1982), „sabotage" (Bensman and Gerver, 1963; LaNuez and Jermier,1994) and „making out" (Delbridge,1995; McCabe,2007b, 2014). In recent years, greater attention has been given to less obvious forms of resistance such as humour (Collinson, 1988; 1992); mockery, gossip and silence (Ybema and Horvers, 2017), whistleblowing (Rothschild and Miethe,1994; Weiskopf and Tobias-Miersch, 2016); memory (McCabe,2004,2010); distancing (Collinson,1994; McCabe, 2007b); misbehaviour (Ackroyd and Thompson,1999; Knights and McCabe, 2000); cynicism (Fleming and Spicer, 2003); exiting or resigning (Parker, 2014) and the creation of alternative meanings (Hawkins, 2008) and subject positions (e.g. Meriläinen et al, 2004; Thomas and Davies, 2005). This expanded understanding of resistance partially reflects the decline in official strikes in many Western

countries; the loss of unionised heavy manufacturing jobs, but also increased managerial efforts towards controlling meaning, culture and identity, with an associated rise in post-structural theorising around identity and subjectivity.

As studies have shown (e.g. Knights and McCabe, 2000; LaNuez and Jermier, 1994), resistance is complex, multifaceted and often contradictory. It is not only accomplished by employees, but a range of actors such as managers (Courpasson et al,2012; Thomas et al,2011), with the latter often subtly colluding with staff (Bensman and Gerver,1963; Thursfield, 2015). In some instances, managers have sabotaged change (Larson and Tompkins, 2005) and consultants have resisted resistance (Karreman and Alvesson, 2009) or established ways of working (O"Mahoney et al,2013). Moreover, clear-cut distinctions between individual and collective resistance can also be misleading (see McCabe,2007a). For example, seemingly individual acts of resistance may require collaboration with others (Mulholland, 2004; Thursfield, 2015) or can give rise to collective resistance (Courpasson, 2017).

Along with other chapters of this volume, we review the three main approaches that can be identified in relation to resistance to management ideas, those derived from industrial relations, labour process and post-structural scholarship, although in practice the distinctions are not always clear cut (e.g. Jermier et al,1994) and alternative approaches as well as other ways of systematising the vast body of work could be considered (see e.g. Mumby et al, 2017). Courpasson et al (2012) have suggested that earlier approaches share an oppositional understanding of resistance and, by contrast, they elevate a productive approach. As we review the three different approaches, however, we shall see that this dualism between oppositional and productive resistance is problematic. Nevertheless, in a fourth section, we will consider literature that has reprised the argument that resistance is positive, facilitative or productive. In the next section, we introduce the context through which the contemporary debate about resistance has emerged.

Resistance in Context

Historical research indicates that we cannot understand management ideas without considering resistance, nor can we unpack resistance without paying attention to the context through which it emerges, as management ideas are not born and popularised in a vacuum (see Barley and Kunda,1992; Ramsey,1977; see also Seeck and Lamberg in this volume). As we will discuss later in the chapter, resistance might arise in relation to given management

ideas, the way in which the ideas are interpreted or the speed in which they are introduced. However, resistance is also connected to the historical, contemporary and political work context. Below, we briefly point to the early writings on the introduction of management ideas and consider how the wider socio-economic context is crucial for understanding resistance.

The introduction of management ideas has never been an uncontested process. Indeed it is interwoven with resistance. Hence, Thompson (1967) explored how the industrial revolution and the earliest factories were characterised by struggles over time as management sought to formalise or bureaucratise methods of work organization. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these struggles continued in relation to Taylor"s scientific method of rate setting, initially in the USA. Scientific Management sought to address „systematic soldiering" or worker endeavours to reduce effort and avoid work. Interestingly, as historic studies show (e.g. Nelson, 1975; Shenav,1999) scientific management often encountered more opposition from managers, foremen, owners and engineers than from workers. Ramsey (1977), whose „cycles of control" thesis focused on more humanistic management ideas in the guise of employee participation (e.g. profit sharing, semi-autonomous work teams, consultation), illustrated how participation schemes flourished at times of low unemployment when trade unionism was strong and employees were willing to resist during the first and second World Wars and in the 1960s/1970s culminating in ideas related to the Quality of Working Life movement.

Since the 1980s, there has been a fundamental change in the workplace and new management ideas (e.g. Excellence, HRM, TQM, BPR, Teamwork, Lean) have been both a condition and outcome of this period of transition. A turning point was the 1980s shift towards neoliberalism under the premiership of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the USA. De-industrialisation gathered pace in both countries initiating a period of sustained high unemployment, with both economies moving towards the service sector and the elevation of enterprise (du Gay and Salaman,1992) where employees are urged to be flexible, responsible, and innovative while being promised greater freedom and autonomy (Willmott,1993). This trend has been followed to varying degrees in countries such as New Zealand (Doolin,2002), Sweden (Garsten,1999) and Australia (Sturdy and Wright,2008). Indeed, Hassard et al (2011) found evidence of different organisational forms and changes in management across the UK, USA and Japan, in private and public sector organisations.

Whilst there were some continuities (e.g. a drive for cost control), new forms of organising were widespread.

The privatization of public services and deregulation followed by the 2008 Global Financial Crisis have ushered in an age of insecurity and growing inequality. Downsizing or rightsizing, flexibility and restructuring have become popular management ideas. Culture change programmes promoting the „culture of the customer" (du Gay and Salaman,1992) have spread to the public sector through the New Public Management (Hood,1991). Indeed, an accelerated use of new management ideas seem integral to this era, hence Carson et al (2000) explored sixteen management fashions over five decades and their findings indicate that those introduced in more recent years have shorter life spans than their earlier counterparts.

In this context there has been a burgeoning interest in workplace resistance that reflects the theoretical approaches of different scholars but also the aforementioned changing nature of work and employment (e.g. work intensification, declining living standards, insecurity, non-unionism, subjugation through culture change programmes) for many frontline employees and managers. As we have argued in this section, these conditions can help to explain why people might resist management ideas but they also account for the shift in the forms of resistance and especially why organised, collective resistance has diminished.

In the following sections we discuss how industrial relations, labour process and post-structural scholars have explored resistance to management ideas (see Table 1). We concentrate on selected empirical articles that exemplify the approach and illustrate what each adds to our understanding of resistance to management ideas. Before concluding, we turn to the contemporary discussion regarding productive resistance.

Table 1 Overview of different perspectives on resistance

Perspective	**Industrial relations**	**LPT**	**Post-structuralism**
Dominant focus	Trade union-management struggles	Worker resistance; control-resistance dynamics in a context of workplace inequality	Struggles in relation to subjectivity
Typical motivation	Threat to the balance of power between unions and	Need for autonomy, to evade control; reduce	Need for authenticity, protection against

for resistance	management; threat to worker interests	exploitation, combat work intensification	colonising forces and threats to extant subject positions
Examples of resistance practices	Union resistance in the form of industrial action (e.g. strikes, wildcats, work to rule, ballots)	Collective and individual resistant actions such as „making out", fiddles.	Typically diffuse acts of subversion such as distancing, cynicism, surface acting, humour, disruption of official discourses, counter discourses
Common limitations	Limited focus on subjectivity Limited focus on covert and individual forms of resistance Narrow focus on union-management relations	Focus on action rather than subjectivity Preoccupation with management-worker relations at the expense of other workplace relationships	Emphasis on identity or subjectivity can lead to a preoccupation with small scale disturbance

Industrial Relations

Industrial Relations as a discipline dominated the study of workplace relations during the post-war period. In the West, this was a period of growing trade union membership and strike activity. Although over recent decades, strike figures have fallen in many Western countries, this partly reflects structural changes in the composition of the workforce in that employment in heavily unionised industries (manufacturing, mining, steel, shipbuilding) has also declined. The object of study for traditional industrial relations scholars has therefore diminished. Nevertheless, industrial relations scholars have produced a vast body of work that typically focuses on strikes, collective bargaining and trade union resistance to management (Tapia et al, 2015) in a variety of sectors and among different groups of workers, such as miners (Allen, 2009), post office workers (Beirne, 2013; Beale, 2003) and dockers (Turnbull and Sapsford, 2001). Here, resistance is motivated by a concern to protect the living standards, working conditions and „bargaining power" of disparate groups. The industrial relations approach focuses upon trade union institutions such as convenors, shop stewards and their organisations such as Joint Shop Stewards Committees (JSSCs), and how unions are able to mobilise resistance. This may arise, for example, when the balance of power between

management and workers is threatened by management ideas and the practices they imply. We will now consider two illustrative examples within this strand of theorising.

Beale"s (2003) study of the Royal Mail explores collective resistance to management ideas such as teamwork and flexibility which were perceived as a threat to established relations. Attempts to introduce team briefings resulted in a national dispute in 1988 because the union saw them as „a serious challenge to its own channels of workplace communication and to the authority of workplace representatives" (Beale, 2003: 86). Subsequent efforts to impose flexible working also led to widespread industrial action in 1993 (Beale, 2003). The underlying concern of the resistance was not to avoid labour flexibility, but that workers should have control over how work is allocated. Teamwork was considered „a threat to duty systems and seniority principles" (op cit: 88). Beale"s (2003) study therefore indicates that the types of resistance that emerged during the industrial revolution (Thompson,1967) and in response to Taylorism (Nelson,1975) continue to play out.

In the case of an aerospace plant that introduced a High Performance Work System (HPWS), Danford et al (2004) focused on management attempts to radically restructure the organisation using flexibilisation, downsizing and continuous improvement. Management was described by Danford et al (2004: 20) as trying to „soften up" their interactions with the union by seeking greater employee involvement and establishing new participatory partnership arrangements with shop stewards. Resistance was collective and organised, reflecting a history of adversarial trade union-management relations, where management only engaged with unions when compelled to do so. The trade union organised strikes and official/unofficial overtime bans to limit management prerogative. In the production area of the company, the JSSC resisted a partnership approach because it was contradicted by redundancies and rationalisation. By contrast, white-collar workers agreed to cooperate with management, but soon resisted because management could not „necessarily deliver on what they had promised" (op cit: 20). According to Danford et al (2004: 28), resistance to HPWS is „inevitable" due to „the inherent conflict in the capitalist employment relationship" and these insights tend to place Danford et al (2004) on the „radical" wing of industrial relations scholarship (Fox,1966) which shares much in common with Labour Process Theory.

Despite its great strength of focusing on the practicalities of how organized workers resist, one limitation of this approach is that it sheds little light on resistance in the growing number of non-unionised workplaces. Another is that it tends to neglect covert forms of resistance

and resistance by groups other than shop or office workers. Moreover, industrial relations scholars rarely attend to subjectivity. As Fitzgerald and Stirling (1999), for example, have argued, resistance and militancy have to be considered not only in relation to the views, attitudes and behaviour of workers, but also in the context of the subjective elements of union leaders.

Labour Process Theory

Labour Process Theory (LPT) derives from Marx and was revitalised following the publication of Braverman"s (1974) *Labour and Monopoly Capital*. As critics have pointed out (see Knights and Willmott,1990), the initial focus of LPT was on control (Friedman,1977; Edwards,1979) but subsequently attention has turned to resistance. The motivation for resistance, from this perspective, is inseparable from the context through which it arises. This is marked by persistent inequalities or, in its own terms, exploitation of workers by capitalists and their agents - management. Rather than a pluralist setting, which is indicative of some industrial relations writing, the employment relationship is understood to reflect a „structural antagonism" (Ackroyd and Thompson,1999:29). Nevertheless, it is also understood that management-worker relations are simultaneously characterised by adaptation and accommodation (Edwards,1986:5). An important feature of LPT is „labour power" whereby employers only buy the capacity or potential of individuals to work. The „indeterminate status of labour power" (Thompson and Smith, 2010:4) means that there is always a potential for employees to resist the controls embedded in management ideas.

Labour process theorists, like earlier industrial sociologists (e.g. Mars,1982; Roy,1952), are interested in *acts* of resistance, be they collective or individual, organised or unorganised, and so resistance is not limited to trade union struggles. It includes what Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) define as misbehaviour „which includes the widest range of behaviour –from failure to work very hard or conscientiously, through not working at all, deliberate output restriction, practical joking, pilferage, sabotage and sexual misconduct" (op cit:1-2). We will now turn to two studies that illustrate resistance from this approach.

Delbridge"s (1995) ethnographic study of a Japanese-owned electronics plant in England explored how employees resisted management ideas (JIT and TQM) in „increasingly fragmentary and marginal" (op cit:803) ways. This study is useful because the union influence in the organization was low and so to have focused only on union-management relations would have revealed little about how management ideas are resisted.

The resistance Delbridge (1995) identified related to *work practices* and partly emerged when workers could not keep up with production line speed. Certain forms of resistance were restricted (or resisted) by some employees, which reflected that such resistance had a detrimental impact on work colleagues further down the line. It was found that workers resisted the resistance of their peers through verbal abuse or ostracism (op cit:813). Delbridge (1995) did not refer to these inter-worker dynamics as resistance perhaps because his LPT perspective led him to consider resistance only in terms of workers resisting management not each other. These dynamics also meant that certain forms of off-the-line resistance such as „absenteeism" (ibid) (which again was not referred to as resistance) were also limited due to their negative impact on workers who would have to make up for their missing colleagues by working harder. In effect, these management ideas redirected resistance into a worker-worker dynamic rather than a worker-manager dynamic (see also Parker and Slaughter,1988).

Delbridge (1995) observed individual *acts* of resistance whereby employees distanced themselves from the values of the organization such as not wearing a company uniform, not paying attention during team briefings, refusing to engage in problem solving and avoiding overtime. This labour process approach with its emphasis on how resistant *actions* emerge or fail to emerge in relation to management ideas can be contrasted with other studies. For instance, in contrast to Delbridge"s (1995) focus on „the perceptions and meanings of the actors" (op cit:814), Collinson (1994) attended to how employees may subjectively distance themselves from corporate culture demands.

Delbridge"s (1995) conclusion that „workers are increasingly restricted in finding ways of resisting management control that are collectively beneficial" (op cit:815) can also be contrasted with the findings and arguments of Bain and Taylor"s (2000) study of a call centre. Bain and Taylor (2000) explored a number of management ideas related to what they considered as „Team Taylorism" (op cit:10), including outsourcing, new technology, teamworking, benchmarking, mystery shoppers, customer care, coaching and lean production. This study depicts an intense and tightly controlled work regime where resistance reflected the activities of a small group of employees who sought to organise a trade union. The „catalyst" for „union recruitment" (op cit:14) was the identification of „managerial malpractice" (ibid) in relation to health and safety issues. Resistance included union activists monitoring „the systems malfunctioning" (ibid), collecting evidence and publicising it so as to compel management „to remedy the situation" (op cit:15). This can be seen as an example of employees engaging in what has more recently been termed „productive" (Courpasson et

al,2012) resistance, which was proactive rather than reactive and reflected issues that concerned the wider workforce.

These authors argued that resistant acts and the subsequent growth of trade unionism „was actualised through „subjectivity"" (op cit: 14) but they are critical of post-structural theorising, where „subjectivity is synonymous with identity, and identity with individualism" (op cit:16). Bain and Taylor"s (2000) arguments provide an interesting insight into the different ways in which labour process and post-structural approaches understand subjectivity. Hence Bain and Taylor"s (2000) equate subjectivity with *action*.

LPT enhances our understanding of resistance because it evades a narrow focus on trade union-management relations. Indeed, given the growth of non-union workplaces, we need to be sensitive to struggles both for union recognition and to struggles that do not involve trade unions. A strength of LPT is its focus on varied *acts* of resistance but a limitation is that this tends to be at the expense of resistant subjectivities. In this vein, Karreman and Alvesson (2009) argue that „"fully-fledged" studies of resistance" need to consider „both subjectivity [identity] and action" (op cit:1122). Another limitation is the assumption that attending to subjectivity in terms of identity means narrowly focusing on individualism because individualism is only one form of subjectivity (Knights and McCabe,2003). Indeed, it has been argued that subjectivity is simultaneously collective and individual and so these are not mutually exclusive positions (see McCabe,2007a). A final limitation is that LPT focuses on how labour resists management and so this tends to marginalise the resistance of other actors (e.g. management, consultants) and forms of resistance that go beyond labour-management relations (e.g. Russell and McCabe,2015). We will now turn to literature that is more post-structural in orientation.

Post-Structural theorising

There has been a surge of interest in post-structural ways of theorising resistance, which partly reflects a concern to address the „missing subject" (Thompson,1990:114) of LPT and the question of „consent" (Burawoy,1979) or how employees (re)produce a capitalist system characterised by immense inequality (Willis,1977). Also, the notion of alienated subjects who are repressed through power has been questioned through Foucault"s (1977) productive concept of power (Knights and Vurdubakis,1994; Knights and Willmott,1989). This theoretical shift has coincided with a decline in trade unionism and a torrent of management ideas targeting employee subjectivity since the 1980s (see du Gay and Salaman,1992;

Willmott,1993). Together these developments have led to a focus on „resistance at the level of subjectivity" (Meriläinen et al, 2004:558) and identity (Jermier et al,1994; Ezzamel et al, 2001; Knights and McCabe,2000) which „opens up for inspection the „complex-media" of capital-labour relations" (O"Doherty and Willmott,2001: 459). It is, however, important to note that many theorists who have sought to incorporate subjectivity into an analysis of resistance are sympathetic to and aligned with the concerns of LPT (e.g. Collinson, 1992; Knights and McCabe,1998; Sturdy, 1992). Theorising around subjectivity does not therefore preclude an interest in broader issues around power/inequality and indeed key theorists in this area argue that they are entwined (Knights and Willmott, 1989).

The focus of post-structural scholars is on the role that people"s attachment to „diverse and heterogeneous bases of identification" (Bardon, Clegg and Josserand, 2012: 358) can play in resisting the identities promoted by management ideas, such as the team identity (e.g. Knights and McCabe, 2003). Resistance and control are here seen as co-constitutive, fluid and multidimensional (e.g. Fleming and Spicer, 2008; Harding et al, 2017). The forms of resistance include dis-identification, cynicism or humour (e.g. Collinson, 1994; Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Knights and McCabe,2000; Westwood and Johnston, 2011) and discursive expressions of resistance, for example, to the New Public Management (NPM) including processes of „adaptation, subversion and reinscription of dominant discourses" (Thomas and Davies, 2005: 687), which enable the creation of resistant subject positions and alternative meanings (Clegg,1994). This resistance is understood to be motivated by a concern to defend or maintain „valued conceptions of self" (Ashforth and Mael, 1998: 97) in the face of the subjugating pressures of new management ideas (Knights and Willmott,1989) when „the constitution of self or identity is jeopardized" (Harding et al, 2017: 1210).

This approach highlights the complexity and ambiguity of resistance to new management ideas. It demonstrates that resistance is not limited to employees or trade unions, or that it can be gendered. Hence Knights and McCabe"s (2003) research in a building society highlighted the way in which a parental identity (mother, father) and related commitments can resist the demands of teamwork (see also Thomas and Davies,2005; Fleming, 2007). A recent illustration of this approach relates to what has been termed neo-normative control, whereby some new management ideas extol the virtues of diversity, authenticity and self-expression, rather than uniformity and conformity. Here, „Personal authenticity….becomes the very medium through which…[subjective domination] is secured" (Fleming, 2013: 487). Fleming

and Sturdy (2009: 578) ask: „How might one resist being oneself?. In answer, Fleming (2013: 482) alludes to the existence of pockets of „subversive readiness" that are manifested in the forging of a different 'sense of authenticity" than the official one as well as efforts to oppose individualism through evoking „sentiments of solidarity and uniformity" (op cit: 579).

Another illustration of this approach is Hodgson"s (2005) study of project management. The author demonstrates how the officially promoted „professional" identity associated with project management was met with „a complex mixture of attraction, fear and a profound ambivalence" (op cit:61) among staff and managers. On the one hand, organisation members appeared to be attracted to a professional identity as it enabled them to position themselves as superior to external consultants. On the other, they mocked the norms of professionalism and project management. This helped staff deal with the challenges they faced in terms of reconciling the expected professional identity with the demands of their daily work which was experienced as much more unpredictable and complex than the one described in project management methodologies. As Hodgson (2005) concludes, socially and collectively enacted humour and parody were „a means of rejecting and accepting, of adopting and challenging, the role of professional" (op cit: 62).

Although post-structural theorising adds complexity to our understanding of resistance, its limitation is its focus on relatively „low levels of disturbance [such as the]…destabilizing, weakening…of dominant discourses" (Thomas and Davies, 2005: 701) or cynicism (Fleming and Spicer,2003). These forms of resistance typically do not pose a direct challenge to the adoption of management ideas. Nor do they necessarily disrupt work processes, which has led some commentators to describe them as „decaffeinated" (Contu,2008) because they do not carry the same threat to those in positions of authority as more organised forms of resistance, such as for example strikes. Nevertheless, this does not mean that such resistance is without importance, especially when management ideas strive to colonize the subjective domain (Willmott,1993). Although this resistance may not formally challenge management ideas, it can destabilize them and also help to maintain the independence and dignity of those subjected to them. As Edwards et al (1995) put it, „in certain cases the „mental strike" or indifference of one individual.....could be more damaging to management than a strike by an entire workforce" (op cit:291). Indeed, as Ybema and Horvers (2017) observe, some forms of resistance may be „decaffeinated" by design, as precisely this backstage quality enables them to effectively frustrate the change efforts they seek to de-legitimise.

Productive or Facilitative Resistance: A Contemporary Debate

Recently, a „facilitative" (Thomas et al,2011) or „productive" (Courpasson et al,2012) understanding of resistance has emerged. The latter differentiates itself from earlier approaches that are argued to assume „a fixed opposition between irreconcilable adversaries" (op cit:901). The extent to which this perspective is separate and distinct from previous approaches is difficult to establish, not least because some of the literature is overtly managerial, some analytical and some has a more critical orientation. In terms of the latter, productive resistance is said to take the form of „concrete activities that aim to voice claims and interests that are not taken into account by management decisions" (op cit: 801). Courpasson et al (2012) illustrate this by referring to empirical research where one group of managers resisted another. The „concrete activities" included mobilising resources, compiling and submitting a „report" that articulated „a new agenda" (op cit:806), the motivation for which was to include other voices than those of top management in „significant organizational change" (op cit: 801) for the „good of the organization" (op cit:816). Thomas et al (2011), adopt a micro-focus and consider „facilitative" resistance by middle managers in relation to a culture change programme. This form of resistance involved a „generative dialogue" and „counteroffers" (op cit: 35), which was motivated by a concern to modify rather than to resist the idea of a culture change.

The organisational change management literature, by contrast, tends to adopt an overtly managerial version of this approach and seeks to reframe our understanding of resistance. Instead of thinking about resistance as being motivated by opposition to corporate goals or management ideas, it seeks to encourage us to think about how resistance can contribute to them (e.g. Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979), for example, by providing a „source of innovation" (Waddell and Sohal, 1998: 545). It views resistance as „a powerful tool" (Ford and Ford,2009:100) of managers or „a valuable resource in the accomplishment of change" (Ford and Ford,2010:24). The form of resistance includes asking questions, making complaints or raising objections to proposed changes (e.g. Ford and Ford,2009,2010; McDermott et al, 2013). Authors within this approach recognise that resistance may „be motivated by individual"s ethical principles or by their desire to protect" the organization"s „best interest" (Piderit, 2000: 585).

A strength of this overall approach is that it attempts to increase employee voice within organizations but this could equally be seen as a limitation if it merely reinforces the status

quo. Courpasson et al (2012) present productive resistance as a distinctive approach since it „includes a mix of compliance and outright confrontation" (Courpasson et al,2012: 817) as opposed to previous approaches, what are said to assume „a fixed opposition between irreconcilable adversaries" (op cit: 901). It has to be acknowledged, however, that productive resistance echoes earlier accounts that highlighted how consent and dissent are blurred (Burawoy,1979; Jermier et al,1994).

Indeed, LPT commentators, for example Delbridge (1995), have asserted that „The interrelations of management and labour are dynamic, confused and confusing. To consider these relations as only conflictual is unrealistic" (op cit:806). He continues that „workers have not only sought to resist managerial authority in the workplace and nor have their counter-control actions always been to the ultimate detriment of capital" (op cit:807). Delbridge therefore alludes to resistance being productive for capital, whereas other scholars have highlighted that resistance can unwittingly aid management control through generating „consent" (Burawoy,1979; Sturdy,1992; Willis,1977). As discussed above, Bain and Taylor (2000) illustrated how resistance can address managerial malpractice in relation to Health and Safety issues. One could therefore argue that this is productive for management and employees even though Bain and Taylor (2000) did not frame their arguments in this way.

We can see then that there are overlaps between traditional LPT and a productive understanding of resistance. This is also the case in relation to post-structuralism or scholarship interested in identity/subjectivity. Hence Collinson"s (1994) „resistance through persistence" is consistent with productive resistance because through it „subordinates seek to demand greater involvement in the organization" (op cit:25). He discussed successful employee resistance to gender discrimination and depicted this as an „oppositional strategy" (op cit:28) characterised by overlapping „consent, compliance and resistance" (op cit:51). Although not described as such,resistance to discrimination was productive for the employee and employer because management was seeking to create a new corporate culture that „included a strong commitment to equal opportunities" (op cit: 41). The resistance used the „culture change" initiative to justify challenging „management practices" (op cit: 50) and it „had the effect of promoting equal opportunity throughout the company" (op cit:52).

Knights and Vurdubakis" (1994) post-structural or Foucauldian analysis of power and resistance highlighted that both are productive. Hence resistance was argued to play „the role of continuously provoking extensions, revisions and refinements of those same practices

which it confronts" (op cit:180). Although not explicitly stated, both Thomas et al (2011) and Courpasson et al"s (2012) accounts appear to take this as their starting point and so analyse „the concrete struggles in which power relations are embedded" (Knights and Vurdubakis,1994:183) or how practices of resistance achieve „extensions, revisions or refinements" (ibid: 180). However, what they pay less attention to, is that „the outcomes of resistance" are „as unpredictable as the conditions that make it possible" (op cit:189).

So what are the differences and similarities between productive/facilitative resistance and prior theorising? One similarity with LPT and post-structuralism is that the analysis is not limited to trade union-management relations. Despite Courpasson et al"s (2012) distinction between earlier oppositional approaches and their own, it is apparent that authors working in different traditions have already argued that relations between management and employees are not simply oppositional. Industrial relations, LPT and post-structural theorists have already highlighted that resistance can be productive but this is not always explicit in these accounts and one has to infer it from them. These accounts implicitly stress that resistance can be productive for employees but they tend not consider whether it is for the wider organisation.

Conclusion

This analysis of resistance to management ideas arguably raises more questions than it answers, thus highlighting the need for further research. What can we take from the approaches that have been outlined? We believe that they highlight that our understanding of resistance is produced and constrained by our theoretical lens or scholarly traditions that allow us to see some things but not others. Although the approaches are often rooted in different philosophical assumptions and are therefore not easily reconcilable (see also O"Mahoney in this volume), we see considerable potential for cross-pollination between them which could help to advance our understanding of resistance to management ideas.

As we have discussed in this chapter, industrial relations scholars have largely attended to union resistance but this only provides a partial picture of resistance and, as scholars within that discipline recognise (Tapia et al,2015), it confronts problems when the empirical terrain shifts. Still, we see potential for detailed future studies within this tradition to enrich our understanding of the organisation and mobilisation of collective resistance to management ideas among unionised workers. Future studies can explore how resistance to management

ideas is mobilised and enacted by workers in less traditional and more dispersed employment settings underpinned by the more precarious employment relationships associated with the "gig" economy. Here, unionisation itself can be seen as an act of resistance. This expanded focus can include not only new settings but also other professional groups which have tended to be studied within other approaches.

Labour Process Theory, by contrast, has provided insights into individual and collective *acts* of resistance to management ideas and is grounded in an appreciation of the inequalities that characterise the employment relationship. This focus on acts is important but it has tended to be at the expense of subjectivity, which has been the focus of post-structural scholars. Future work underpinned by Labour Process Theory can, therefore, be enriched by considering resistant acts while staying attuned to issues of subjectivity.

Post-structural scholars who have elucidated resistance at the level of subjectivities, in turn, can enrich their analysis of resistance by providing more detailed accounts of the material forms of dis-identification and „the material conditions in which people are embedded" (Bardon et al,2012:360). This could help to illuminate why some organisation members might be more susceptible to management ideas than others. This broadening of the focus of post-structural resistance in relation to materiality has been advocated by Knights and McCabe (2016) through their use of Actor Network Theory and it opens up new possibilities for research. Similarly, Harding et al"s (2017) performative theory of resistance aims to shed light on „the formations within and through which control and resistance are materialized" (op cit: 1210). Attention can also be given to how the reconfiguration of space/place creates new struggles and forms of resistance related to the "gig" economy and insecure forms of employment relating to migrant workers. It would be valuable to know what management ideas these workers are exposed to and how and with what effects these unorganised workers resist.

In our chapter we have also pointed to the emerging and still very disparate approach which sees resistance as facilitative or productive (Thomas et al,2011; Courpasson et al,2012). While the premise that resistance can be productive is itself not new, more research is needed to unpack the productive side of resistance, the conditions under which it emerges and the effects it produces. Empirical research is particularly needed to explain the relevance of such arguments for employees as well as managers and to explore both successful and failed „entrepreneurial actions" (McDermott et al, 2013) of a wider range of resisters enacting

change. The usefulness of this debate is that it draws our attention to the practicalities of how resistance is mobilised and organized, which can be lost if our analysis becomes too micro-focused or preoccupied solely with shades of subjectivity.

If resistance can be reconsidered in term of its productive implications for the wider organisations and framed accordingly it could help to redefine negative conceptions of resistance. To some extent, trade unions already do this, for instance, when strikes are presented as being about public safety on the railways or improvements in the public health service. LPT and post-structural scholars rarely offer guidelines about how to resist, which Courpasson et al (2012) attempt to do, but this is implicit in industrial relations approaches, at least in relation to trade unions. There are tensions in being prescriptive in relation to resistance because we cannot assume that all resistance is „good" nor can we know the outcomes of resistance. Much, of course, will depend on the context of such struggles.

This type of tension reflects that established approaches insist that „resistance cannot be examined as if it were separate from workplace discipline and control" (Collinson,1994:51) or the broader conditions of power and inequality and this context needs to be considered in relation to productive resistance. This is significant because if resistance merely reinforces extant corporate power relations and inequalities then should it be regarded as productive? As our arguments so far have indicated, we are loathe to spell out resistance strategies or tactics because of the unequal context through which resistance arises and also because even with the best intentions outcomes cannot be predicted. What may be successful in one context may prove disastrous in another; what fails in one context may succeed in another. Certainly, empirical research is needed to explore such dynamics but problems of generalization will remain.

Our primary focus has been on resistance to management ideas and so we have only briefly touched upon how resistance relates to gender and discrimination. We are aware that resistance in relation to other forms of discrimination (age, race, sexuality) requires far more attention. Although a significant body of work already exists (e.g. Collinson,1992; Kerfoot and Knights,1993; Thomas and Davies,2005) it would be useful to consider how specific and contemporary management ideas perpetuate or contribute to inequalities and how resistance emerges in relation to them. We agree with Thomas and Davies (2005) that there is considerable potential for studies inspired by the feminist perspective and its deep appreciation of difference in relation to „voices, contexts, forms and outcomes" (op cit: 731)

to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of intra- and inter -group resistant practices and processes in relation to management ideas. Similarly, more work is needed on the „situated performance of resistance" which would unpack different configurations, intersections and „resistance-compliance blends" (Ybema and Horvers, 2017: 1249) *in*, *around* and *between* different organisations (see e.g. Courpasson and Vallas, 2016; Mumby et al, 2017; Russell and McCabe, 2015).

To conclude, according to Edwards (1986), employees „find means of living with the system as they find it" they „do not simply enter work and then seek means of resistance" (op cit:42). This indicates that precisely why and how agents resist, be they managers, unions, consultants or workers, individually and in collaboration, needs to be investigated in the context of shifting economic conditions. The creative, collaborative and intimately contextualised faces of resistant practices along with their intended and unintended outcomes merit further attention. In particular, we see potential in studies adopting longitudinal designs and more immersive methods of data collection such as ethnography and netnography, which would allow us to explore the patterns, shifts and effects of resistance (work) in situ over time. Nevertheless, we recognise that such studies are extremely difficult due to the pressures on academics and that research access for the purposes of critical investigation is likely to be restricted.

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