

University of Stirling

Developing a theoretical basis for the concept of
organizational misbehaviour

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ABSTRACT

Workplace misbehaviour is seen to be a neglected feature of organizational study (Ackroyd and Thompson; Vardi and Weitz, 2004). Where research has been undertaken into misbehaviour the emphasis tends fall into two broad categories. First of all, organizational behaviour theorists use the term misbehaviour as a means to highlight how the 'negative' behaviour of employees gets in the way of formal organizational goals. Secondly, radical sociologists tend to use the term misbehaviour as a means to critique Foucauldian labour process theory. Here an argument is made that suggests the disciplinary affects of new management practices associated with human resource management and total quality management have been overstated. Furthermore, radical sociologists also use the term misbehaviour as means to critique organizational behaviour accounts, which are believed to paint overly optimistic accounts of organizational life.

However, on further examination it was discovered that neither a radical sociological approach, nor a traditional organizational behaviour approach, sufficiently addresses the current deficit in our understandings and explanations for workplace misbehaviour. Hence, one of the main themes of this thesis was to design a theoretical and methodological framework to address the deficit in our understandings and explanations. As such, a view was taken of how a radical sociological approach (orthodox labour process analysis) combined with an emerging social psychological perspective (a social identity approach (Haslam, 2001) could help overcome previous theoretical problems associated with researching misbehaviour.

Empirical support for this approach is provided by the detailed examination of the objective and subjective working conditions of four different sets of low status workers. The findings are

based on longitudinal covert participant observations, as well as covert interviews and the covert gathering of company documents. The findings depart from previous insights into workplace misbehaviour in stressing the importance of acknowledging and investigating both the organizational and sub-group social identities of low status workers, in relation to such activities. As such, a great deal of the misbehaviour noted in the findings can be attributed to the poor treatment of low status workers by management, yet misbehaviour is equally if not more attributable to the empowering or inhibitive qualities of the many psychological groups that worker can associate with or disassociate themselves from. Recommendations are made about the direction of future research into workplace misbehaviour. There are many suggestions made and include examining misbehaviour in a wider range of settings, sectors and levels of organizations.

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CHAPTER 1: THE NEGLECT OF MISBEHAVIOUR

1.1 Introduction

A small range of industrial sociologists have recently drawn attention to a deficit in our understandings of workplace misbehaviour. Workplace misbehaviour was recently defined as being 'anything you do at work you are not supposed to do' (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999: 2 – taken from Sprouse, 1992: 3) and connected to organizational activity such as 'making out', fiddling expenses, horseplay, faking absence, pursuing romance on work time. More specifically, misbehaviour is seen to be synonymous with worker resistance (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995) or acts, such as cultural subversion and sexual misbehaviour that do not fit comfortably into radical models of the labour process (Thompson and Newsome, 2004). Whilst there is some debate about the usefulness and suitability of the definition provided by Ackroyd and Thompson, historical and continuing empirical evidence of misbehaviour, especially in the context of highly controlled or high performance workplaces, has meant that misbehaviour is often used as a means to critique mainstream accounts of organizational behaviour. In brief, Ackroyd and Thompson (1999: 1) believe their work on workplace misbehaviour is a 'useful antidote to sanitized accounts of behaviour that appear in many books on organizational behaviour'.

Misbehaviour has also been investigated from an Organizational Behaviour (OB) perspective (a much more lengthy discussion of the two perspectives can be found in section 2.3, in Chapter Two). Here misbehaviour is often referred to as the 'dark side' of organizations. As with the case of industrial sociology, misbehaviour has also been neglected in OB accounts of the workplace too. Indeed, probably the most prominent misbehaviour theorists from the OB

discipline – Vardi and Weitz – believe misbehaviour is neglected because of how many OB theorists treat misbehaviour:

We have not come to grips with the fact that certain forms of organizational misbehavior are indeed commonplace, are prevalent, are part of organizational life, and are not necessarily bad or dysfunctional for either perpetrators or organizations. We must explore misbehaviour simply to better understand people's behavior in the workplace. In short, we can no longer dismiss organizational misbehavior as some esoteric form of deviant behavior. To claim that such deviance is indeed pervasive is to use an oxymoron. We know OMB [organizational misbehaviour] is part and parcel of OB (Vardi and Weitz, 2004: xvii).

Whilst it may appear that the two sets of theorists have the same aim in mind – that of calling for the integration of workplace misbehaviour into mainstream study – in reality, more than a subtle distinction can be made between why each respective set of theorists calls for a greater recognition of workplace misbehaviour. For radical industrial sociologists the main reason why misbehaviour has become a part of contemporary discussion, other than as a critique of OB theory, is based on what has been referred to in industrial sociology as the long-running 'missing subject' debate. For OB researchers, the call for more understanding of workplace misbehaviour essentially relates to a widespread denial of its existence and how a denial of its existence has implications for management theory. The importance of misbehaviour in current debate, therefore, lies in what misbehaviour is said to represent. Indeed, on one hand radical sociologists believe misbehaviour represents proof that new management control initiatives are not as omnipotent as first thought. On the other hand, OB theorists believe misbehaviour to represent a neglected dimension of management theory. The current research does not intend to explore the concept of misbehaviour as a means to critique mainstream accounts of

organizational life. Neither, moreover, is the current research aimed at advancing management theory. This thesis is about taking a step back from contemporary discussions on misbehaviour as contemporary discussions seem to use misbehaviour without any significant consideration of its detail. Before the aims of the research are outlined, however, the following sub-sections discuss in more detail why and how misbehaviour has become to be neglected in both industrial sociology and OB.

1.1.1 The missing subject debate

Writing in the mid-1990s, Thompson and Ackroyd (1995) suggest that literature on new management initiatives had removed labour as an active agency of resistance in a considerable portion of theory and research. In essence, they believe the most recent crop of research and theory overstates the effects and effectiveness of new management practices as means to control misbehaviour. Thompson and Ackroyd believe more sophisticated management practices (such as human resource management (HRM) and total quality management (TQM)) do not lead to an increase in compliant workers. Instead, however, they believe three particular forces conspire to make it seem as if workplace misbehaviour is in decline, becoming a thing of the past, and therefore irrelevant in current debates.

The first problem identified by Thompson and Ackroyd relates to the changing social, political and industrial context since the late 1970s. This includes the fracturing of collectivism – noted acutely in the Workplace Employment Relations Series (Millward et al, 2000; Kersley et al, 2006) and how workers have been denied access to traditional sources of collective power because of political action. As a consequence of such change, it is often assumed that the

decline of trade unions in Britain is synonymous with a decline of resistance and misbehaviour.

Moreover, Thompson and Ackroyd believe many organizational theorists understate the alienating tendencies and over-estimate how effective new management initiatives such as TQM are at controlling and satisfying workers. In effect, such contemporary organizational theory has implied that the 'spaces' for workers to misbehave in have declined. The basis of this claim is that the shadow of scientific management continues to cast a shadow over new management practices such as HRM and TQM (Smith and Thompson, 1998), said to represent a major departure from alienating Fordist techniques (Womack et al, 1990). In more detail, under these techniques management seek to minimise waste, involve staff and manipulate an inclusive culture. Coupled to less bureaucratic organizational hierarchies and more humanistic ways of managing employment relations are new ways for management to secure data that can be used to control the labour process. For instance, whilst small groups of workers are delegated responsibilities – once the work of supervisors or line managers – electronic technologies are used to monitor the effectiveness of teams. As a consequence, it is assumed that workers have less reason and reduced space to misbehave.

Finally, Thompson and Ackroyd believe the neglect of misbehaviour relates to how descriptions of new management practices rely heavily on Foucauldian conceptual props. This is with particular reference to one of main tenets of Foucauldian labour process theory – that of the panopticon and how the observed can be seen but cannot see, while the observers see everything but cannot be seen – and how contemporary monitoring and surveillance devices commonly used by management lead to docile and useful bodies (Sewell, 1998). The result is

that misbehaviour disappears from the theoretical equation because two particular (problematic) assumptions are made about management. The first is that management is able to monopolise knowledge of the labour process and the second is that the aim of management control is to create obedient bodies rather than willing subjects. Taken together, the main assumption made about relating electronic surveillance with idea of a panopticon is that misbehaviour is likely to become less prevalent where electronic surveillance is used effectively. As a consequence of this assumption, misbehaviour has become a marginal feature of Foucauldian debates on the labour process, except, perhaps, in work of Jermier et al (1994), or even Kondo (1994).

1.1.2 Institutional denial

The field of OB has similarly neglected the notion of misbehaviour. Broadly, this is due to an institutional bias towards the conventional side of organizations – where misbehaviour is given attention it tends to be at the cost of unconventional practices to businesses. The key writers from this perspective, Vardi and Weitz (2004), Vardi and Wiener (1996) and Sagie et al (2003) do not outline why misbehaviour is a marginal feature of OB, yet implicit in their writings are some good clues as to why this may be the case.

Firstly, it is evident that top management generally has no interest in studying misbehaviour and even less interested in making any findings public (Vardi and Weitz, 2004). It is believed that this approach relates back to the origins of management theory and how attentions ever since have been focused on increasing production and motivation. As a consequence, the ever-demanding habits of management have created a healthy demand for practitioners, consultants and academics to resolve their problems. Crucially, the manner in which this has

occurred has led to a massive array of models, research and practical advice that emphasises the creation of positive behaviour as opposed to tackling negative behaviour or misbehaviour.

A second reason for the neglect of misbehaviour relates to the methodological limitations of a great deal of OB research and theory. For instance, as Vardi and Weitz point out quite explicitly, OB tends to focus on a rather small number of organizational phenomena. What is more, the problems associated with studying certain ring-fenced aspects of organizations are compounded by the research methods typically used in OB – that is, quantitative, precise, and rigorous language to describe organizational phenomena. The outcome is that OB researchers and theorists do not effectively tap into the amorphous and often hidden dimensions of everyday organizational life. In other words, the field of OB neglects misbehaviour because there is general belief that it has no part to play in organizational success (however success may be defined) and is off the OB ‘radar’. As remarked on earlier, the intentions of the current research is not to deal with management issues such as ‘organizational success’, although one of the main research aims is to design a research methodology to explore the ‘hidden’ dimensions of organizations (see section 1.2 and Chapter Four for more details).

1.1.3 Re-balancing the knowledge deficit

It would seem that the neglect of misbehaviour is based on the assumption that workers no longer have the means to misbehave on a grand scale. They are also perceived to have less space and reason to misbehave. Indeed, contemporary theories, such as Foucauldian labour process theory, suggest it is difficult for workers to misbehave. Influential people are not interested in misbehaviour, such as an executive level manager who wishes to control

negative images of the organization. And, many research methodologies traditionally used to study organizations are simply not sensitive enough to the subtleties of misbehaviour. In total, whilst there is no real evidence of a conspiracy against knowing more about misbehaviour, there are clear signs that to detriment of knowledge in general, positive organizational phenomena are given preferential treatment over negative organizational phenomena.

Many of the assumptions made about workplace misbehaviour in the past twenty years are based on untested and/or conservative ideas and philosophies, such as Foucauldian based labour process analysis, and are yet to be rigorously tested by way of a wide range of empirical methods. Indeed, the tradition of using participant observational techniques as a means to develop organizational theory has declined at a time when many claims about the tightening and effectiveness of management control have emerged (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999). This is particularly surprising as such methods are noted for being sensitive to hidden behavioural dimensions of organizations (Bryson, 2004). Furthermore, re-balancing the knowledge deficit associated with workplace misbehaviour is likely to require gaining quite critical insights into how workers respond to changes in their working environments, as well as setting any changes against a wider context. However, this is not the appropriate place in which to discuss theoretical frameworks, although this matter is discussed at length in Chapters Two, Three and Four. Likewise, matters relating to a methodological framework are discussed to a far greater extent in Chapter Five. Finally, a lack of interest in workplace misbehaviour from influential people is an insufficient excuse for ignoring what almost certainly occurs in every organization, at all level of organizations, and on a regular basis.

1.2 Aims of the thesis

So far it has been stated that workplace misbehaviour is a neglected feature of organizational research. However, up until now we have only discussed how it has been neglected. In effect, it has not been stated clearly what it is about workplace misbehaviour that needs further investigation and explanation. In this section what is to be further explored about workplace misbehaviour is outlined under the headings of primary and secondary research aims. Primary research aims should be taken to mean what explicit research questions are to be pursued in this thesis. Secondary research aims should be taken to signify the implicit and unique means by which the primary goals are to be achieved. The section ends by stating the parameters of the research project.

1.2.1 Primary research aims

As is usually the case with any research project, time and resources are limited, yet advancing explanations for workplace misbehaviour presents some serious empirical and theoretical challenges. Indeed, as workplace misbehaviour represents a vast range of organizational phenomena it is important to understand why workers chose one particular act of misbehaviour over another. For instance, misbehaviour is synonymous with a whole range of activities (see figures 2.1 and 2.2 in Chapter Two), some of which are more challenging to management than others, therefore it is reasonable to explore the motivations for 'making out', when worker could also contemplate refusing to make out. The second main aim of the research is to investigate the nature of workplace misbehaviour. That is to say, finding out why in some situations we may get individualistic acts of misbehaviour and in other situations more likely to see collective forms. The basis of this aim is to investigate the nature of misbehaviour

in the light of the decline of traditional forms of collectivism such as through trade unionism (Millward et al, 2000; Kersley et al, 2006).

1.2.2 Secondary research aims

The first of the secondary aims is to clarify the many terms and expressions associated with workplace misbehaviour and reduce them to a manageable level. Clearly, workplace misbehaviour is not one single organizational phenomenon, but we must assume that misbehaviour can be reduced to a useful level of generalisability. The main advantage of pursuing this aim would be to allow comparisons to be made between acts of misbehaviour committed at one workplace with the misbehaviour committed at another. Seeking a level of generalisability represents a challenge best tackled at the onset of the thesis. As a consequence, this need represents the main aim of the literature review (see next section for more details).

The second of the secondary aims is to pursue a particular theoretical approach that would be sensitive to the main research aims discussed in the previous sub-section. For instance, is the radical approach advocated by Thompson and Ackroyd (1995) the means to better understandings and explanations for workplace misbehaviour? Can we learn anything from the OB approach espoused by Vardi and Weitz (2004)? Or, do we need to look elsewhere for a theoretical approach as a means to answer the main research questions? This discussion forms the basis for the second part of Chapter Two. However, in Chapter Four a further theoretical framework is discussed – a social identity approach (Haslam, 2001) – as means to help mediate between the context of the organization and the misbehaviour.

The final secondary aim is to design a suitable research methodology that is compatible with the theoretical approach pursued in this thesis as well as being suitably sensitive to the nature of workplace misbehaviour. On the second point in particular, it seems reasonable to assume that top managers and even workers themselves may be sensitive to outsiders knowing about their secret rituals and strategies. Indeed, dilemmas of both kinds are to be discussed in the research methodology chapter (see next section for more details).

1.2.3 Research parameters

As with other empirical research in the field of misbehaviour (for example, Roy, 1952; Ditton, 1977a; Mars, 1994; Webb and Palmer, 1998; Taylor and Bain, 2003) this work will be limited to lower-level workers. The reason why it seems reasonable to research the misbehaviour of low-level workers is because low-level workers tend to have their work defined in a highly prescribed way. Therefore, it would be easier to be aware of any activity that deviates from their formal remit, especially when compared to that of a manager. This work will also focus on organizations that are reflective of modern work and modern life, that is, the British labour market continues to be characterised by persistently high levels of low-skilled employment (Brinkley, 2006). Moreover, focusing on what is typical of modern work is likely to be of more general value than of work that does not. Examples of such work is likely to include people who work in relatively common and mundane jobs that are also reflective of the day and age we live in – denoted by high levels of consumerism, service-orientated employment and a general absence of trade union affiliation and activity (Grainger, 2006). Behaviour that relates to traditional industrial relations practices such as organized ‘go-slows’ or strikes and serious forms of crime that includes, for example, physical abuse, sexual harassment and organized theft of company property, will also be excluded from the current work. Such omissions are

typical of recent research into misbehaviour (for example, Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Sagie et al, 2003; Vardi and Weitz, 2004) (a further discussion of what should be seen and what should not be seen as misbehaviour can be found in section 2.3 in Chapter Two).

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The following chapter (Chapter Two) reviews the literature on misbehaviour and associated activities such as sabotage and resistance. The main aim of this chapter is to reduce the wide variety of terms and expressions associated with misbehaviour to produce general, yet meaningful categories. Indeed, despite there being more than a hundred terms and expressions for misbehaviour, the main conclusion from Chapter Two is to suggest there are five distinct dimensions to misbehaviour. Chapter Two also considers which of two existing approaches (OB and radical industrial sociology) should form the basis for further exploring workplace misbehaviour.

Chapter Three builds upon the categories of misbehaviour (referred to as the 'five dimensions of misbehaviour') identified in Chapter Two. The categories of misbehaviour are further discussed by comparing their main features with an established radical sociological model for investigating workplace conflict and the labour process. Where features of misbehaviour do not readily fit in with a radical model, suggestions are made as to how these problems can be overcome. The chapter, in effect, indicates that whilst a radical sociological approach (or orthodox labour process analysis) can explain a great deal about workplace misbehaviour, such an approach has problems linking social structure with social action.

Chapter Four discusses the main strengths and limitations of a radical sociological approach in more detail. It is also at this time that an emerging social psychology perspective is outlined and evaluated (a social identity approach (Haslam, 2001)) as a means to compensate for the limitations of a radical sociological approach. The chapter ends with details of how the two approaches are to be applied to the findings in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Five discusses both the rationales and exercise of the qualitative research tools used to examine the aims of the research. This chapter also explains the epistemological and ontological assumptions underpinning this thesis and the unique ethical issues that a study of misbehaviour must confront.

Chapter Six presents a descriptive overview of the research programme as well as detailing the main problems associated with collecting data in a covert fashion as well as outlining how the researcher made the decision to end each of the four separate data gathering exercises that form the basis for Chapter Seven. It is during this chapter we are introduced to the main means by which the researcher presents his findings – mainly extracts taken from an extensive research diary and data bank.

Chapter Seven presents the research findings from four case studies. This chapter is structured around the main variables associated with a radical sociological and social identity approach, that is, forms of management control and other features of the labour process, and, in the case of a social identity approach, social identities and groups that relate to workers, quality of the relations between shopfloor groups, and the social identity salience of shopfloor groups. In the main, the findings depict the objective and subjective conditions of four types of

low-level worker – a food hygienist, a waiter/waitress, stockroom assistant/sales assistant, and, a call centre operator. The main aim of this chapter is as much about emphasising the context of misbehaviour as it is about describing the workplace misbehaviour found at each of the case studies.

Chapter Eight interprets the findings from Chapter Seven. This chapter emphasises the contribution of the present research and also explains how the theoretical approach taken in this thesis can illuminate a side of workplace misbehaviour previously lacking in the social sciences. The chapter also addresses the limitations of the theoretical approach.

Chapter Nine takes a more global view by stating the main achievements of the thesis and makes a range of recommendations about the future direction of research into workplace misbehaviour.

CHAPTER 2: IN SEARCH OF MISBEHAVIOUR

2.1 Introduction

It is certain that managerial workers could be accused of misbehaving – for example, the fraudulent use of company finances or bullying subordinates – however, the focus of attention of this thesis is the misbehaviour of lower-level workers misbehaving with and without management consent

Misbehaviour is not a new concept but has only been discussed in such explicit terms over the last ten years. Indeed, Flynn (1916) reported that at the start of the twentieth century workers took revenge at their employers by having less children as a way to limit the over-supply of slaves (Flynn, 1916). However, there are few systematic reviews of the term and the key purpose of this chapter is to describe and evaluate the existing work in the field and to clarify what misbehaviour means and how the term can be developed and understood both theoretically and empirically.

In order to detail the development of the concept of misbehaviour, the first part of the chapter consists of a general overview of the literature relating to misbehaviour. Here I expand on the definitions and examples provided in Chapter One, and develop this discussion in terms of the relationship between misbehaviour and other related concepts. This chapter explains how misbehaviour transcends the boundaries of many disciplines including management studies, organizational behaviour, gender studies, industrial sociology and industrial relations. In essence, part one is an orientation exercise as I begin to review the literature on work-related misbehaviour.

The second part targets a much narrower body of literature and looks at the very recent introduction of the actual word misbehaviour into the vocabulary of industrial sociologists and organizational behaviour theorists – the only two disciplines that specifically refer to misbehaviour. Indeed, there is no distinct mention of what appears to be an emerging discussion point until Thompson and Ackroyd's (1995) critique of Foucauldian approaches to labour process theory¹. In this instance, Thompson and Ackroyd used the terms resistance and misbehaviour in an interchangeable manner. However, subsequent writings by the two authors (1999) led to a working definition of 'anything you do at work you are not supposed to do²'. Part two, therefore, discusses the work of organizational behaviour and industrial sociological theorists. The aim is to analyse two quite contrasting perspectives on misbehaviour and to assess their respective strengths and weaknesses.

Part three concludes the chapter by summarising the findings from the literature review. The main findings suggest misbehaviour has five distinct dimensions that are reflective of a range of strategies workers pursue on work time. There follows an outline for the subsequent chapter.

2.2 Literature overview

2.2.1 Expressions associated with misbehaviour

There are literally scores of examples and terms that relate to misbehaviour to be found in the work-based and management-orientated literature. However, the purpose of identifying a

¹ It appears that the term misbehaviour or organizational misbehaviour (OMB) was first coined by Vardi and Wiener (1992) when attempting to explain personal motivations for non-normative workplace acts. It is only in recent times that there has been some acknowledgement that misbehaviour emerged quite differently within the respective disciplines (see Vardi and Weitz, 2004, pp. 26-31).

² This is with direct reference to Sprouse's (1992: 3) edited book on workplace sabotage in USA.

range of examples and terms related to misbehaviour has its purposes other than making lists for list's sake. Quite simply, an approach of this kind allows us to appreciate the many ways in which misbehaviour can and has been interpreted over many decades of organizational research.

Figure 2.1 summarises some existing work that details examples of misbehaviour. At the extreme misbehaviour could include workplace murder (Sagie et al, 2003), destruction (Analoui, 1995) and drug use at work (Mangione and Quinn, 1975). Indeed, Dupre and Barling (2003: 15) highlights how homicide, the most extreme form of workplace aggression, is one of the leading causes of fatal occupational injuries for all workers in the United States every year. More minor versions of misbehaviour include, 'licking up to foremen' (Nicols and Armstrong, 1976), gossiping (Noon and Blyton, 1993), clowning (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999), and daydreaming (Mangione and Quinn, 1975). The following example demonstrates a range of misbehaviour and indicates why it may prevail:

A worker can retreat from his or her work by means other than simply not showing up for work (as reflected in measures of turnover, absenteeism, or lateness). He or she can also withdraw psychologically through day-dreaming, through a self-divestment of the psychological importance of work, or [chemically] through the use of drugs at work to help him or her through a day at work (Mangione and Quinn, 1975: 114).

Comprising a vast and varying middle ground, workers are said to misbehave in the form of working on homers and personal chores on company time (Anteby, 2003). Such activity has also been referred to as working on government jobs (Gouldner, 1954). Workers also

misbehave when it is difficult for them to express a grievance and as a result may take part in silent strikes (McKinlay and Taylor, 1996b), silent protests (Graham, 1995), or, deliberately take time off as a form of protest (Behrend, 1951). Misbehaviour in this central domain could include a range of alternative and informal work practices frequently called fiddles (Ditton, 1977a; Knights and McCabe, 2000b; Mars, 1994; Webb and Palmer, 1998). A particular feature of misbehaviour is its secretive nature and how observational-based research appears particularly suited to revealing its detail. For instance, Roy (1952) describes an act of quota restriction from covert observations at an engineering factory:

...the operators in my shop made noises like economic men. Their talk indicated that they were canny calculators and that the dollar sign fluttered at the masthead of every machine. Their actions were not always consistent with their words; and such inconsistency calls for further probing. But it could be precisely because they were alert to their economic interests – at least to their immediate economic interests – that the operators did not exceed their quotas (1952: 430).

Moreover, figure 2.2 demonstrates the many terms that could be associated with misbehaviour, such as the multi-dimensional phenomenon of sabotage (Analoui, 1995; Beynon, 1984; Brown, 1977; Edwards, 1986; Flynn, 1916, Zabala, 1989). A first hand account by a front-line operative demonstrates just one effect sabotage can have on the speed of service desired by customers, or what Harris and Ogbonna (2002) call customary-public service sabotage:

You can put on a real show. You know – if the guest is in a hurry, you slow right down and drag it right out and if they want to chat, you do the monosyllabic stuff. And all the time you know that your mates are round the corner laughing their heads off (2002: 170).

Further mention of misbehaviour includes research that looks at restriction of output (Lupton, 1963), informal job satisfaction (Roy, 1958), pilferage (Analoui and Kakabadse, 1989; Ditton, 1977a, 1977b) and employee theft (Anderton and Keily, 1988; Ditton, 1977b; Hawkins, 1984; Mars, 1994; Sagie et al, 2003). An account of employee theft helps us see how pre-meditated and complex acts of misbehaviour can be:

Art is waiting on a large party of twelve men, all of who have been ordering drinks from the bar during dinner. The check is to be presented to the gentleman in charge and he will pay with a credit card. After looking through all the drink tickets, Art decides to inflate the figure of the bar bill, figuring that an extra four or five dollars will not be noticed. Art presents the bill and man pays it (Hawkins, 1984: 57).

Example	Author(s) and year
Blue Monday	Behrend (1951)
Clowning	Ackroyd and Thompson (1999)
Collective bargaining by riot	Hobsbawm (1968)
Cynicism about management in general, taking the piss	Taylor and Bain (2003)
Disobeying immediate orders	Gouldner (1965)
Distancing	Delbridge (1995)
Drug use at work	Mangione and Quinn (1975)
Fiddling	Ditton (1977a); Knights and McCabe (2000b); Mars (1994); Webb and Palmer (1998)
Going to pub at lunch time	Thompson and Bannon (1985)
Goldbricking, quota restriction, informal attainment of job satisfaction, making repetitive work tolerable	Roy (1952, 1953, 1954 and 1958)
Gossiping	Noon and Blyton (2002)
Harassing weaker and younger workers	Ackroyd and Cowdry (1992)
Homers or personal chores on company time	Anteby (2003)
Homicide (or murder)	Dupre and Barling (2003); Sagie et al (2003)
Horseplay	Lupton (1963)
Leap-frogging [in pay deals]	Edwards and Scullion (1982)
Licking up to foremen	Nicols and Armstrong (1976)
Limiting the over-supply of slaves	Flynn (1916)
Machine breaking	Hobsbawm (1968)
Moonlighting	Mars (1994)

Mucking in (informal)	Pollert (1981)
Organizational romance	Quinn (1977)
Part-time crime	Ditton (1977a); Mars (1994)
Pilferage	Analoui and Kakabadse (1989); Ditton (1977a, 1977b)
Racial discrimination	Beaud and Pialoux (2001); Cockburn (1991); Linhart (1981); Wallace and Leicht (2004)
Rash of notice-giving	Lupton (1963)
Rate busting	Dalton (1948)
Restriction of output	Lupton (1963)
Ripping off customers	Hawkins (1984)
Satire	Ackroyd and Thompson (1999)
Sexual voyeurism	Salzinger (2000)
Silent strikes and silent protest	McKinlay and Taylor (1996b); Graham (1995)
Subversive humour	Holmes and Marra (2002); Taylor and Bain (2003)
The withdrawal of efficiency	Flynn (1916)
Tit-for-tat scoring (team peer review)	McKinlay and Taylor (1996b)
Uncertified sickness absence	Behrend (1951)
Underworking, slow working, systematic soldiering, hanging it out, ca canae	Taylor (1967)
Using sex at work	Gutek (1989)
Very severe crimes like murder and assault	Sagie et al (2003)
Withdrawal of emotional labour – offer a thin crust of display	Hochschild (2003)
Working on govvy jobs or government jobs	Nicols and Armstrong (1976); Gouldner (1954)
Workplace aggression	Dupre and Barling (2003)
Workplace violence	Sagie et al (2003)

Figure 2.1 Examples of work-related misbehaviour

It would also seem that misbehaviour might not always be the direct result of how work is organized. Examples of such misbehaviour could include friendly and offensive sexual humour (Cockburn, 1991), sexual politics (Gutek, 1989), the often-ignored dimensions of sexual discrimination (DiTomaso, 1989), sex-role spillover (Gutek, 1989), or shop-floor sexism (Pollert, 1981). DiTomaso (1989) provides an example of how sex-related misbehaviour can manifest:

Sex itself was mentioned by a number of women as a negotiating tool, used by both men and women in the firm. Several women talked about women in the factory who slept with men to get easier jobs or promotions (1989: 81).

A central theme in each example is the matter of sexuality or gender and how such identities may come into conflict with other overt or even hidden organizational identities. Sexuality can also manifest in a more co-operative form – that of an organizational romance (Quinn, 1977). What is more, another dimension of worker identity, that of race, can also be related to acts of misbehaviour. For instance, workplace racism has been a feature of a range of work-related empirical research (Beaud and Pialoux, 2001; Cockburn, 1991; Linhart, 1981; Wallace and Leicht, 2004).

A type of misbehaviour certainly worthy of specific investigation includes whistleblowing (Edwards et al, 1996; Rothschild and Miethe, 1994). Furthermore, workers can also misbehave by spending far longer than is necessary at work to appear worthy of promotion (Bunting, 2004). Workers misbehave by outwardly giving the impression of commitment where high performance systems prevail (that is, Svejism), yet remaining defiant wherever possible (Fleming and Sewell, 2002). Other noteworthy examples include a more brutal form of humour in workplace satire (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999). Indeed, Ackroyd and Thompson (1999: 111) suggest that in workplaces where satirical traditions are well entrenched, there is competition between satirists to develop their informal status; by being effective critics of management. As such, informal strategies such as whistleblowing, faking effort and commitment, and scathing humour are often part of a radical agenda with the intention of defending or furthering the interests of low-level workers.

In brief, we can see from description alone that misbehaviour covers an enormous range of activity that is likely to be typical of most workplaces – some acts of misbehaviour are direct responses to the nature of work and some are clearly less so. Further, misbehaviour ranges from acts that are quite obvious to note and identify, to forms of misbehaviour that occur in a less than revealing manner, hidden either from the view of most, or, so-called normal behaviour masking mischievous motives or practices. We now turn to a historical perspective of misbehaviour.

Term	Author(s) and year
Additive forms of expression	Bean (1975)
Alternative forms of conflict	Edwards and Scullion (1982); Edwards (1986)
Attempts to assert control	Linstead (1985)
Behaviour that violates significant organizational norms (46 different types identified)	Robinson and Bennett (1995)
Coping behaviour	Storey and Harrison (1999)
Counterproductive, dysfunctional, deviant, disruptive, antisocial, non-compliant, unconventional behaviour, or a wrongdoing	Sagie et al (2003)
Creative attempts to survive mind-destroying boredom	Pollert (1981)
Culture wars in the workplace	Wallace and Leicht (2004)
Darker side of shopfloor culture	Collinson (1988)
Defiance at work	Analoui and Kakabadse (1989)
Destruction	Analoui (1995)
Dishonest acts in the workplace	Coyne and Bartram (2000)
Externalised resistance (turnover)	Thompson (2003)
Game, the	Burawoy (1979)
Indulgency patterns	Gouldner (1954)
Intentional acts that violates organizational norms and expectations	Vardi and Wiener (2004)
Knavery, skulduggery, cheating, unfairness, malingering, cutting corners, immorality, dishonesty, betrayal, graft, corruption, wickedness, sin	Cohen (1966)
Men's ill-feeling to women	Nicols and Armstrong (1976)
Minimalist syndicalism	Elger (2001)
Neglected forms of resistance	LaNuez and Jermier (1994)
Non-directed conflict	Edwards and Scullion (1982)
Recalcitrance	Ackroyd and Thompson (1999)
Rejecting the company's philosophy of forced co-operation	Graham (1995)
Resistance by persistence and distance	Collinson and Collinson (1994)

Responses to cultural change programmes	Harris and Ogbonna (1998)
Sabotage	Analoui (1995); Brown (1977); Flynn (1916)
Subterranean bargaining	Zabala (1989)
Subtle forms of resistance	Hodson (1995)
Svejkism	Fleming and Sewell (2002)
Unconventional practices	Analoui (1995)
Unorganised conflict	Hyman (1981)
Whistleblowing	Edwards et al (1996); Rothschild and Miethel (1994)
Withholding effort	Kidwell and Bennett (1993)

Figure 2.2 Terms associated with work-related misbehaviour

2.2.2 A brief history of work-related misbehaviour

Historical records undoubtedly go back further than the early 1820s; however the first detailed accounts of misbehaviour start from around this period. From this period there are numerous accounts of organized machine breaking (Hobsbawm, 1968). It was said that there were two types of machine breaking – Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire Luddites attacking machines as a means of coercing their employers into granting them concessions with regard to wages and other matters, and, a general sort of wrecking which was seen by many as the expression of working-class hostility to new machines of the industrial revolution. Indeed, Hobsbawm (1968: 7) likens the former action to collective bargaining by riot, and concludes that whilst machine breaking could not stop the advance of technical progress it did seem to help the plight of the least skilled or esteemed workers of the time – farm-labourers (1968: 17). Other illuminating accounts of nineteenth century sabotage suggest that new work disciplines emerging at the end of the nineteenth century – that is, early forms of scientific management – emphasised time over task and led to many outbreaks of sabotage with the intent to disrupt and shape newly introduced forms of work organization (Brown, 1977). In this

case, some industries in mid-Victorian Britain were forced to concede defeat to workers who insisted on working for four days instead of the five or six days required by employers.

In the early twentieth century it was not uncommon for workers to be accused of deliberately working slowly to avoid a full day's work, or sometimes referred to as systematic soldiering (Taylor, 1967). This was at a time when it was a common belief that workers had a natural instinct and tendency to take it easy at work (The American Society of Mechanical Engineers – quoted in Taylor, 1967: 19). Workers of this age also reportedly stole from each other and indulged in fiddles sometimes just to feed themselves (Orwell, 2003). However, there were also accounts of organised and unorganised workers trying to address commonly held work-related concerns. For instance, workers sabotaged their work as a means to enforce employers into granting certain conditions (Flynn, 1916), suggesting that even low level workers, without trade union representation, retain a capacity to frustrate (that is, misbehave) their employers.

In the years that included and immediately followed World War II, there was a definite increase in industrial sociological accounts seeking to find explanations as to why some workers worked more quickly, more efficiently, or were just more co-operative than their peers. Examples of this trend include Roy's accounts (1952, 1953, 1954 and 1958) of quota restriction and goldbricking, working on the angles of making out. Roy (1958) also provided examples of resistance to and subversion of formally instituted managerial controls of production, and, how informal group interaction – that is, 'banana time' (a daily playful ritual involving one worker stealing from a colleague's lunch box), allowed repetitive work to become more tolerable. In contrast to Roy's writings on workers deliberately slowing down their pace of work, research emerged that looked at the rate buster – a rare breed of individual who

refuses to be held back by the authority of their peer group (Dalton, 1948). Whilst this does not necessarily constitute misbehaviour in itself, it is likely that this kind of behaviour may lead to conflict within work groups or even management informally curbing the excesses of rate busters to broker peace with the many. Indeed, Gouldner (1954) described how management often stops short of their maximum theoretical command of labour and becomes drawn into what he refers to as indulgency patterns. This is where management is seen to exercise a wide-range of concrete judgements so as to create favourable sentiments amongst workers towards their employer. In other words, managers are able to use a degree of discretion, which may or may not contravene formal rules, so as to create more favourable working conditions for subordinates. Later, Gouldner (1965) suggests that a violation of indulgency patterns may lead to wildcat strike action and demonstrates quite clearly how informal management-led workplace practices are often a necessary requirement for productive employment relations. Finally, in an era noted by the attention given to informal dimensions of workplace activity, research revealed how joking could in certain situations be a means by which new members learn to be trustworthy and compliant members of the work group (Bradney, 1957). The value of how even light-hearted humour can affect workplace behaviour and attitudes is described as such:

In the store, joking occurs not only between two persons, but also between one person and a group and sometimes between two groups. It occurs both in contacts necessitated by the system and in personal contacts and may consist of either one of the following or a combination of these – a jovial manner of passing the time of day or commenting on the weather or some other matter of topical interest; mutual teasing about personal habits, appearance, love experience, morality, and, in particular, work and method of work; telling funny stories in some way relevant to the subject of conversation (Bradney, 1957: 183).

The 1960s brought with it more research on worker productivity. For instance, Lupton's (1963) detailed study of two factories looks at actions that fall outwith what Lupton calls the sacrosanct goals and norms of management, Baldamus (1961) considers informal relations between employees, and, Goldthorpe et al's (1968) study of affluent and supposedly non-militant workers revealed undertones of disquiet and a reluctance of able operatives to become supervisors.

In the 1970s research that mention acts that could be construed as misbehaviour includes infighting amongst workers (Nichols and Armstrong, 1976), informal forms of protest such as spontaneously walking off the line or stopping the line by sabotaging its workings at Ford (Beynon, 1984), and fiddling and pilferage as a subculture of a bread delivery business (Ditton, 1977a). However, managing a subculture is by no means an easy task as Ditton demonstrates using the words of a senior supervisor:

You will always have the chaps who are out to make a bomb out of it...they kill the goose that laid the golden egg...the majority of them would do it whatever phase of life they're in, for the sort of person who's going to do this, he's going to do it from word 'go'...the corruption is there in the mind every time, we don't corrupt people, we try to put them off, or warn them not to overdo it (1977a: 25).

Later in the decade research revealed new explanations for workplace sabotage that includes temporary concerns of management to acts that have shut complete factories (Taylor and Walton, 1979). Finally, one of the most enduring pieces of research that refers to misbehaviour considered the political motives behind making out (Burawoy, 1979) - acts of 'game playing' within the organisation's rules, which result in mutual benefit for employees and

managers (Noon and Blyton, 2002). Indeed, if such acts could be classified as misbehaviour, then misbehaviour in certain forms is not detraction from capital accumulation; in fact misbehaviour could be one of the necessary ingredients in simultaneously obscuring and securing the surplus value of labour.

By the 1980s it could be clearly seen that there was no shortage of literature that contained reference to misbehaviour. Indeed, such was the increase in relevant literature that we need only dwell on the work of a more differentiated style and scope. For instance, the decade is characterised by a rise in feminist accounts of the workplace. For instance, female factory workers dealing with shop-floor sexism and mind-destroying boredom in whatever way possible (Pollert, 1981). In a similar feminist style, Cavendish (1982) presented an account of conflict that emerged at a clothes manufacturing company. A particular example includes female operatives consistently warned for standing near the clocking off machine too early. Moreover, unauthorised absenteeism was a common feature of the textile factory she was researching as this excerpt suggests:

Everyone complained about being 'jaded'. Getting up at 6.30 and working virtually until 7.30 knocked you out; you had to go to bed early not only to recover but also to be able to get up early again. If you were off for a day, it was generally acknowledged that you'd 'slept in' because you were too exhausted. You needed to take a day off now and then just to catch up on sleep. I used to think it was a waste of time to take a day off work just to sleep in until I found you really needed to. Some women 'slept in' regularly, about once every two weeks, so the absenteeism rate must have been quite high (1982: 119).

Further research includes female flight attendants who partially withdraw from displays of emotional labour when aggrieved (Hochschild, 2003), and the degrading treatment of 'checkout chicks' by male co-workers (Game and Pringle, 1983). More masculine studies of the time refer to the apparent normality of crime at work (Mars, 1994), and, very open acts of misbehaviour like go-slows and short stoppages of work (Thompson and Bannon, 1985). However, the 1980s saw a rise in the theoretical side of informal workplace activity and how misbehaviour could be equated with acts normally associated with industrial relations such as refusing to work overtime, keeping a rigid adherence to the rules, breaching factory discipline and taking part in informal forms of effort-bargaining (Hyman, 1981; Edwards, 1986; Edwards and Scullion, 1982).

Misbehaviour continued to be a dimension of workplace and management research throughout the 1990s and beyond. However, a changing political, economic and industrial landscape resulting in a tremendous change in British employment relations (Cully et al, 1999), a Japanization of British industry (Oliver and Wilkinson, 1992), an alleged increase in the potency of management control systems (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992a and 1992b; Sewell, 1998), and the arrival of emancipatory post-Fordist production systems (Wickens, 1987; Womack et al, 1990), led to a rift amongst labour process theorists – both noted by a particular interest in resistance and misbehaviour. The rift was characterised by one group who believed the development of labour process theory would be best served by staying loyal to its Marxian traditions and another group characterised by post-modern accounts of the labour process. For instance, post-modernists such as Knights and McCabe, 1998, 2000a and 2000b) believe workers may find it difficult to misbehave in the current social, political and industrial climate. In contrast, orthodox theorists such as McKinlay and Taylor (1996a and

1996b) believe resistance and misbehaviour can still be found under the watchful eye of advanced management regimes. Similarly, Thompson and Ackroyd (1995) and Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) focused specifically on enduring and new forms of misbehaviour as a means to refute post-modern theoretical arguments. The debate continues, but the recent research seems to back up the view that misbehaviour and resistance continues to be a feature of low discretion and high control workplaces (Taylor and Bain, 2003; Mulholland, 2004; Townshend, 2005).

In the main what we can take from an historical review of misbehaviour-related literature is this. First and foremost it seems that misbehaviour as a workplace phenomenon is not going away – even in an era purported to be a new industrial order (Harvey, 1989). This in itself suggests that even if we are in a new industrial era, continuity in misbehaviour is evidence in itself that this new era is also denoted by an extraordinary links with the past. Second, it appears that there is also great continuity in the many forms misbehaviour can take. For example, sabotage, effort bargaining and the discriminatory and degrading treatment of women continue to be features of the modern workplace. Third and finally, what stands out the most is that whilst many researchers refer to misbehaviour, it is most surprising to find that few theorists or empiricists contemplate whether it is problematic or not to have so many names and terms for workplace misbehaviour. In other words, whilst an abundance of research refers to a broad range of misbehaviour, there has been little attempt to make more of a connection between, or seek out patterns in, what is clearly not a single phenomenon. An attempt to seek out definitive patterns in misbehaviour is one of the main objectives of this chapter, but for now we look at diverging academic perspectives on misbehaviour.

2.2.3 Crossing disciplinary boundaries

Workplace misbehaviour is a phenomena covered by many sub-disciplines. However, attention here will summarise the main features of accounts that come under the broad headings of management studies (including that of HRM), organizational behaviour, gender studies, industrial sociology and industrial relations.

Academic work that relates to management studies include theorising on employee theft (Anderton and Keily, 1988), defiance at work (Analoui and Kakabadse, 1989), rate busting (Dalton, 1946), dishonesty in the workplace (Coyne and Bartram, 2000), soldiering (Taylor, 1967), employee responses to culture change programmes (Harris and Ogbonna, 1998), and organizational romances (Quinn, 1977). Whilst this list is far from exhaustive what we can take from these definitions is the suggestion that misbehaviour is an undesired consequence of organizational activity. For example, Quinn's view of organizational romances also reveals a great deal about how managerial theorists view misbehaviour:

Romantic relationships are a serious practical problem because they sometimes distort the smooth functioning of organizations...variables that are important in explaining the impacts of an organizational romance: visibility, behavior changes in the participants, reactions of other members, and the overall impact on the system (1977: 37).

As such, management accounts tend to show misbehaviour in a negative light. Indeed, a problem with using a management-orientated perspective is the over-emphasis on variables such as efficiency, conformity, and customer satisfaction, and the neglect of explaining why workers act like this in the first place. It seems that an approach of this kind neglects the aims and objectives of those least likely to share the aims and objectives of senior management.

Indeed, accounts of misbehaviours originating from an OB perspective appear similar in many ways to those portrayed by management theorists. Here discussions are characterised by descriptions of deviant workplace behaviours (Robinson and Bennett, 1995), what behaviour can be expected when normative work values are not the deciding factor (Sagie et al, 2003), deliberate acts that harm organizations (Vardi and Wiener, 1996; Vardi and Weitz, 2004), and accounts of why workers withhold effort (Kidwell and Bennett, 1993).

Whilst there is clear purpose and value in approaching misbehaviour from this point of view, it is probably unreasonable to assume low-level workers share the same norms and values of their employer. Unless, that is, strong empirical evidence can be produced to back up this claim. In effect, whilst organizational behaviour theorists seem to acknowledge that misbehaviour is an important realm of organizations, at the same time an impression is given that these acts are mostly preventable, and where they are not preventable, represent the work of defiant troublemakers or employees with abnormal attitudes to authority.

With gender studies, we see another perspective of misbehaviour. For example, misbehaviour in terms of males defending their masculinity in an organizational context and how masculinity is in reality a crucial, yet often hidden dimension of a broader organizational identity (Collinson and Collinson, 1989; DiTomaso, 1989; Levin, 2001). An account of men trying to preserve the dominance of a masculine identity in the workplace is provided by the following passage:

When the [working environment becomes] less active, the more overtly sexualized repertoire of joking and getting along emerges. Men and women use jokes to pass time, fit in and relieve tension, but a direct result of men's sexual banter is to facilitate group solidarity among men to the

exclusion of women. Strong heterosexual joking is predicated on men being the sexual agents of jokes and women being the objects (Levin, 2001: 126).

However, a range of theorists draws attention to other forms of gender-related misbehaviour. For instance, women subverting dominant masculine identities (Cockburn, 1991; Game and Pringle, 1983; Gutek, 1989; Pollert, 1981) and female flight attendants feigning responses to lurid comments from male passengers (Hochschild, 2003). Further, certain gender-based theorists demonstrate the many ways in which sexuality can be the spur for a range of misbehaviour:

More common [than sexual coercion from either sex] are sexual jokes, use of explicit terms to describe work situations, sexual comments to co-workers, and display of sexual posters and pictures engaged in by men at work (Sex and sports, some observers claim, are the two metaphors of business.) The use of sex can be more subtle than either hostile sexual remarks or sexual jokes. Although this tactic is often assumed to be used exclusively by women, some men, too, may feign sexual interest to gain some work-related advantage (Gutek, 1989: 63-64).

In the discipline of industrial sociology misbehaviour is again viewed in a distinct way. For example, sociologists influenced by the work of Marx (1976) and Braverman (1974) view misbehaviour as evidence that workers' consent to the labour process cannot be assumed under new management practices (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Fleming and Sewell, 2002; Hodson, 1995; Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). However, sociologists who are influenced by the work of Foucault (1977) seem to suggest misbehaviour is a lesser form of resistance (Knights and McCabe, 2000b) or a means for workers to distance themselves from management oppression (Collinson, 1994). It also appears that industrial sociologists believe misbehaviour is a neglected and largely hidden aspect of workplace relations and workplace

practices; part of the politics of production (Burawoy, 1985). For instance, misbehaviour is a reaction to the contradictions of management (Bolton, 2005), a form of dissent (Elger, 2001), and, a way of subverting stifling forms of new management practices such as peer review for teams (McKinlay and Taylor, 1996a). The following extract demonstrates the general view of misbehaviour taken by industrial sociologists – a low-level attempt to subvert management authority:

The practice of tacitly trading monthly scores, negating the discriminatory intent of the system, became quite widespread throughout Pyramid [a greenfield microelectronics plant]. It was a commonplace to hear workers saying that to keep things 'fair' they gave each other 3s and 4s. Workers were subverting the individualization that lay at the heart of peer review (McKinlay and Taylor, 1996a: 479).

Further accounts suggest certain forms of misbehaviour may be a response to the increasing presence of surveillance systems in the workplace (Thompson, 2003). It seems that industrial sociologists (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995; Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) view misbehaviour as being symbolic of labour, as a class agent (yet highly fragmented and atomised at times), learning to live with or even learning to fight back against a range of new management practices. Industrial sociologists also appear to celebrate and perhaps sentimentalise misbehaviour, especially in an era noted by a long decline in the fortunes of organized labour. Having said that, by celebrating misbehaviour industrial sociologists are also creating problems for themselves as it is widely acknowledged that many acts associated with misbehaviour do not fit comfortably into an orthodox model of the labour process (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Thompson and Newsome, 2004).

Finally, industrial relations theorists often conceptualise misbehaviour as an alternative to strike action or action short of strike action (Bean, 1975; Blyton and Turnbull, 2004; Edwards et al, 1996; Hyman, 1981; Nicols and Armstrong, 1976). From this perspective misbehaviour represents the actions of non-unionised or unorganized workers. In effect, misbehaviour reflects a widespread and increasing inability of workers to offer a coherent and organised response to management strategies (Beynon, 1984). Akin to strike action, misbehaviour is a low-level and informal product of structured antagonism between employee and employer (Edwards, 1986) and represents social processes largely unaccounted for by the industrial relations literature.

Alternatively, some theorists believe acts such as sabotage – in the form of grievance bargaining or deliberate poor workmanship – are intimately bound up in the labour process (Zabala, 1989). That is, a worker constantly challenging the actions of management, either directly or indirectly, as the following excerpt suggests:

Sabotage...fills a gap left vacant in the collective bargaining process – it is a supplement to, and reform of, shop floor bargaining between foreman and union committeeman. It is a feature of job-control unionism. But it is often an ineffective defensive tactic, sabotage is clearly limited in the extent to which it can affect policy decisions by the corporation or the national trade union (1989: 30).

It would appear that advocates of the industrial relations discipline are beginning to appreciate misbehaviour more and more, yet tend to view misbehaviour as an informal dimension of traditional industrial relations practice. In other words, some acts of misbehaviour appear to be closely related to strike activity, collective bargaining, union membership, and workplace

democracy. However, a problem with viewing misbehaviour in this way is to assume all misbehaviour is about labour-management relations. Likewise, where comparisons can be drawn between formal and informal industrial relations practices, it is difficult to imagine how acts of such a low-level variety could inform a discipline heavily dependent on statistic-based trends.

By looking at misbehaviour from a multitude of perspectives it highlights the many ways in which theorists view these phenomena as well as indicates the wide variety of acts that could be associated with the term misbehaviour. For instance, advocates of management studies and organizational behaviour are likely to view misbehaviour as some sort of irrational or uninformed response to rational or informed commands. Moreover, organizational behaviour theorists seem to portray misbehaviour as an individualistic pursuit as well as underplaying less disruptive forms of misbehaviour. On the other hand, advocates of the other three disciplines view misbehaviour as the product of asymmetrical employment relations or asymmetrical gender relations.

2.2.4 Theoretical progression

To summarise, misbehaviour is quite clearly varied in character and appears to be as much a feature of modern workplaces as it was in the first workplaces of the industrial age. Despite many changes in the way work has been organized over the past two centuries, the workplace continues to be a highly contested arena. Misbehaviour is clearly far more than anything you do at work that you are not supposed to do. In other words, misbehaviour is not just about employee resistance; it is about dealing with the pressures of work in a less opposing manner.

Misbehaviour is also about conflicts that cannot be exclusively attributable to the effort-bargain relationship between employer and employee.

2.3 Evaluating two contrasting approaches to misbehaviour

There has already been a brief overview of the two main perspectives on misbehaviour in Chapter One. However, the two perspectives are reviewed and evaluated in this section in a much more comprehensive fashion. The key objective is to identify from the review the most appropriate elements of both approaches as a means to advance explanations for misbehaviour. The two approaches to be reviewed involve the research of organizational behaviour and industrial sociology theorists. The review begins by looking at competing definitions of misbehaviour. Subsequent sub-sections include the bases for analysing misbehaviour, typologies of misbehaviour, theoretical parameters, and, causes of misbehaviour. The review is also summarised in figure 2.3.

2.3.1 Defining workplace misbehaviour

Superficially, definitions from the two disciplines appear similar. For example, Vardi and Wiener (1996) characterise misbehaviour as:

'...any intentional action by member/s of organization/s that defies and violates (a) shared organizational norms and expectations, and/or (b) core societal values, mores and standards of proper conduct' (1996: 153).

Subsequent work by Vardi and Weitz (2004) on misbehaviour reiterates the same definition. Other organizational behaviour theorists such as Sagie et al (2003: 153) believe misbehaviour

can be equated with 'dysfunctional attitudes', or, 'the kind of organizational behaviour that can be expected when normative work values are not a deciding factor'. Broadly, organizational behaviour theorists believe misbehaviour to be about consciously breaking and violating formal company rules and regulations. Misbehaviour also appears to be about breaching broader societal norms.

Earlier it was noted how Ackroyd and Thompson (1999: 2) use Sprouse's (1992: 3) definition of sabotage – anything you do at work you are not supposed to do – to define misbehaviour. However, on closer examination of their work and of similar collaborations, misbehaviour is portrayed as more than doing something that should not be done at work. Indeed, Ackroyd and Thompson imply workplace misbehaviour represents a range of strategies employed by workers to recover a degree of autonomy when faced with oppressive or overly restrictive working conditions. Further attempts to clarify what misbehaviour means to radical industrial sociologists led to a statement made by Thompson and Newsome (2004) who believe it to be anything other than organised and conscious collective action by labour as a wider class agent. What is more, Thompson and Newsome also suggest many aspects of workplace misbehaviour fall outwith the control and resistance model – a model often promoted by orthodox labour process theorists – and into other complex workplace conflicts such as sexual misbehaviour and cultural subversion.

FEATURE	ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR	INDUSTRIAL SOCIOLOGY
1. Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • '...any intentional action by member/s of organization/s that defies and violates (a) shared organizational norms and expectations, and/or (b) core societal values, mores and standards of proper conduct' (Vardi and Wiener, 1996: 153) • '...[W]hat kind of organizational behaviour can be expected when normative work values are not a deciding factor' (Sagie et al, 2003: 1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Sprouse's (1992: 3) definition 'anything you do at work you are not supposed to do' (quoted in Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999: 2) • An active set of practices that attempt to recover a degree of autonomy at work (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) • Anything other than 'organised and conscious collective action by labour as a wider class agent' (Thompson and Newsome, 2004)
2. Basis of analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on unitary assumptions – organization represents the relevant unit of choice (Vardi and Wiener, 1996) • Individual level perspective (Vardi and Wiener, 1996) • Voluntary and committed by choice (Vardi and Wiener, 1996; Vardi and Weitz, 2004) • Involves degree of premeditation (Vardi and Wiener, 1996) • Requires direct worker involvement (Vardi and Weitz, 2004) • Focus on rank-and-file workers (Sagie et al, 2003) • No reason to treat workplace misbehaviour as an inevitable product of class conflict (Vardi and Weitz, 2004) • Should not be treated as deviant behaviour (rare or marginal) but rather as an integral and prevalent aspect of everyday life (Vardi and Wiener, 1996) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on radical pluralism and structured antagonism (Thompson and Ackroyd 1995; Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) • Result of a clash of identities brought into workplace (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) • Organizationally produced (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) • A broader variety of forms that cannot be entirely encompassed in orthodox labour process model, that is, control and resistance, and, accommodation and consent (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995; Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Elger, 2001; Thompson and Newsome, 2004) • Crosses formal hierarchical boundaries (Bolton, 2005)
3. Type and range of misbehaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'S' – internal to organization and aimed at firm or members – three targets: the work, the organisation's resources, and other members • 'O' – intention is to benefit organization; victims are external to organization • 'D' – primarily intended to inflict damage and be destructive – sabotage undertaken under own initiative and for own ends or acting on behalf of others, for example, unions (Vardi and Wiener, 1996; Vardi and Weitz, 2004) • Benign to severe (Vardi and Wiener, 1996) • Workplace murder with withholding effort (Sagie et al, 2003) • Many other types (mainly descriptive), for example, workplace aggression (Dupre and Barling, 2003); sexual harassment (Bowes-Sperry et al, 2003); covering-up behaviour (Stashevsky and Weisberg, 2003); social loafing (Amichai-Hamburger, 2003); 'job burnout and dysfunctional work attitude' (Kalliath, 2003) workplace deviance (Galperin, 2003) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many types (mainly descriptive), for example, time perks, time wasting, absence, turnover, work activity, effort bargaining, soldiering, destructiveness and sabotage, perks, pilferage, fiddling, theft, goal identification, joking rituals, sub-cultures, sex games, class or group solidarity (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) • Commitment through to denial and hostility (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) • Coping mechanisms to resistance (Bolton, 2005; Delbridge, 1995; Elger, 2001; Fleming, 2001; Knights and McCabe, 2000b; Taylor and Bain, 2003)

4. Beyond the scope of analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accidental damage (Vardi and Weitz, 2004) • Human error, accidents, slip-ups (Sagie et al, 2003; Vardi and Weitz, 2004) • Unintended negligence (Vardi and Weitz, 2004) • Class conflict (Vardi and Weitz, 2004) • Occasional slip-ups and accidentally causing mischief without evil intent (Sagie et al, 2003) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious managerial misbehaviour, for example, major fraud, cheating and chicanery (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) • Grey fringes of business (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) • Connections with organized crime (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) • Whistleblowing (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999)
5. General explanations for misbehaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfy personal needs (Vardi and Weitz, 2004) • Benefit perpetrators (Vardi and Weitz, 2004) • Individual factors: personality, person organization value congruence, generalised value of loyalty and duty, personal circumstance, dissatisfaction of personal needs by the organization (Vardi and Wiener, 1996) • Organizational factors: built-in opportunity, control systems (oppressive and lax), organizational culture (formal and informal), organizational cohesiveness, organizational goals (Vardi and Wiener, 1996) • Person-organization fit (Vardi and Wiener, 1996) • Value congruence (Vardi and Wiener, 1996) • Moral development (Vardi and Wiener, 1996) • Organizational cohesiveness (Vardi and Wiener, 1996) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contention or disagreement between workers and managers over time, work, product and identity (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) • Denial of basic right of dignity (Bolton, 2005) • Mismanagement of emotion labourers (Bolton, 2005) • Deep penetration of conflict in the formal and informal social organization of workplaces (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) • Shaping and affirming of non-work identities that disrupt the industrial order of workplaces (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) • Surveillance and control technologies (Knights and McCabe, 2000b) • Contradictions of management (Bolton, 2005) • Sense making (Elger, 2001)

Figure 2.3 Organizational behaviour and industrial sociological approaches to misbehaviour

Both disciplines view misbehaviour as employees challenging the objectives and prerogatives of their employer. However, on closer examination, organizational behaviour theorists take a very precise and unambiguous view of misbehaviour, whilst, industrial sociologists seem to be less precise in their definitions. The difference is probably most apparent in an empirical sense as OB researchers tend to research misbehaviour in a precise and quantitative manner, and, industrial sociologists tend to research misbehaviour using qualitative methods as a means to offer rich accounts of informal organizational activity. Having said that, the organizational behaviour definition appears to raise more questions than it answers. Indeed, Vardi and

Wiener's (1996) definition is quite fixed and subjective whilst indications suggest industrial sociologists are more open minded about such activity.

2.3.2 Basis of analysis

Organizational behaviour accounts of misbehaviour are based on a unitary perspective of organizations – organizations are viewed as being unified bodies in which everyone shares the same goals (Fox, 1966). This perspective is quite apparent in the work of Vardi and Wiener (1996), Sagie et al (2003) and Vardi and Weitz (2004). These writers emphasise individuals being the main perpetrators of misbehaviour (Vardi and Wiener, 1996). Moreover, Vardi and Wiener and Vardi and Weitz (2004) believe that on the whole, misbehaviour is voluntary and committed by choice, involves a degree of premeditation, and requires a worker's direct involvement. Sagie et al (2003) believe low-level workers commit the majority of misbehaviour even though they begin their analysis of misbehaviour by referring to the Enron scandal in the year 2000. It seems that an organizational behaviour approach is about organizations being viewed as rational entities and those who do not conform to the organization's norms are deviant in some way, although this view has become more relaxed in recent years in that some theorists now take the view that misbehaviour is an integral and prevalent aspect of everyday life (Vardi and Wiener, 1996).

In contrast to organizational behaviour accounts of misbehaviour, an industrial sociological approach takes a more pluralistic perspective on the phenomena. Thompson and Ackroyd (1995 and 1999) see misbehaviour as being grounded within a process of structured antagonism between employee and employer – the subjection of workers to the authority of management and the need to plan production in accord with the needs of a capitalist market

(Edwards, 1986: 5). However, even a radical approach is seen to be problematic by its main supporters as misbehaviour also involves a clash of complex and evolving interests (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999) and a sizeable proportion of misbehaviour is difficult to encompass within an orthodox model of the labour process (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995; Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Elger, 2001; Thompson and Newsome, 2004). For instance, fairly common acts of misbehaviour such as organizational romances can often take the form of alliances that transcend formal hierarchical boundaries (Bolton, 2005).

The two approaches offer quite contrasting outlooks on such acts. However, if we take the view that misbehaviour is by and large a form of industrial conflict then there is reason to believe that a unitary view is an inadequate means of analysing its causes (Edwards, 1986). A unitary perspective can be a useful way of viewing organizations, particularly from a practitioner's perspective, but it is a model that struggles to cope with the reality that organizations are not self-contained systems and that conflict is as much a part of social reality as harmony. Likewise, viewing organizations as being made up of rational individuals ignores the influence of groups on individual behaviour (Jenkins, 1999). Indeed, a major benefit of viewing organizations using a radical perspective is that we can account for organizational realities often overlooked in normative accounts, that is, a higher emphasis on asymmetrical employment relations, the effort bargain and the indeterminacy of the labour contract (Edwards, 1986: 35). This perspective, however, does not come without its difficulties. It is difficult to incorporate misbehaviour of, for example, a sexual, racial, or age-related nature, into an analytical framework that emphasises conflict between employer and employee over any other workplace relationship. A framework of this kind fails to adequately cope with the interplay between a worker's individual and group identities, nor does it indicate

why in two similar circumstances we have the potential to see conflictual behaviour in one instance and co-operative behaviour in the other. Whilst a radical perspective of organizations offers valuable organizational insights, it clearly needs to be revised or upgraded to make a clearer link between context and actual behavioural outcomes.

2.3.3 Type and range of misbehaviour

In this sub-section I look at the types of behaviour that constitute misbehaviour. Taking an organizational behaviour perspective to start with, misbehaviour is said to include workplace aggression (Dupre and Barling, 2003), sexual harassment (Bowes-Sperry et al, 2003), covering-up behaviour (Stashevsky and Weisberg, 2003), social loafing (Amichai-Hamburger, 2003), job burnout and dysfunctional work attitude (Kalliath, 2003), and workplace deviance (Galperin, 2003). Organizational behaviour theorists also suggest that workplace misbehaviour ranges from benign to severe (Vardi and Wiener, 1996) and from workplace murder to withholding effort (Sagie et al, 2003). However, Vardi and Wiener (1996) attempt a synthesis of such insights by suggesting there are in fact three types of misbehaviour:

- I. Misbehaviors that are intended to benefit the self (OMB Type S). These misbehaviors are mostly internal to the organization, and usually victimize the employing organization or its members. Thus, such behaviors may have three categories of internal targets: (1) the work itself (e.g. distorting data); (2) the organization's property, resources, symbols or regulations (e.g. stealing and selling manufacturing secrets); and (3) other members (e.g. harassing peers). An exception to the above behavior by a member that appears to benefit the organization (e.g. overcharging the customers), but is, in fact, intended to eventually benefit the individual (e.g., gaining a promotion).

- II. Misbehaviors that primarily intend to benefit the member's employing organization as a whole (OMB Type O). Those misbehaviours (e.g. falsifying records in order to improve chances of obtaining a contract for the organization), are mostly external in nature, usually directed toward outside "victims" such as other organizations, social institutions, public agencies, or customers. If the intention underlying this form of behavior is not primarily to benefit the organization, but is self-serving (e.g. for career considerations), it should not be classified as OMB Type O. More likely, this would be OMB Type S.

- III. Misbehaviors that primarily intend to inflict damage (OMB Type D). Targets of these behaviors could be as listed above, both internal and external. Whereas the intentions underlying Type S and Type O misbehaviors are to benefit either the individual or the organization, the intention behind OMB Type D is to hurt others or the organization. Such intentional misbehaviors (e.g. sabotaging company equipment) may be perpetrated by members either on their own initiative (e.g. as a revenge or a responses to perceived or actual mistreatment), or on behalf of "significant others" (e.g., interfering with organizational operations to comply with Union's expectation). However, the underlying intention must be to cause some type of damage whether minor or considerable, subtle or visible (1996: 155, original emphasis).

From the typology it appears that Vardi and Wiener have outlined what most (especially managers) would view as misbehaviour. Indeed, their typology clearly acknowledges that misbehaviour is not one social phenomenon and can range from fairly harmless and innocuous activities to events that have very serious consequences for the individual or organization. It can also be seen that organizational behaviour theorists tend to take a traditional psychological approach to misbehaviour; In effect, emphasising the role of the individual in such acts. However, organizational behaviour theorists clearly neglect or underplay the social context of misbehaviour. As a result, there is little discussion of the

objective conditions faced by workers, such as management control, and how such conditions may contribute far more to an act of misbehaviour than individual motives.

In spite of a recent surge of interest from an industrial sociological perspective, there is probably only Ackroyd and Thompson's (1999) mapping exercise to draw upon to clearly demonstrate variations in misbehaviour (see figure 2.4). In brief, Ackroyd and Thompson suggest that it may be best to view misbehaviour as range of behaviour that falls between two extremes of employee commitment to and employee hostility against management prerogatives. What is more, Ackroyd and Thompson emphasise how the pressures of work play a large part in most forms of misbehaviour. They also make valuable contributions to our knowledge of misbehaviour by demonstrating the richness, intensity and variety in misbehaviour. For instance, 'withdrawal' from work may be a conscious and progressive bargaining strategy employed by workers, yet it could also be demonstrative of an innate human condition related to alienating environments. In effect, misbehaviour can clearly take the form of resistance, but it can also be a means to cope with work. However, as Ackroyd and Thompson indicate, misbehaviour is a broad and odd set of phenomena that in some incidences has little to do with the labour process itself.

An evaluation of the two approaches suggests the industrial sociological accounts are better suited to investigating the rich and varied nature of misbehaviour. Whilst Vardi and Wiener's categorization may be helpful to certain consultants, academics and practitioners, their typology seems to over-simplify misbehaviour by portraying it in a particular light. For instance, whilst placing misbehaviour on a continuum does not tell us all we need to know about misbehaviour, what it does do, however, is allow us to gain a greater appreciation of the many

ways in which workers can deal with work-related conflict. In other words, it is quite clear that workers often deal with conflict in a manner that deviates from what is expected by management, yet most of the time this involves a constructive response. Yet, an industrial sociological approach to misbehaviour presents a range of theoretical dilemmas. For instance, an industrial sociological approach struggles to deal with the many dimensions of worker identity exemplified by acts that include sexual and cultural-related misbehaviour. What is more, such an approach struggles to offer explanations for the diverging behavioural outcomes of conflict.

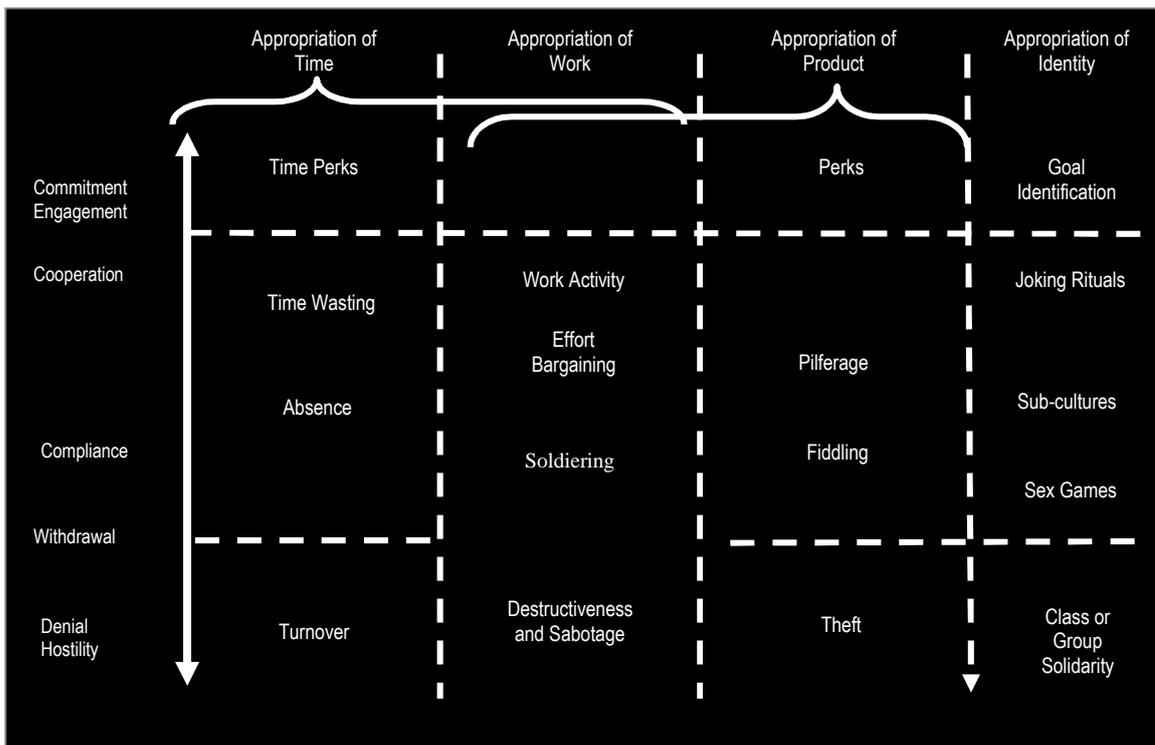


Figure 2.4 Dimensions of misbehaviour

Source: Ackroyd and Thompson (1999: 25)

2.3.4 Beyond the scope of analysis

There must be reasonable limits set for what constitutes misbehaviour, as it is unreasonable to say misbehaviour involves everything that should not happen in organizations. Surprisingly, there is little consensus between the two approaches about what is and what is not misbehaviour. For instance, organizational behaviour theorists believe misbehaviour should not include accidental damage (Vardi and Weitz, 2004), human error, accidents and slip-ups (Sagie et al, 2003; Vardi and Weitz, 2004), unintended negligence (Vardi and Weitz, 2004), and, occasional slip-ups and accidentally causing mischief without evil intent (Sagie et al, 2003).

For industrial sociology theorists, such as Ackroyd and Thompson, the limits to misbehaviour end with serious activities such as major fraud, cheating and chicanery. Ackroyd and Thompson also exclude the 'grey fringes of business'. Interestingly, the two theorists omit whistleblowing as being an act of misbehaviour, although they do not make the decision to do so particularly clear. For instance, Ackroyd and Thompson omit whistleblowing despite claiming whistleblowing, like fraud and organized crime, to be at the centre of recent employment-related debates. Whistleblowing, after all, can be viewed in some instances as an act of sabotage (LaNuez and Jermier, 1994).

It seems, therefore, that it would be appropriate to omit accidental and significant acts of misbehaviour from future research into misbehaviour. However, it seems unreasonable to exclude acts of whistleblowing (certainly in an informal manner) from such an inquiry. This is because whistleblowing is a means by which workers can resist management. It is also an act that both management and workers may see as being a kind of mischief.

2.3.5 General explanations for misbehaviour

Organizational behaviour theorists offer a number of explanations for misbehaviour. For instance, Vardi and Wiener (1996) believe that employees misbehave as a means to satisfy their own personal gratification. Similarly, Vardi and Weitz (2004) suggest the main motives for misbehaving is to benefit the perpetrators. Taken together, it would appear that an organizational behaviour approach equates misbehaviour with inward and egocentric individualism. Further, more in-depth organizational behaviour explanations for misbehaviour tend to focus on personal and organizational factors (see figure 2.3). For instance, Vardi and Wiener (1996) believe determinants of misbehaviour include employee personality; the degree of congruence between person and organization, and, the opportunity to misbehave in the first place. What is more, Vardi and Wiener (1996: 161) take a view that person-organization fit, value congruence, moral development, and organizational cohesiveness represent further predictors of misbehaviour.

With an industrial sociological approach it appears that misbehaviour represents the contention or disagreement between workers and managers over four controversial workplace issues – time, work, product and identity (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999 – see figure 2.4). Interestingly though, Ackroyd and Thompson do not make it particularly clear how ‘identity’ plays a part in misbehaviour. Further explanations for misbehaviour are scattered thinly throughout recent industrial sociological literature and include a suggestion that workers misbehave as a means to make sense of the contradictions inherent in the social organization of work (Elger, 2001). Misbehaviour is a worker reaction to the contradictory nature of managers and management (Bolton, 2005). Lastly, misbehaviour is a diminutive response to sophisticated surveillance and control technologies (Knights and McCabe, 2000b).

Assessing the value of diverging contributions to general explanations for misbehaviour clearly depends on the view taken of the context in which these acts occur in the first place. Whilst there is little doubt that, for example, personality and moral development plays a part in workplace behaviour (a work ethic) and some forms of misbehaviour, an emphasis on such variables neglects the context in which misbehaviour occurs. That is to say, contention or disagreement between workers and management is far more likely to form the basis of misbehaviour than personality and (lack of) moral development. For instance, worker personality and moral development are likely to be highly constrained in an environment that is quite unlike life outwith organizations where low-level workers are far freer to express their personal opinions and attributes. Inside the organization personality and moral development are likely to be of little relevance as management reward values nurtured as part of their own organizational cultural programme. Instead, it would appear that the industrial sociological view of organizations offers by far the most accurate and relevant insights required as a means to advance explanations for misbehaviour. However, an industrial sociological approach can only offer limited insights into worker identity as it seems that we must move beyond an assumption that workers have only have a limited range of identities. For instance, worker identity in industrial sociology seems restricted to that of a subject of management control (Knights and Willmott, 1989), class (MacKenzie et al, forthcoming) membership of a trade union (Edwards, 1986), or an allegiance to an occupational or professional group (Marks and Lockyer, 2005).

2.4 Evaluating misbehaviour literature

The way in which this review has been conducted has allowed me to consider many expressions that could be associated with misbehaviour. Around a hundred examples and terms that relate directly to misbehaviour were discussed and highlighted (see figures 2.1 and 2.2) to help appreciate how misbehaviour permeates the working lives of low-level workers. An historical approach provided many important insights into misbehaviour. Of particular note is how misbehaviour is probably as common in workplaces today as it has ever been. What is more, there appears to be an extraordinary continuity in the forms it may take, for example, sabotaging management prerogatives appears to prevail in new manufacturing plants as much as it did in the mills built in the early nineteenth century. However, it was the consultation of inter-disciplinary theoretical and empirical literature that allowed the most valuable insights into misbehaviour. Further analysis suggested that whilst there is merit in viewing misbehaviour as a concern of management, this view must be carefully balanced out with an acknowledgement that management plays a significant role in creating the context of misbehaviour. The final conclusion of this section suggests we must build upon and look beyond current analytical frameworks to gain greater insights into misbehaviour.

In part two, the process of being critical of two contrasting approaches to misbehaviour led to the following. First of all, even though both approaches offered similar definitions of misbehaviour, neither definition covers the full range of acts that could arguably come under the heading of misbehaviour. Secondly, the basis of an analysis typically used by industrial sociologists offers a more satisfactory way of making sense of misbehaviour. Thirdly, an industrial sociological approach offers a less restricting means to explore the many types of misbehaviour discussed earlier in the chapter. Fourthly, an organizational behaviour approach

offers a better perspective on where to draw the line between behaviour and misbehaviour. Finally, due to an emphasis on organizational context the industrial sociological approach offers a more appropriate means to explain why misbehaviour occurs in the first place – largely the result of the way in which the labour process is conducted, rather than based on personality and moral standing.

However, it was also clear in the discussion that an industrial sociological approach has distinct limitations and that this radical view of organizations must be developed to prevent workers being portrayed just as workers. The reasons for the criticism are unmistakable. For instance, an industrial sociological approach, typically in the form of orthodox labour process analysis, cannot adequately deal with one apparent, yet distinct dimension of misbehaviour – misbehaviour, for example, of a sexual or culturally related nature. What is more, such an approach is rather limited in explaining why in similar circumstances we may witness co-operative misbehaviour in one situation and witness adversarial forms of misbehaviour in another. The basis for advancing explanations for misbehaviour, it seems, would require a much more intricate means to explore the role of worker identity and the objective conditions of labour. Having said that, the analysis led to the suggestion that exploring the identity of employees, and especially how identity may play a pivotal part in difficult workplace situations, would almost certainly help fill the gaps missing from an industrial sociological approach.

2.4.1 Conclusions

What has mainly been discussed in this chapter so far is based on a largely literal interpretation of the literature that relates to misbehaviour. However, the discussion revealed a range of trends in the many ways and forms misbehaviour takes shape. In other words,

misbehaviour appears to be a multi-dimensional series of phenomena and not just concerning minor acts that attempt to challenge or undermine managerial authority and strategy. Evidence to support a multi-dimensional proposition runs throughout the chapter, and outlined below are examples that help us further develop such a suggestion.

In the first part of the chapter, after looking at misbehaviour from a number of perspectives evidence to suggest that misbehaviour is multi-dimensional is overwhelming. For instance, misbehaviour could involve drug use at work, silent strikes, silent protests, shopfloor sexism, organizational romances, machine breaking, indulgency patterns, bickering and infighting, and, surviving monotonous meetings.

In the second part of the chapter, we also saw Vardi and Wiener (1996) suggest that misbehaviour should be seen as serving three particular purposes: benefiting the self, benefiting the organization, and, as a means to inflict damage. In contrast, Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) suggest misbehaviour is at one extreme a series of acts that deviate slightly from formal organizational policy, but essentially consensual and harmonious practices, that is, often endorsed in some way by both managers and their subordinates. At the other extreme are acts of misbehaviour that relate to overt conflicts between managers and subordinates. However, an important distinction to be taken from the contribution made by Ackroyd and Thompson is that misbehaviour also relates to conflicts between employees over matters that are not necessarily of a work-related nature, for example, misbehaviour of a sexual or culturally related nature. What this suggests is misbehaviour is essentially a multiplicity of strategies, which require further consideration before discussing a theoretical framework to advance explanations of its occurrence.

Indeed, it is believed that a great deal of misbehaviour is based on work-related conflict and made up of five dimensions, and representative of a range of strategies adopted by workers in work-related situations. First of all, it is quite obvious to claim that one dimension of misbehaviour concerns lower-level employees trying to undermine the authority of their superordinate peers. For instance, examples and terms such as disobeying immediate orders, silent strikes and silent protests, subversive humour, defiance at work, resistance by persistence and sabotage. Taken together, it would be reasonable to suggest misbehaviour takes the form of what could be called an alternative resistance strategy – alternative, that is, to organized strikes, work-to-rule, boycotts of certain activities and over-time bans.

Secondly, it would appear that another distinct dimension of misbehaviour, which also appears to be a deliberate work-based strategy, involves a range of acts that are about employees struggling to deal with the pressures of work. In particular, coping with aspects of work that may be undesirable for those who have to do them, but accepted nevertheless as part of the job, occupation or profession. For instance, clowning, distancing, horseplay, mucking in, gossiping, informal attainment of job satisfaction, and Svejism relate far more to survival strategies than attempting to change how work is organized and experienced.

Thirdly, as inferred by Ackroyd and Thompson's (1999) account of misbehaviour, there are acts of misbehaviour that could be viewed as being informal work-based custom and practice, that is, largely informal, yet consensual understandings between managers and subordinates that play a functional part in the success of organizations. However, there must be an underlying conflictual problem for the need for new customs and practices to arise. Characteristics of an informal workplace practice includes a range of acts where management

sets definite limits on such practices, or turns a blind eye to acts that do not seriously jeopardise the aims and objectives of the organization. Examples of informal workplace practices include fiddles, homers or government jobs, ripping off customers, and games that relate to piece-rate systems. Further examples could also include subterranean bargaining and indulgency patterns.

A fourth dimension concerns quite a broad-range of strategies and is more to do with viewing employees as having a range of identities as opposed to a fixed identity solely related to a job description. For instance, organizational romances, culture wars in the workplace, men's indifference to women, racial discrimination, sexual voyeurism, harassing weaker and younger workers. In other words, misbehaviour that involves subverting cultural identity as well as a variety of sexual misbehaviour.

A fifth and final dimension of misbehaviour occurs when workers sense that their environment does not allow them, for whatever reason, to express their discontent. In effect, leading to external strategies to deal with conflict. Examples of this kind are less apparent in the literature; however, acts such as whistleblowing and externalised conflict in the form of labour turnover can probably be viewed as a strategy distinct from any of the above. The reason for this is simple in that a strategy that involves whistleblowing or an abrupt termination of the contract of employment means conflict generated from the demands of the labour process or other conflicts that manifest in the workplace are expressed external to the organization.

It can be seen that the literature has revealed five distinct dimensions to misbehaviour, although it is likely that each dimension will overlap to a degree with other dimensions. The

main reason for this, as it was stated before, centres on the belief that all workplace misbehaviour is shaped and formed in some way by the demands of the labour process and the structured antagonism between employer and employee. However, before I consider how to develop further explanations for misbehaviour there is a need to explore these five dimensions of misbehaviour, or informal workplace strategies, in much more detail. Indeed, a discussion of the five dimensions of misbehaviour forms the basis for chapter three. In short, what has been proposed in this chapter is the idea that misbehaviour can be divided into distinct and meaningful categories and is best approached using a radical industrial sociological mode of analysis. In the next chapter the main aim is to further explore and validate each of the proposed five dimensions of misbehaviour in relation to an established labour process theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 3: THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF MISBEHAVIOUR

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter it was suggested that misbehaviour was multi-dimensional, although it was also suggested that each of the dimensions needed to be confirmed as distinct organizational phenomena. Consequently, this chapter considers each of the five dimensions of misbehaviour outlined at the end of chapter two. More specifically, as misbehaviour seems to be about an informal dimension of organizations and work-based relations one aim of this chapter is to compare and contrast each proposed dimension of misbehaviour with an established theoretical framework that considers workplace conflict. The purpose being to align apparently irregular behaviour with established radical theory. The process starts by briefly outlining an established radical model of workplace conflict. Following on from this is a further review of alternative resistance strategies, survival strategies, informal workplace custom and practice, cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour, and, external strategies to deal with conflict. The dimensions are explored in isolation in order to identify the core characteristics of each. Consistent definitions with core characteristics, allow uniform comparisons of misbehaviour between different research settings (see Chapter Seven).

The aim of the second part of this chapter is to discuss the extent to which misbehaviour fits in with established categorizations of workplace conflict. The objective is also to provide a summary of unexplained aspects of misbehaviour. This chapter acts as the basis for chapter four, which looks to the potential for further theoretical development of misbehaviour.

3.2 The five dimensions of workplace misbehaviour

Theories of workplace conflict provide a crucial starting point for an analysis of both misbehaviour and conflict. Each of the five dimensions of misbehaviour described in the previous chapter is aligned with a category of workplace conflict in the following section. This chapter also seeks to establish distinct aspects of each category of misbehaviour and identifying mismatches between a radical model of conflict and each dimension of misbehaviour. The process starts by discussing a radical model of industrial conflict (see figure 3.1) before linking in each dimension of misbehaviour.

3.2.1 Conflict and co-operation and the labour process

Edwards and Scullion's (1982) categorization of conflict is used as the means to evaluate the five dimensions of misbehaviour (see figure 3.1). The reason for using this model is based on the belief that the radical view of misbehaviour is currently the most satisfactory means to explain a range of workplace misbehaviour (see Chapter Two). What is more, the model used also ties in well with idea of structured antagonism being at the centre of orthodox labour process analysis (Edwards, 1986; Thompson, 1989). That is, misbehaviour must be appreciated in the context in which it occurs – a product of organizational goals, management control and responses by workers to management control.

The radical approach, however, can only offer limited insights into the psychological processes of those who misbehave. Hence, the model can be used to predict misbehaviour, but it cannot explain its nuances. From figure 3.1 it can be seen how the three levels of conflict relate to the three categories of conflict.

In more detail, the 'behavioural' level represents action expressly used by workers to manifest conflict. In turn, behavioural forms of conflict manifest in two forms – 'overt' and 'non-directed'. Overt actions can be equated with workers connecting their actions with the source of their frustration. For instance, workers taking action against planned redundancies. Non-directed conflict, on the other hand, occurs when workers behave in a way that reflects their objective conditions, yet the conflict is not targeted at the main perpetrator. An example of non-directed conflict would be 'having a laugh' at work as a means to deal with boring and repetitive work. The institutional level of conflict is taken to represent conflict that has been contained with informal rules and regulations. The purpose of institutionalising conflict is so that certain conflict does not reach the behavioural level. Collective bargaining procedure would be an example of how disputes over pay can be institutionalised without resorting to industrial action. In other words, the institutional level of conflict is represented by formal or informal rules or customs. The structural level of conflict is said to represent a dimension of workplace conflict that is not expressed. The implicit category represents a situation where conflict exists but is not expressed in an overt, non-directed or institutionalised way. Such conflict represents a dilemma for organizational researchers as explanations need to be found why there is no affordable expression of conflict. In sum, Edward and Scullion's categorization of conflict allows us to conceptualise the conflicting and co-operative nature of the labour process, the social setting for the labour process and the basis for misbehaviour – conflict. A detailed examination of the five dimensions of misbehaviour is now undertaken in conjunction with the model of conflict put forward by Edwards and Scullion (1982).

Level of conflict	Categories of conflict
Behavioural	Overt Non-directed
Institutional	Institutionalised
Structural	Implicit

Figure 3.1 Categorization of Conflict

Source: Edwards and Scullion (1982: 10)

3.2.2 Alternative resistance strategies

Resistance in its essence is said to occur when workers either mitigate claims by management on themselves, or how workers advance claims against management (Hodson, 1995). Edwards et al (1995: 283) on the other hand define resistance in one particular way – where workers counter managerial control of the workplace. As the focus of the current research is low-level workers it makes sense to adopt Edwards et al's definition as alternative resistance strategies are strategies by which low-level workers aim to subvert management demands. Actions associated with workers furthering their own specific interests will be considered under the sub-section entitled cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour. Furthermore, actions that stop short of subversion are to be reviewed in the next sub-section on survival strategies. The scope of resistance in this instance refers to acts committed within the workplace or wherever work takes place. Acts of resistance committed outwith the organization is discussed in the final sub-section on external strategies to deal with conflict.

The scope of resistance is said to range from unorganised, informal and individual acts through to organised, formal and collective forms (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004). This distinction

is probably influenced by the contribution to our understanding of industrial conflict by Hyman's (1981: 53-56) 'forms of conflict as alternatives' and Edward's (1986: 107-141) ideas concerning 'changing forms of collective protest'. However, there is no good reason to believe resistance simply involves individuals acting alone or individuals acting together as a group or collective – that is, a simple dichotomy between individual and collective acts misses out, for example, on individual acts that have tacit group support (Hodson, 1995: 102).

Dimension	Features
I. Alternative resistance strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opposition to management demands (not consent) • Workers connect their actions to source of frustration • Individual, collective and pseudo collective responses • Not concerned with specific interests of workers or their broader identities • Committed in workplace only
II. Survival strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns worker adaptation to alienation • Workers see less of a connection with their actions and the source of frustration • Not overly conflictual or directed • Requires high levels of resourcefulness and creativity • Denoted most of all by consent with some degree of resistance • A response to how work is organised – that is, not any other oppressive force • May involve intra-group collusion, but little or immediate collusion with figures of authority • Committed in workplace only
III. Informal workplace custom and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of formal business or working practice • Institutionalised recognition of conflict • Involves inter-group collusion, that is, like formal rules understandings transcend authoritative boundaries • Involves varying degrees of management complicity • Benefits all in some way, but ultimately serves the group who receives surplus value from labour • Committed in workplace or wherever work takes place • Often kept secret from significant third parties
IV. Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts based predominantly on non-work identities, for example, gender, nationality, social background, age, religion, etc. • Committed in the workplace or wherever work takes place • One strategy based on an informal exploitation or abuse of formal status • Other strategies based on perceptions of other groups in the workplace – other than those defined by job title or formal status • Made up of sub-sets of resistance and consent, and can take the form of a survival strategy (see above)
V. External strategies to deal with conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers recognise their frustrations, but express them outwith place of work • Brought about by sense of powerlessness • An expression of conflict that would be extremely difficult to display within the workplace • Can involve ending of employment relationship, but mostly a form of indirect retribution towards certain managers or management • Largely symbolic as it is typically low risk, non-confrontational and unlikely to bring about change to situation

Figure 3.2 Features of the five dimensions of misbehaviour

Acts that could be referred to as alternative resistance strategies include spontaneously walking off the line (Beynon, 1984), a food operative demonstrating annoyance with management by altering a customary seaside motif to carry the words 'Fuck Off' (Taylor and Walton, 1979), and car workers deliberately sabotaging production to increase their bargaining potential (Zabala, 1989). In a more subtle fashion, workers have been known to resist by 'following the 'book of rules'' (Flynn, 1917) with workers aware that an unambiguous interpretation of law, rule or regulation can be a major inconvenience for employers. Similar examples are characterised by workers openly withdrawing effort or refusing to 'make out' when management set piecework rates judged by workers to be unacceptable (Roy, 1954). In a more contemporary context, where management attempt to control employees using cultural programmes, workers have been known to covertly resist 'cultural change efforts' (Harris and Ogbonna, 1998). For instance, 'actively rejecting' a management initiative by using every 'trick in the book'. In effect, resistance, in this sense, is about combining legitimate methods with a mobilisation of tacit knowledge of work systems – the result is a relatively successful strategy of covertly influencing management plans. Moreover, Harris and Ogbonna (2002: 170) draw attention to what they call 'customary public service sabotage', that is, openly affecting the speed of service in a manner opposite to that desired by customers. Accounts of worker 'defiance' noted by Analoui (1995) and Analoui and Kakabadse (1989) suggest openly enacted, individual and collective acts of sabotage are surprisingly common in the 'modern' workplace – in this case an 'entertainment establishment'.

At a more secretive and non-confrontational level, resistance could involve assembly line workers discovering untraceable ways of stopping the line (Graham, 1995). Collinson (1994) highlights how 'resistance by persistence' is a particular form of resistance, but in a form that

does not represent a direct and formal challenge to management policy or initiative. Resistance in this form is accomplished when management back down due to the amount of time and resources required defending a decision or practice. Delbridge's (1998) research of worker experience of TQM and JIT manufacturing systems reveals vivid accounts of low-level workers moderating and sometimes 'beating' the system. Analoui's (1995) research considers concealed forms of resistance such as individual-orientated indiscipline and non-cooperation. Likewise, Harris and Ogbonna (1998) review acts that involve workers reinventing or selectively reinventing cultural change efforts. What is more, workers have little choice but to pursue secret and creative strategies because they view legitimate grievance channels as less effective than their own initiatives. McKinlay and Taylor (1996a and 1996b), moreover, uncovered a plethora of disobedience in an organization where workers are subjected to the harsh disciplinary intent of peer-orientated HRM practices. Taking all this research together suggests there are an almost unlimited number of ways in which workers can subvert management demands. It also demonstrates that workers can be creative despite attempts by management to constrain their behaviour.

Hodson (1995) has developed theory within this domain and considers all the ways that workers can resist management. For instance, deflecting abuse, regulating the amount of work they do, defending autonomy, and exploiting worker participation programmes as a means to pursue a wide-range of interests. Fleming and Sewell (2002: 870), moreover, introduce 'Svejk' as a synecdoche to represent a set of practices that may be recognised as resistance in the context of 'high commitment' organizations. Indeed, evidence of both Hodson, and Fleming and Sewell's proposals can be found in a range of past and present research, especially if we add high control organizations to the equation. For instance,

Pollert's (1981: 151-155) detailed research refers to mature women using aggressive wit to resist management orders. On a similar note, workers have been widely reported to use humour as a fruitful weapon of resistance (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Taylor and Bain, 2003; Rodriguez and Collinson, 1995; Holmes and Marra, 2002). In effect, workers are known to resist by 'taking the piss' out of management and using an abundance of creative humour in the form of metaphors, quips, and jocular abuse with the intent of subverting management authority. Similarly, it has been argued that worker gossip can also be used as an innovative way of subverting management initiatives (Noon and Delbridge, 1993).

Alternative strategies of conflict can be compared with what Edwards and Scullion (1982) categorize as overt conflict (see figure 3.1) – cases where conflict is recognised by participants and where action is taken to express it (1982:11). For instance, walking off the line, refusing to make out and disobedience clearly fit in with this category as misbehaviour in each of these situations represents a means by which workers can show their discontent with management. What is more, alternative resistance strategies equate with the nature of strike action except alternative resistance strategies clearly do not involve the full withdrawal of labour. However, what is less clear is how effective alternative resistance strategies are (Elger, 2001). Care should be taken to avoid exaggerating the potential effects of such acts without exploring them in more detail. Further, as discussed in chapter two, little is known about why workers resist when a less confrontational or more co-operative approach may produce more favourable outcomes. We also know little about why workers act individually when collective responses may be more effective. For example, why do we get individual acts of resistance in situations where most if not all workers are members of a trade union?

3.2.3 Survival strategies

According to Noon and Blyton (2002: 228), survival strategies are synonymous with the ways that workers get through their working day: how they survive the boredom, tedium, monotony, drudgery and powerlessness that characterises many jobs. Other theorists, such as Storey and Harrison (1999), refer to such behaviour as 'coping'. Noon and Blyton go on to suggest there is one central principle at the heart of survival strategies. The central principle is that in order to 'survive' work, people are obliged to become resourceful and creative in developing strategies that allow them to assert some control over, and construct meanings for, the work activities they are directed by managers to undertake (2002: 228). Noon and Blyton's proposals are made up of five main strategies (see figure 3.3 for further and ongoing clarification) – 'making out', 'fiddling', 'joking', 'sabotage' and 'escaping'. In turn, they suggest survival strategies are not just about consent – they could also be interpreted as a form of resistance. Whilst it is accepted that survival strategies contain an element of resistance, for the purpose of this sub-section consent is likely to be the more defining feature of such acts. In effect, by surviving work we are looking at situations where resistance is likely to be viewed as futile or pointless, yet absolute conformance would be too much to bear. Such strategies may also be characterised by unconscious responses as workers adjust themselves to rigid and inflexible objective conditions. Surviving work should therefore be more accurately viewed as a creative reinterpretation of, rather than attempt to, subvert organizational rules.

Survival strategies are therefore about workers unilaterally modifying the way in which they are expected to work. As a consequence, survival strategies do not include collusive practices between superordinate and subordinate groups, such as organizational romances (Quinn, 1977) joking rituals aimed at culturally defined groups, or men subverting the interests of

females (Cockburn, 1991; Game and Pringle, 1983). Behaviour related to collusive misbehaviour and romance or non-work identity is covered in a later sub-section. Moreover, misbehaviour displayed outwith the confines of the organization are discussed later on too. We start by looking at research that refers to the many mischievous ways in which workers can deal with the pressures of work without making any significant attempt to change how work is organized or the power structures that relate to the organization of work.

If survival strategies are indeed a form of consent and less of an act of defiance then Roy's (1958) work on informal group interaction and job satisfaction, and, Burawoy's (1979) account of the 'game' would represent a good place to start reviewing the literature on survival strategies. A further example of a survival strategy includes joking that preserves the status quo (Ackroyd and Cowdry, 1992; Bradney, 1957; Linstead, 1985). Surviving work is likely to include doing almost 'anything for a laugh' (Pollert, 1981: 136) or undertaking acts defined by Taylor and Bain (2003) as 'undirected subversion'. As such, certain acts of sabotage could be viewed as a type of survival strategy. More specifically, examples of this kind could include 'letting off steam' (Bolton, 2005; Hochschild, 2003; Taylor and Bain, 2003), as well as actions that may have unintended and negative consequences, for example, 'horseplay' and 'teararsing' (Lupton, 1963), or, the manipulation of productivity figures to please management (Knights and McCabe, 1998). If Noon and Blyton believe 'escaping' is a way of surviving work, then acts such as daydreaming or even drug use at work (Mangione and Quinn, 1975) should certainly count as a way of getting through the working day.

Survival strategy	Interpreted as a form of consent	Interpreted as a form of resistance
Making out	Acts of 'game playing' within the organisation's rules, which result in mutual benefit for employees and managers.	Acts that undermine management control by bending the rules to satisfy the self-interest of employees.
Fiddling	'Deserved' perks that help subsidise wages and confer status on employees.	Theft that affects profitability and undermines the integrity of everyone in the organisation.
Joking	Forms of group self-regulation that preserves the status quo and provides a way of letting off steam.	Challenges to management authority that undermine the status and policies of managers and make them appear foolish.
Sabotage	(a) Expressions of frustration or irresponsible behaviour (letting off steam). (b) Well-meaning actions that have unintended negative consequences.	(a) Malicious acts against property and people, intended to 'get even' with the organisation. (b) Well-meaning actions intended to 'expose' the organisation (whistleblowing).
Escaping	Acts of withdrawal that results in the employee passively accepting the status quo, even though they disagree with management policy or objectives.	Acts that result in the withdrawal of goodwill or mental and physical effort, thereby reducing organisational performance and undermining management objectives.

Figure 3.3 Interpreting survival strategies

Source: Noon and Blyton (2002: 258)

Acts of making out are for the purpose of making work more interesting and rewarding as well as ensuring management are satisfied with the worker's final product. Specific examples of making out include quota restriction (Roy, 1953) or malingering at work to informally regulate the supply of labour (Beynon, 1984: 143). However, contentious forms of making out, such as fiddling in the form of 'ripping off waiters' (Hawkins, 1984), indicate the limits of survival strategies being viewed as a relatively harmless pursuit. Similarly, humour of a kind that contains a critique of management may also represent a shift to resistance. For instance, car workers subjected to Americanised forms of Japanese management practices joking about 'Kaizen'ing a chair (Graham, 1995: 121), or French speaking call centre workers (who deal

with French speaking customers) taking advantage of their immediate manager who does not 'parle Francais' (Taylor and Bain, 2003). Survival strategies could also include getting the job done, as well as working in a manner that involves the withdrawal of goodwill and minimising mental and physical effort (Kidwell and Bennett, 1993), once more demonstrating the difficulty of understanding where to draw the line between survival and resistance.

Survival strategies have much in common with what Edwards and Scullion (1982) categorize as non-directed conflict (see figure 3.1). Non-directed conflict refers to a situation where workers seem content just to survive their working day. In other words, there is a clear link between non-directed conflict and survival strategies. For instance, fooling around at work as a means to make the working day pass quicker indicates in one sense the alienating nature of low-grade and mundane front-line work, but on the other hand, it also indicates a sense that the same workers may not readily make a strong connection between their objective conditions and how they respond. However, survival strategies could also indicate that the workers are aggrieved, but for whatever reason, do not adopt a resistance-based strategy. The main point is that researchers need to find ways in which to determine the nature of survival strategies instead of making assumptions that may turn out to be inaccurate.

So, survival strategies or non-directed conflict are common workplace features. Although the idea of surviving work is nothing new, how work is survived is likely to vary according to the nature of the work and the creative ability of the workers. In the context of modern management practices, evidence of new types or innovative ways of surviving work would probably add little to our current understanding of this particular dimension of workplace misbehaviour. Explanations for misbehaviour must be related to understandings of why

workers, for example, survive instead of resisting. Indeed, we need to know more about the process by which workers rationalise their strategy of choice. It is not necessary to know whether workers use survival strategies because they are ignorant of their objective conditions, or, whether workers are drawn to survival strategies when resistance is seen as being an inappropriate course of action. What is important is some further investigation into the decision-making processes that lead up to the act itself.

3.2.4 Informal workplace custom and practice

The idea for the category of informal workplace custom and practice derives from Ditton's (1977a) referral to 'informal business practices', that is, collusive forms of work-related part-time crime, fiddling and pilferage. Ditton also refers to such practices as a 'subculture of businesses'. However, even though Ditton (1977a: 173, original emphasis) suggests fiddling is contextually dependent upon the legitimate structure of 'service', he also remarks on how fiddling is a subculture of legitimate commerce. In other words, commercial success is dependent on varying degrees of informal or secret activity as well as dependency on formal and overt activities.

Mars's (1994) research about 'cheats at work' develops ideas on informal workplace custom and practice. His research into workplace crime discusses the concept of a 'total reward system' – extending the official rewards that workers get, such as wages and salaries, to unofficial, alternative and extra-legal or illegal activity (Ibid.: 8). A further example of informal workplace custom and practice, as a form of misbehaviour, includes indulgency patterns (Gouldner, 1954). In this instance informal workplace custom and practice could be associated with a 'connected set of concrete judgements and underlying sentiments disposing workers to

react to the plant favourably and to trust supervisors' (Ibid.: 56). Indulgency patterns, for example, are said to include managers not being as strict as they could be, workers working hard when they need to and taking it easier when the pressure is off, leavers being re-hired, the use of informal job rotation, a benevolent approach to workers who are injured, management turning a blind eye to workers' private use of company property, managers applying a 'flexible' application of rules, management allowing an informal means of seeking a grievance, and management supervising workers in a lenient fashion. Many of these practices may not strictly be misbehaviour, but they certainly qualify as secret practices that senior management may know little about or allow outsiders to be aware of.

Informal workplace custom and practice differs from survival strategies and alternative resistance strategies because they are arrangements between managers and non-managers - even though the practice may function with only a tacit understanding between the two parties. In effect, management is always complicit in informal workplace custom and practice. A further example of such activity is an 'underhand' pay deal called a 'Robin Hood scheme' so that 'high fliers' at a telecommunications company could be compensated for agreeing to subsidise the pay of low earners - a possible breach of the Conservative government's incomes legislation, 1970-1974 (Thompson and Bannon, 1985: 46-49).

A second feature of informal workplace custom and practice indicates that the ultimate purpose of the act is to serve the interests of the employer. Workers who agree to ignore hygiene standards (Ackroyd and Cowdry, 1992) and jam safety devices (Nicols and Armstrong, 1977) are likely to expect favourable treatment from management for misbehaving. Yet, it is management who ultimately benefits from keeping workers working, production going

and costs minimised. A further example of such practices includes food manufacturers who tacitly support workers who 'steal' raw materials and final produce (Anderton and Keily, 1988). It seems that an informal workplace custom and practice is unlikely to continue if the active consent of the workers is ended or management no longer endorses the accord.

A final parameter of informal workplace custom and workplace practice is that the practice relates to a work-related issue and conducted either in the workplace itself or wherever work takes place. In short, informal workplace custom and practice occurs in the workplace. Examples include workers being involved in, or giving tacit support to, fiddles so as not to be disciplined (Knights and McCabe, 2000b) and management augmenting production by encouraging informal working practices that operate alongside apparently strict quality initiatives (Palmer, 1996).

There is a clear relationship between informal custom and practice and institutionalised conflict (see figure 3.1). In other words, the misbehaviour reviewed in this sub-section represents institutionalised conflict. For example, disputes related to the effort-bargain can take the form of low-level employees being allowed to 'take it easy' when the pressure to produce slows down. Indeed, institutionalised conflict is an institutional recognition through a formal agreement, a customary rule, or even a traditionally accepted practice which has not attained the status of a rule (Edwards and Scullion, 1982: 12). Indulgency patterns represent actions to resolve and contain conflict between employer and employee and are therefore likely to prevent conflict emerging in a frustration-like manner. Moving beyond the constituent features and suggesting why informal custom and workplace practices may manifest in the workplace represents a greater challenge. What forces are at work that leads to two opposing

groups from striking up such an agreement? Clearly, there is good reason for workers to cooperate with management and enter into agreements that favour their interests. Yet, the accord is likely to favour management. The process that leads to a replication of the power imbalance requires further inquiry as the grounds for agreement are not sufficiently clear.

3.2.5 Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour

Quite different to all previously discussed dimensions of misbehaviour is a series of acts that do not fit comfortably in a labour process model based on workplace conflict (see figure 3.1). As a matter of fact acts referred to as 'cultural subversion strategies and misbehaviour' seem to occur despite a range of control structures being in place. More interestingly, however, is how cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour involves conflicting and co-operative acts between workers. A particular example of this kind of misbehaviour involves a clash of masculine and feminine identities that could result in anything from sexual discrimination to a workplace romance or affair. Further examples include men using hidden structures to resist or disproportionately influence the advances of other social groups that include women, ethnic minorities, homosexuals, lesbians and disabled groups (Cockburn, 1991), low-level personnel abusing their position by using surveillance technology to evaluate the sexual attractiveness of female operatives (Salzinger, 2000), men using sex at work to foster personal goals (Gutek, 1989), men trying to exclude and marginalise women from their place of work (Levine, 2001), and, women taking advantage of their sex appeal to get around male supervisors (Pollert, 1981).

Clearly, it would seem that the main antagonists in such situations are white males, although as Pollert (1981) suggests, there is reason to believe that females could be antagonists given

certain, perhaps, less regular circumstances. Indeed, there has been research that indicates men, typically defined by being white, discriminate against non-whites (see for example, Roy, 1952; Burawoy, 1979; Linhart, 1981; Zabala, 1989). However, as previously suggested, cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour represents a complex set of workplace conflicts and behaviour that moves beyond the control and resistance model (Thompson and Newsome, 2004). It seems, therefore, that this dimension of misbehaviour represents the main reason to consider a theoretical framework that can cope with the many identities of workers. Having said that, cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour appears to have many similar characteristics with alternative resistance strategies, survival strategies and informal workplace custom and practice. Such acts, in other words, could involve behavioural conflict and institutionalised practices. However, the manifestation of such misbehaviour in an organizational context suggests an orthodox labour process mode of analysis can still make a contribution in advancing explanations for why it occurs in the first place. For example, whatever the origins of sexual or racial discrimination may be, or whomever an organizational romance may involve, management are likely to have some sort of indirect influence on such activities.

The main defining features of cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour therefore involve conflict and co-operation between competing workers. Whilst the three previous dimensions of sexual misbehaviour are about interactions between managers and subordinates, cultural subversion strategies and misbehaviour appears to be more about interactions between, for example, men and women; whites and non-whites. A second defining feature is that whilst interactions between managers and subordinates might be determined by structured antagonism, cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour

are less clearly attributable to asymmetrical employment relations and differing objectives. As such, white males may be aggressive towards non-white and non-male groups because white males are covertly held in higher esteem by senior management than any other culturally defined group. Aggression may just be one of many ways in which white males defend their status. However, white males could still be aggressive to other cultural groups without an overt or covert organizational policy to support them. An example of this kind would be defending a self-defined level of status or sense of importance.

Based on these defining characteristics, cultural subversion and sexual misbehaviour does not fit comfortably into Edwards Scullion's (1982) categorization of conflict (see figure 3.1). For instance, whilst conflict between men and women could also be conflict between manager and subordinate, it could also be conflict between two people who have the same occupational status. In both cases the conflict may hinge on status, but the nature of the status is legitimate in the former first example, but not in the latter. As such, conflict could be symbolic of a man believing women are the source of his inability to secure a promotional opportunity. Yet, the actual grievance could be the result of a hidden organizational preference for females, or in broader societal terms, men must now work harder to demonstrate their abilities in comparison with previous generations. In effect, such misbehaviour could be attributed to management control mechanisms. It could also involve men acting in unison, without authority from senior management, seeking to preserve their masculine identities. With sexual misbehaviour there appears to be even less of a link with Edward and Scullion's model of workplace conflict. In brief, sexual misbehaviour, and in particular romances that flourish and manifest on work time that are not based on ulterior work-related motives, require an

analytical framework that can make sense of behaviour not necessarily the product of organizational objectives.

3.2.6 External strategies to deal with conflict

The fifth dimension of misbehaviour involves a particular kind of act that entails a degree of indirect retribution. For example, a disgruntled employee taking external steps to get back at an employer. To be more precise, such misbehaviour represents a largely neglected side of, for example, leaving an employer without prior notice or absence without being sick. In a more formal and recognised form, external strategies to deal with conflict could also include pursuing retribution against an employer through an employment tribunal, union organizing outwith the workplace, whistleblowing in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act, and contacting the Citizens' Advice Bureau, ACAS, or an employment lawyer, for advice on how to deal with a bullying or an otherwise unreasonable employer. Therefore this dimension of misbehaviour is representative of a situation where a worker feels sufficiently powerless on a work-related matter that they have to redress the problem by taking external action. Such an expression of conflict in itself represents a major challenge for researchers who often have no easy way of directly observing behaviour of this kind.

As a consequence of such misbehaviour being difficult to observe, literature on this particular dimension of misbehaviour is sparse. However, what little research has been done on external strategies to deal with conflict is quite revealing. For instance, labour turnover or absenteeism specifically as an expression of discontent or conflict (Edwards and Scullion, 1982; Palmer, 1996; Mulholland, 2004), labour turnover as a response to increased surveillance of workers (Thompson, 2003), and a latent will to take action against employers (Kelly, 1998). Indeed, a more intriguing aspect of external strategies to deal with conflict could include whistleblowing;

such as workers increasingly stepping forward to blow the whistle as their jobs put them in inherent conflict with their superiors (Rothschild and Miethe, 1994). In these situations, whistleblowers, fearful of management retribution, may mask their true motives and protect themselves by claiming their actions are part of 'doing' their job. Further examples of external strategies to deal with conflict include workers making anonymous complaints to senior management through letter writing (Graham, 1994), and, the rise of so called weblogs (an easy to set up online diary) where workers provide frontline news from the modern workplace, documenting what are believed by 'bloggers' to be stupid routines, petty frustrations and inane management speak (McClellan, 2004).

The boundaries for external strategies to deal with conflict are therefore quite easy to define, that is, such behaviour clearly involves getting back at employers, but undertaken outwith the workplace or wherever work takes place. However, external strategies to deal with conflict need not involve an employee leaving employment, although labour turnover due to irreconcilable differences between employee and employer seems to represent its most likely form. Indeed, in either case, it would appear that workers are in fact pursuing a strategy of indirect retribution. Instead therefore, it appears that the key to understanding external strategies to deal with conflict should not be in terms of winning concessions from management, but as a means to achieving a symbolic victory over a current or previous employer. In short, external strategies to deal with conflict appear to involve workers retaining a sense of value in themselves and not a means to enforce a demand.

External strategies to deal with conflict do not fit comfortably into the radical model of industrial conflict (see figure 3.1), although the fit is closer than that of cultural subversion and sexual

misbehaviour. For instance, Edwards and Scullion suggest all conflict that cannot be expressed should be categorized as implicit conflict. In other words, some organizational conflict is likely to manifest away from the shopfloor. If this is the case then it provides one explanation for the absence of conflict in some workplaces. As a consequence, this makes the implicit category of conflict less relevant when researching misbehaviour. To all intents and purposes, labour turnover of this particular kind, whistleblowing and offering alternative accounts of corporate life are behavioural expressions of conflict that manifests outside the organization. That is to say, being unable to channel alternative viewpoints through internal communication mechanisms creates the need for an additional category of conflict. However, to consider conflict that manifests away from the organization would require an expansion of the very idea of organizational analysis.

The fifth dimension of misbehaviour leaves us with some theoretical unknowns. For instance, whilst an industrial sociological approach may help us understand why such actions are taken, it does not guide us particularly well on why this specific strategy is pursued instead of adopting a more recognised route, or even a strategy related to other forms of misbehaviour. In other words, if misbehaviour is caused by industrial conflict then why in this situation is it expressed outwith the workplace? What is more, such acts are typically individualistic and questions therefore emerge as why such drastic action needs to be taken. Before we can begin to answer these questions we must review the link between a radical sociological model and the five dimensions of misbehaviour.

3.3 Misbehaviour and conflict

The main objective of the chapter is to further review the five dimensions of misbehaviour identified in Chapter Two, in the context of a radical sociological model of industrial conflict. It is also a means to evaluate the extent to which each dimension relates to Edwards and Scullion's model of industrial conflict (see figure 3.1). The purpose of this section, therefore, is to discuss and summarise the fit between the model and the five dimensions of misbehaviour.

3.3.1 Aligning misbehaviour with a labour process model of conflict

In the first instance, that is the case of alternative resistance strategies, it seems reasonable to relate this dimension of misbehaviour to what Edwards and Scullion (1982) refer to as overt actions to express recognition of conflict (see figure 3.1 and 3.4). However, alternative resistance strategies are clearly not always overt or easy to observe. For example, utilising tacit knowledge of work systems to covertly influence management plans (Harris and Ogbonna, 1998) and using untraceable ways to stop an assembly line (Graham, 1994). In effect, alternative resistance strategies appear to be a different form of a particular organizational phenomenon that includes striking and working-to-rule.

Survival strategies also appear to fit closely with the idea of non-directed conflict (see figure 3.4). For instance, 'letting off steam' (Bolton, 2005; Hochschild, 2003; Taylor and Bain, 2003) or doing almost 'anything for a laugh' (Pollert, 1981: 136) whilst at work. However, as Noon and Blyton (2002) suggest, survival strategies can also be interpreted as being an act of resistance. This is not a matter that can be easily resolved and in some instances we may just have to rely on reasonable interpretations of events. However, surviving work, after all,

appears to be far more about consenting to (perhaps sometimes in a begrudging way) a way of working rather than an effective means to undermine organizational rules and practices.

There appears to be a strong correlation between what Edwards and Scullion (1982) call institutional conflict and the third dimension of informal workplace custom and practice (see figure 3.4). Indeed, acts bound up in total reward systems (Mars, 1994) and indulgency patterns (Gouldner, 1954) are clearly alternative ways in which conflict between employer and employee can be contained by way of mutually agreed accords. For instance, total reward systems and indulgency patterns are clear ways and means in which the active consent of employees can be sustained in a micro-level context. There is also a link between informal workplace custom and practice and two previously discussed forms of misbehaviour, that is, such agreements are likely to have origins in behavioural forms of conflict.

Dimension of misbehaviour	Level of conflict	Category of conflict
Alternative resistance strategies	Behavioural	Overt
Survival strategies	Behavioural	Non-directed
Informal workplace custom and practice	Institutional	Institutionalised
Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour	Behavioural, institutional and structural*	Overt, non-directed and institutionalised
External strategies to deal with conflict	Behavioural**	Overt and non-directed

Figure 3.4 Misbehaviour and the labour process

* Relates to organizational control structures, but some relates to informal organizational structure, that is, a dominant gender, race, etc. A further level of conflict relates to conflict non-aligned with organizational objectives.

** Outwith the workplace

With cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour it appears reasonable to suggest that behaviour of this kind does not fit easily into the models developed to explain the labour process (Thompson, 1989; Thompson and Newsome, 2004). However, such behaviour can be linked with the model of industrial conflict in an indirect way. As such, acts like acts like organizational romances (Quinn, 1977), men acting aggressively to women (Nicols and Armstrong, 1977) and voyeuristic practices (Salzinger, 2000), still exhibit characteristics of power and conflict. In other words, cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour, despite being related to broader societal forces, represents either an informal dimension of a formal role or a dimension of workers neglected by a radical sociological approach. To address this problem, it seems reasonable to propose an extension to Edwards and Scullion's categories of conflict and in the process highlight how conflict can vary quite dramatically in its nature and form (see figure 3.4). It is proposed, therefore, that whilst there is an overlap with more recognised forms of industrial conflict, the basis of such conflict and co-operation is often indirectly or unrelated to the labour process.

The last dimension of misbehaviour – external strategies to deal with conflict – initially seemed to fit uncomfortably with the model of industrial conflict. The main reason for this relates to the fact that Edwards and Scullion's ideas appear to only relate to behaviour expressed in the organization. For instance, writing a letter of protest to a senior member of the organization (Graham, 1994) and detailing frontline news from the workplace using weblogs (McClellan, 2004), are not implicit forms of conflict as they manifest outwith the workplace. Indeed, the conflict that spurs worker to take such action may be implicit in terms of the organizational setting, but becomes behavioural if the boundaries of analysis are extended to include non-work settings. In other words, there is good reason to believe that Edwards and Scullion's

model of conflict needs to be up-graded to include the effects of management control that manifest beyond the office and the factory floor. Having said that, external strategies to deal with conflict appear to symbolise conflict in that the acts are characterised by workers seeking to boost their confidence as opposed to taking on management in a way that could demoralise their self confidence even further. As such, actions of this kind are either not intended to, or indeed likely to, change the situations that caused the conflict. How external strategies to deal with conflict can be incorporated into Edwards and Scullion's model therefore requires the removal of implicit conflict and in its place a category based on where the act is typically committed and how it may manifest (see figure 3.4).

To summarise, a review of the five proposed dimensions of misbehaviour, whilst indicating a degree of overlap between each dimension, has resulted in a broadening of the categories of conflict initially proposed by Edwards and Scullion (1982). However, these modifications do not suggest Edwards and Scullion's categorizations are incorrect, as their model remains valid for investigating a certain range of work-related conflicts within workplaces. Rather, the model has been extended to consider cultural subversion, sexual misbehaviour and external expressions of conflict. What this suggests in theoretical terms is that to further research misbehaviour we must be willing to account for factors that radical sociological theorists tend to neglect. In effect, figure 3.4 is demonstrative of an attempt to align concrete features of misbehaviour with a range of recognised categories of conflict. What is more, where recognised categories appear justifiably inappropriate or insufficient, modifications have been made as a means to adjust the original model for an expanded form of analysis. In short, the five dimensions of misbehaviour are clearly discernible phenomena and they correlate well with an established model of industrial conflict. However, throughout this chapter it has been

highlighted on several occasions how a radical sociological approach to workplace misbehaviour has distinct and specific limitations.

3.3.2 Summary of unexplained aspects of misbehaviour

The discussion so far has clearly identified a range of unexplained aspects of misbehaviour. For instance, a method is required to measure the effectiveness of certain forms of misbehaviour. In particular this would include comparing alternative strategies of resistance to more recognised forms of overt behaviour such as striking. A further problem is associated with determining the main reasons behind non-directed conflict.

However, an aspect of misbehaviour that probably requires a great deal of theoretical and empirical attention concerns the forces that lead to a particular form of misbehaviour. For example, why do workers pursue a survival strategy over a resistance strategy? What is more, it is apparent that radical sociology is neglectful of worker identity in that workers are clearly capable of acting in a manner outwith the confines of an oppressed class. Indeed, theorists such as Thompson (1989) have long since argued for a more satisfactory way in which to incorporate the identity of workers into a behavioural model of the labour process. As such, it seems the major problem with a radical sociological approach is that it fails to acknowledge the social psychological context of organizational life. And as Haslam (2001) suggests, organizational researchers neglect the context of organizations at their cost. The point is management control is only one part of the context of misbehaviour and based on this conclusion we must attempt to build on our existing knowledge of misbehaviour. The means by which we attempt to build on our knowledge of misbehaviour is based on this very conclusion.

3.3.3 Conclusions

It would be reasonable to suggest that misbehaviour represents a largely hidden and neglected side of organizations; in effect, a sub-set of behaviour below the veneer of formality and officialdom. What is more, misbehaviour is clearly separated from behaviour in conceptual and ideological terms. However, if we look again at misbehaviour it is apparent how closely it resembles 'behaviour'. For instance, management may (begrudgingly) recognise a legally organized strike as a legitimate way in which workers display their discontent, but refuse to view an informal go-slow as legitimate. Having said that, managers do not ignore resistance if it comes in an unrecognised shape or form. Similarly, management may admit unfair treatment of a worker in an employment tribunal and compensate accordingly, yet are likely to absolve themselves of responsibility when faced with absence or lateness caused by exhaustive working practices. Indeed, the similarity between misbehaviour and behaviour is summarised in figure 3.5, although it is difficult to imagine a formal dimension of cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour. In brief, misbehaviour is part of behaviour, yet the divide between the two appears to be based on a matter of definition rather than objective reality.

Misbehaviour therefore represents the many conscious and unconscious reactions of workers to management control over the labour process. More specifically, it is a response to management keeping workers in position that confers upon them, from time-to-time, a sense of low importance or sense of powerlessness. It also appears to represent a by-product of the labour process that management theorists seem content to neglect. In another dimension, however, misbehaviour takes another form whereby workers with different degrees of authority further exploit or abuse their status for ends unrelated to their formal organizational

role. However, in some cases misbehaviour involves actions that are largely unrelated to the labour process and largely unrelated to formal power structures.

Misbehaviour	Alternative resistance strategies	Survival strategies	Informal workplace custom and practice	Cultural subversion and sexual misbehaviour	External strategies to deal with conflict
Behaviour	Strikes Official trade union activity	Job enrichment Team building exercises	Organizational policies, rules and procedures Contract of employment	No formal alternative, but relates to equal opportunity and 'love' contracts	Employment tribunals and other forms of employment-related advice

Figure 3.5 Misbehaviour and behaviour

In this chapter we have established that there are five distinct dimensions of workplace misbehaviour. However, as discussed in this chapter and Chapter Two, current industrial sociological frameworks for explaining strategies related to each of the five dimensions of misbehaviour are limited. In chapter four we consider how the problem of linking context to misbehaviour can be overcome by discussing how a social psychological framework can inform an orthodox labour process approach (and vice versa).

CHAPTER 4: THEORY AND MISBEHAVIOUR

4.1 Introduction

The main objective of chapter four is to develop a theoretical framework to improve existing explanations of misbehaviour. Two main theoretical perspectives are applied – labour process analysis (LPA) and a social identity approach (SIA) (Haslam, 2001) – to determine why workers adopt a particular strategy when misbehaving. Orthodox LPA is chosen because it provides a clear account of the ways in which work is organized and controlled (Brown, 1992). Orthodox LPA provides an outline to help us understand the main structures in the work setting – various management control initiatives. A SIA complements a LPA as it provides critical mediation between organizational contexts and organizational behaviour (Halsam, 2001). A SIA accounts for worker agency, which is a factor omitted, for the most part by LPA. LPA is said to be ‘an inadequate discussion of the reactions of workers, as themselves knowledgeable and capable agents, to the technical division of labour’ (Giddens, 1982: 40). The benefits of unifying LPA and a SIA are to reconcile the limitations of both approaches and in turn create a process theory that can better explain low-level worker misbehaviour

The first part of chapter four is a review of orthodox LPA which considers the many ways in which management regimes seek to control their employees. The post-structuralist strand is largely omitted from the discussion because of the contrasting ontological differences between the two strands of LPA. Besides, worker subjectivity and identity are constituent features of a SIA. The second part of the chapter reviews social identity theory and self-categorization theory – the two theories that make up a SIA. In this instance, the significance of individuals belonging to a range of meaningful psychological groups (including the groups workers are put

into by management) and how belonging to a range of groups (characterised by varying attributes and degrees of status) opens up options of individual and social action, is considered. The final part of chapter four outlines how LPA and SIA can be brought together.

4.2 Labour process analysis

The origins of LPA can be traced to the works of Marx (1976). A Marxist approach is based on a radical structural paradigm, and its main aim is to provide a critique of the status quo in social affairs (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The focus of attention is upon structures within society, which are ultimately in conflict with one another. In a work-related context this would mean the owners of production – employers and managers – are in conflict with those who have the means to make production possible – labour or workers. LPA became a largely forgotten issue until Braverman's (1974) *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, which revitalised and built on many of Marx's ideas. Such was the impact of Braverman's work several theorists, such as Friedman (1977), Richard Edwards (1979) and Burawoy (1979), made further significant contributions to the labour process debate (discussed in more detail in the following sub-section). However, a core labour process theory did not emerge until Thompson's (1989) synthesis of labour process research. Even then, orthodox labour process theorists such as Thompson (1989) and Paul Edwards (1986) came under criticism from a strand of LPA that emerged during the 1980s – mainly under the heading of 'post-structuralism' – whose main advocates have a very different concept of control and agency. It is argued that there is little hope of any form of consensus ever being reached due to fundamental ontological differences between and post-structuralist LPA and orthodox LPA. This is because the latter acts on discursive constructions of reality and the former deals in 'concrete' relations of production (Bolton, 2005). The main intention of this

section, however, is not to dwell on the conflict between the two main strands of LPA: it is to review the main themes of LPA by outlining the many ways management control can be conceptualised and in turn, how this can help us understand the basics behind worker responses to management control.

4.2.1 Main themes of labour process analysis

Thompson's (1989) interpretation of the labour process emphasises forms of management control and worker resistance as well as the legitimation and consent of work. Further themes include the organization of work and the division of labour. However, the post-structuralist strand of LPA pays more attention to theorising worker subjectivity (for example, Knights and Willmott, 1989; Willmott, 1993). These writers attempt to explain why workers value and defend work practices even when they recognise these practices to be oppressive and designed to increase the rate of exploitation (Barker, 1993). In brief, orthodox LPA (Edwards, 1986; Thompson, 1989) focuses its attentions on giving meaning to the daily experiences of workers subjected to management authority. Post-structuralists, however, whilst accepting the asymmetrical features of capitalist labour relations, seek to remedy the neglect of worker subjectivity by rejecting the idea that power can be reduced to the property of a dominant class (Knights and Willmott, 1989). The following summary of orthodox LPA considers where the mediatory characteristics of a SIA may go on to help explain strategies related to misbehaviour.

4.2.2 Management control and labour process analysis

As Thompson (1989) argues, Marx did not really spell out exactly how management control labour, although he often mentioned terms such as 'factory despotism' and the 'transition to real subordination' to make certain points about the capitalist labour process. What these terms refer to most of all is capital using science and machinery to control labour through the production process itself. What Marx foresaw was the development of systematic management most notably in the form of Taylorism or scientific management.

The most commented upon contributor to LPA in modern times – Braverman (1974) – believed the principal weapon by which management captures this control is to separate conception and execution through the division of labour and mechanisation. For Braverman, scientific management represented the fundamental practice of management in the twentieth century. Braverman (1974) explains the basis of his arguments:

Modern management came into being on the basis of [three principles of scientific management]. It arose as a theoretical construct and a systematic practice, moreover, in the very period during which the transformation of labor from processes on skill to processes based upon science was attaining its most rapid tempo. Its role was to render conscious and systematic, the formerly unconscious tendency of capitalist production. It was to ensure that as craft declined, the worker would sink to the level of general and undifferentiated labor power, adaptable to a large range of simple tasks, while as science grew, it would be concentrated in the hands of management (1974: 120-121).

In summary, Braverman argued that management retains control by exercising ever-tighter control over the labour process. What is more, the process involves degrading and de-skilling work, and further weakening the bargaining power of labour.

Later labour process theorists and other critics, however, disagreed with the inevitable and generality aspect of Braverman's ideas; although many theorists believe the shadow of scientific management continues to cast a shadow over contemporary work organizations (Smith and Thompson, 1998). For instance, Friedman (1977) believes modern management to involve two closely related functions – the co-ordination of the various activities undertaken by the firm such as how work can be efficiently organized to create a product that can be marketed, and, the exercise of authority over workers (1977: 77). Friedman (1977), however, goes on to make an important contribution to LPA by suggesting there are two broad types of control strategy used by top managers to exercise authority over labour power. Other than having the power to dismiss unproductive workers are responsible autonomy and direct control. Responsible autonomy is said to:

...[H]arness the adaptability of labour power by giving workers leeway and encouraging them to adapt to changing situations in a manner beneficial to the firm. To do this top managers give workers status, authority and responsibility. Top managers try to win their loyalty, and co-opt their organisations to the firm's ideals (that is, the competitive struggle) ideologically (1977: 78).

Direct control on the other hand is said to involve attempts:

...[T]o limit the scope for labour power to vary by coercive threats, close supervision and minimising worker responsibility (1977: 78).

Friedman (1977) argues that responsible autonomy attempts to capture the variable nature of worker power. In contrast, direct control is a strategy to limit the harmful effects of labour power and treats workers as though they are machines. Responsible autonomy is associated far more with professional or managerial-level workers, although professional and managerial-level workers can still be subjected to direct control. Low or semi-skilled workers may also be allowed a certain degree of responsible autonomy.

Concurrent with work of Friedman, another prominent labour process theorist Richard Edwards (1979) published research on the historical development of management control under the capitalist labour process. In brief, Richard Edwards suggests 'simple control' – denoting a time before Taylorism whereby owner managers working under competitive capitalism could determine whether workers were performing their jobs properly (1979: 25) – gave way to an era denoted by monopoly capitalism and management 'experimenting' with many forms of control. Richard Edwards argued, in historical terms, that managements experimented with various forms of work organization. In other words, only a minority of employers used scientific management as their main means to organize work. Other forms of control used by managements at the time included welfare schemes and company unionism. However, Edwards, decisively, argued that none of these strategies were successful in their own right and managers began to focus their attentions on structural forms of control. For instance, Edwards (1979) delineates between 'technical control' – an assembly line approach and mechanisation of work – and 'bureaucratic control' – a routinisation of the functions and procedures of management, the stratification of work and job titles, and the promotion of impersonal rules. However, Edward's notion of simple control has come under sharp criticism

(see in particular Thompson (1989)), yet his main contribution to LPA relates to the changing and experimental nature of management control under an evolving capitalist system.

The third major labour process theorist writing at a time of what has been referred to as 'Bravermania' saw Michael Burawoy (1979) writing first and foremost about worker consent to the labour process. Indicating a very different way of looking at orthodox labour process theory by adding worker consent and management accommodation to the control versus resistance model. As Paul Edwards (1986: 46) suggests, Burawoy (1979) rejects the idea that the main problem of management is not in extracting the workers' knowledge of the production process (especially in the case of scientific management), but to persuade workers to co-operate in their own exploitation. In doing so management controls labour through the concept of a 'game' and by devising a means to obscure and secure surplus value from the labour process. The game was not the only form of control found by Burawoy (1979) during his research. Aside from piecework systems believed to give workers a certain amount of satisfaction from their labour, Burawoy emphasised the use of a highly structured internal labour market and an 'internal state', compromising a collective bargaining system and grievance procedure. Taken together, the three-way control system allowed workers a certain amount of social mobility should promotions become available and if not, workers could rely on the ability to take both collective and individual action to address grievances. However, by offering workers incentives and allowing certain rights to constrain management initiative, it protected management's more fundamental power and direction of the labour process.

4.2.3 Thompson's (1989) core theory

Probably the best way of summarising the four major contributions to LPA discussed so far comes courtesy of Thompson's (1989) 'core theory'. Thompson believes there are four crucial things that come from the work of Braverman, Richard Edwards, Friedman, Burawoy and some others. They are outlined below:

- 1) The role of labour and the capital-labour relation should be the focus of labour process analysis
- 2) Capital constantly tries to revolutionise the production process due to competitive pressures and the antagonism between capital and labour
- 3) Control is imperative in revolutionising the production process, that is, market mechanisms cannot regulate the labour process alone
- 4) The social relation between capital and labour is based on 'structured antagonism' (Edwards, 1986) – the factors needed to control the labour process create a variety of forms of conflict and resistance (Thompson, 1989: 242-244).

This suggests that management control is not a fixed entity, it is not an end in itself and it does not guarantee the organization will be able to sell on the product of labour. If anything, management may not set out deliberately to control labour, but control, nonetheless, is a precondition for production and the subsequent sale on to the customer (Blyton and Turnbull, 1998). Control can be achieved in a myriad of ways and a simple 'capital control versus worker resistance' model of the labour process is inadequate (Edwards, 1986: 42). In other words, control and resistance are not separate things as resistance by workers typically plays a part in capital extracting compliance, co-operation and creativity from workers. Secondly, it strongly suggests that the labour process has some degree of relative autonomy from wider

market forces and an application of the core theory is best suited to a specific research site. Finally, it suggests certain forms of misbehaviour, as symptoms of structured antagonism, are key features of the labour process. However, as Thompson (1989) comments, management continually seek to revolutionise the production process, therefore it would be appropriate to consider what recent researchers can tell us about contemporary approaches to controlling labour.

4.2.4 Recent research in to management control

Research on management control since the 1990s has tended to focus on the management of organizational culture (Harris and Ogbonna, 1998), use of teamworking (Barker, 1993; Marks and Lockyer, 2005) and the adoptions of information systems by way of electronic monitoring devices (Sewell, 1998). Further avenues explored by labour process theorists include the management of emotions (Hochschild, 2003; Bolton, 2005), the rhetoric of globalisation (Lilley et al, 2004) and the use of gender as forms of management control (Cockburn, 1991; Knights and McCabe, 2001).

The recent interest in managing organizational culture can be traced back to the work of Peters and Waterman's (1982) best seller – *In Search of Excellence*. Throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, culture management has been viewed as a key control technology (Lilley et al, 2004), despite the fact that research has shown workers are not willing or passive agents in such situations (for example, Harris and Ogbonna, 1998). At the heart of organizational culture is said to be the socialisation of workers using an array of human resource techniques such as promoting myths about the founder members of the organization, daily rituals such as team briefings, and even the invention of a new language to marginalise

those who are not loyal or committed to the cause (Harris and Ogbonna, 1998). All, of which, it is argued, is about managing what people value and what they will consider as important when engaging in self-calculation of the best course of action to follow (Lilley et al, 2004). It is believed that the nurturing of workers' values and attitudes to work plays a major part in the increasing interest in total quality management and flexible specialisation noted in the 1990s (Wilkinson et al, 1998). The self-disciplinary effects of organizational culture are extended further by customer care rhetoric. However, there are indications that organizational cultural initiatives only have limited effect on worker attitudes. As such, initiatives of this kind are often supplemented by both peer and electronic forms of surveillance.

The earliest literature tended to cast teamworking in a positive light (Womack et al, 1990). For instance, the benefits of teamworking are said to include a more satisfying way of working, a lowering of labour turnover, a boost to morale, a departure from Taylorist forms of work organization, improved communication and developed interdependence. However, more critical theorists went on to reveal a previously hidden dimension of teamworking. For instance, Barker (1993) suggested one of the main objectives of teamworking is so that workers internalise the values of a control system. In certain circumstances team workers 'become their own masters and slaves' (1993: 433). Moreover, Sewell (1998) proposed teamworking to be a means to attain worker compliance through peer surveillance. Successful teamworking initiatives involve the translation of administrative controls into social controls, and thus the achievement of accommodation, assimilation, identification and finally internalisation (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). Whilst, again, many researchers doubt the extent to which teamworking can create such outcomes (Knights and McCabe, 2000), the

reality of teamworking is a concerted attempt by management to turn their values into broader organizational norms and dispense with a layer of formal supervision.

Whether aligned to an organizational culture initiative or not, electronic surveillance is a common feature of contemporary work organizations. It is most prevalent in the case in the call centre industry where it is believed surveillance is the consequence of perpetual benchmarking by which call centres assess their performance and their ability to compete and make profits (Bain and Taylor, 2000: 9). Electronic surveillance is therefore said to be nothing new as the traditional role of a shopfloor supervisor equates with the surveillance of shopfloor workers and the quality of their work. However, electronic surveillance is said to move beyond the coercive, personalised and non-rational elements of physical observation to a more intensive, powerful and unobtrusive form (Sewell, 1998). Electronic surveillance is said to augment other forms of management control by generating performance data, notably about quality and error identification, which is traceable to individuals (Thompson, 2003). Indeed, the potency of such control methods has caused a rift between orthodox and post-structuralist labour process theorists. In brief, the post-structuralist strand believes electronic surveillance (or the electronic panopticon) severely constrains the ability of workers to resist (Knights and McCabe, 1998; Sewell, 1998; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992; Fernie and Metcalf, 1998), while orthodox labour process theorists believe such claims are based on inflated generalisations (Bain and Taylor, 2000; Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995; Webb and Palmer, 1998; Townshend, 2005). As remarked on in previous chapters, continuing empirical evidence for work resistance and misbehaviour suggests earlier claims about electronic surveillance, as a highly successful form of management, remains a disputed aspect of LPA. The point to take from the recent research on electronic surveillance is that management continues to explore new ways to create obedient and willing workers.

The debate about management control has also been developed in a range of innovative ways. For instance, it has been suggested that organizations develop rules not just to govern the actions of frontline workers, but also to control their feelings and emotions. For instance, Hochschild's (2003) empirical study of flight attendants highlights how emotional skills have become a saleable commodity under the term 'emotional labour'. What is more, it is believed that workers can be just as alienated by emotional labour as physical or mentally intensive labour. The management of emotions represents many forms of control discussed so far and in particular initiatives associated with managing organizational culture. Likewise, another emerging form of management control – the rhetoric of globalisation – is an extension of direct control, but unlikely to be used on its own, with its potency in a rhetoric that renders it as an inevitable event and must be accommodated (Lilley et al, 2004). A final mode of management control, and again an extension of direct control, suggests gender can be inextricably linked with the processes and practices of control. Indeed, Knights and McCabe (2001) believe masculine identities can be subdivided into two contrasting styles of control – a macho masculinity associated with a new business process re-engineering discourse; and, an older, more 'gentlemanly' paternalistic one associated with an older, formal, hierarchical organizational arrangement. The main point being, by deliberately adopting, promoting and rewarding the former, management could use the dogma and ideology of toughness and single-mindedness to breakdown resistance in the old order.

4.2.5 Summary of labour process analysis

Essentially, LPA is a critique of activities that seek to bring order to other activities. In other words, LPA does not just look at how the labour process is planned; it looks at what actually happens (Bolton, 2005: 29), although what actually happens when management is controlling

labour cannot simply be 'read-off' (Thompson, 1989: 232). Indeed, the conceptualisation of control is still a contested issue amongst labour process theorists despite decades of research. However, emerging from the review of mainly orthodox LPA are a number of credible conclusions that are summarised below.

Knowing all the sources of management power is clearly a difficult challenge (see figure 4.1 for a summary of all methods of management control discussed in this section), but knowing the following would be a strong basis to build our understandings of misbehaviour on – if management control influences the form by which misbehaviour takes it follows that the ways management can control employees must be clearly defined and understood. For instance, management is a profession of some sorts and with professional status comes a certain degree of deference, organizations have formal rules and structures of authority that workers tend to follow, and, the technology of production has a certain degree of built-in rigidity that neither manager or worker can challenge. What is more, there is clearly power in creating unity amongst workers through teamwork initiatives, and where various forms of surveillance are used; especially when workers know they could be monitored, yet unsure when it occurs or whether it will be used against them in the future. However, there is plenty of evidence to suggest management are often vulnerable, especially when having to resort to using formal or informal joint decision-making processes. Further weaknesses become apparent when having to exploit business-related rhetoric, gender divisions or the expensive seduction (or coercion) of workers through organizational culture initiatives. A final weakness suggests the historical development of management control is by no means a linear trend in that there is evidence of significant continuity with the past and the most recent LPA literature indicates a proliferation of scientific management philosophy even in the most contemporary forms of work

organization. Despite of all this, the crux of the matter and noteworthy strength of management, certainly in terms of researching organizations, is to understand that managers may use any one or several forms of control at anyone time, managers clearly experiment with control mechanisms over time, and, managers clearly experiment with control mechanisms as a means to continually go about changing how the labour process is conducted. What this means is labour is compelled to respond to changing control structures, rather than setting the agenda in its own right. What we cannot assume, however, by applying LPA, is how workers will react to being the object of management control.

From another perspective, the review also leads to questions about why management need to control labour other than to ensure a perpetuation of social order and the organization itself. Management are clearly in the business of getting things done through their employees and their role is not simply confined to telling employees what to do and how to go about their work. As such, management control is far more than this – it is as much about creating willing and co-operative workers as Burawoy (1979) so skilfully argued. So it would seem that the greatest inconsistency to come from the review of LPA is how precarious the activity of controlling labour actually is. In other words, it is clear that management does not have the ability nor the desire to completely control its workforce, but there is a clear contradiction between trying to exploit the physical, mental and emotional abilities of workers and making sure managers do not fail to achieve their goals, or in contrast, go too far and risk the overt alienation of the workforce.

Control technique	Empiricist/theorist
Bureaucratic control	Richard Edwards (1979)
Company unionism	Edwards (1979)
Direct control	Friedman (1977)
Dismiss unproductive workers	Friedman (1977)
Factory despotism	Marx (1976)
Gender division	Knights and McCabe (2001)
Internal labour market	Burawoy (1979)
Internal state	Burawoy (1979)
Managing emotions	Hochschild (2003)
Organizational culture	Harris and Ogbonna (1998)
Real subordination	Marx (1976)
Responsible autonomy	Friedman (1977)
Revolutionise the production process	Thompson (1989)
Rhetoric of globalisation	Lilley et al (2004)
Scientific management or division of labour	Braverman (1974)
Simple control	Richard Edwards (1979)
Teamworking and peer surveillance	Barker (1993)
Technical control	Richard Edwards (1979)
The game – piece-rate systems	Burawoy (1979)
Total quality management and flexible specialisation	Wilkinson et al (1998)
Unobtrusive electronic monitoring	Sewell (1998)
Welfare schemes	Edwards (1979)

Figure 4.1 Management control techniques

It would seem, therefore, that LPA helps us understand why management regimes seek to control labour and how they can go about it. However, orthodox LPA does not go far enough when it comes to explaining how workers respond to being controlled if the means to control them conflicts with their own aims and objectives. Therefore, LPA has a significant role to play in explaining misbehaviour, yet it suffers from significant limitations when it comes to explaining, as Thompson (1989: 250) notes, why workers defend their skilled identities even after 'technical' deskilling; why workers get attached to routines that are seemingly devoid of self-expression; or how gender identities shape and constrain individual opportunities at work. In other words, orthodox LPA struggles to offer a 'theory of the subject' (Willmott, 1993) and why in one case workers may resist management strategy and in another case seek to find creative ways to accommodate its demands. In brief, to achieve a holistic grasp of workplace misbehaviour, the alternative to a post-structuralist version of employee subjectivity and identity is a social psychological dimension. In an attempt to redress a particular theoretical shortcoming, we now turn to an emerging theoretical paradigm promoted most notably by Haslam (2001) – recognised for its ability to mediate between social context and mental processes as well as promoting group-based social psychology over individual psychology.

4.3 A social identity approach

The main argument in favour of using a social identity approach (SIA) can be summarised as:

Building upon the strength of existing paradigms [see figure 4.2], [the SIA] attempts to provide an analysis of psychological processes that recognises and explains how group memberships and social relations contribute to organizational life. This approach is social psychological, because it takes both the social and the psychological aspects of organizational life seriously. Indeed, the

approach is concerned to clarify the way in which social and psychological elements are structured by each other, rather than – as previous paradigms have tended to – emphasising one element at the expense of the other (Haslam, 2001: 21-22, original emphasis).

The SIA suggests that in order to understand worker perception and interaction in organizational contexts, we must do more than just simply study the psychology of individuals as individuals. Instead, Haslam believes:

....[W]e need to understand how social interaction is bound up with individuals' social identities – their definitions of themselves in terms of group memberships (2001: 26, original emphasis).

In short, the SIA can offer a discussion of how and why workers react to the way in which they are managed. For instance, a SIA allows the potential to explore how workers see themselves instead of assuming workers have certain interests when at work. To demonstrate the different advantages of a SIA, Haslam (see figure 4.2) outlines how a SIA can be set apart from a range of organizational paradigms (including an early version of LPA). The original illustration has been adapted by replacing an 'economic approach' with LPA as it stood when Braverman (1974) wrote about monopoly capitalism and the degradation of work. This is because both adopt an economic approach and Braverman's approach to explaining the labour process is closely associated with scientific management. It should also be noted that it is rather unclear what is actually meant by 'social factors', as it is unlikely to refer to the objective conditions of labour and a range of managerial control initiatives incorporated in more contemporary versions of LPA.

However, the SIA advocated by Haslam (2001) is said to be the basis of two theories: social identity theory (SIT) and self-categorization theory. For instance, briefly, SIT is a theory of inter-group relations and how social groups make comparisons with other social groups in order to attain positive identification, and, self-categorization theory, an extension of SIT, is a theory of the psychological group in that it strives to explain how individuals are able to associate or disassociate themselves from psychological groups, under particular circumstances. In short, a SIA is a psychological metatheory that allows the opportunity to take organizational research in a radically new direction (Haslam, 2001). However, before exploring how a SIA and LPA could be used together is a discussion of the main features of a SIA. There follows a review of how the SIA approach has been applied as an organizational theory and a discussion of the limitations of a SIA.

4.3.1 Social identity theory

SIT was initially developed by Tajfel (1978) and quickly developed in a range of further theoretical and empirical papers (for example, Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Tajfel and Turner, 1979 and 1986; Tajfel, 1978, 1981, 1982). SIT emerged from a group of experiments now known as the 'minimal group studies' and the use of laboratory conditions. The main assumption that underpins SIT is that in some social situations people either think of themselves on the basis of personal characteristics or preferences (for example, in friendship groups), or, in terms of particular group memberships (for example, job role, trade union membership, health and safety representative, etc.). For instance, during a quiet period a young worker may view him or herself as single and part of a fairly salient group of single people looking to attract members of the opposite sex. In contrast, when work intensifies around an important deadline the same worker may quickly re-define him or herself more in

terms of their job role and as a member of a team, and, how a failure to meet the deadline could result in the group being seen in an unfavourable light, or in SIT terms – suffering from a negative identity. In short, the example demonstrates how workers can define themselves in different ways depending on different circumstances. In these situations the worker moves between two social identities – one characterised by personal preference and the other in terms of an organizational identity.

On the basis of discovering the dynamics of social identity, Tajfel (1978) formulated two significant hypotheses founded on the concept of social identity salience – the process that leads individuals to define themselves and act in terms of a given social identity in a particular context (Haslam, 2001: 383). A heightened salience of group membership is associated with individuals from the group depersonalising themselves from their own individual identities and believing in the homogeneity and consensus of the group – the ingroup. By depersonalising one's own identity the individual can make comparisons with other groups and stereotype their nuances and finer qualities. A further consequence of believing in the homogeneity of the ingroup is the stereotyping of the outgroup as homogenous too – a kind of 'them and us' situation. Where there is low salience of group membership and low consensus within the group, however, individuals of the ingroup stereotype ingroup and outgroup members on a heterogeneous basis – reducing the likelihood of a 'them and us' situation somewhat.

Tajfel (1978), took these theories one-step further by suggesting that high and low levels of social identity salience – created by an interplay between social factors and psychological factors (see figure 4.2) – in actual fact represent two extremes of a behaviour continuum (see figure 4.3 for more details on effects of social identity salience on individual behaviour). Whilst the level of social identity salience determines whether individual or group action is likely to be

the preferred strategy of the individual, Tajfel indicated that individuals are likely to determine strategies of action depending on a combination of what is happening around them and how they view those events. This represents the very point at which the deficiencies and strengths of orthodox LPA can be best appreciated. For instance, orthodox LPA clearly struggles to explain the psychological processes involved in misbehaviour, yet it can clearly offer an enhanced analysis of the social-contextual dimensions of organizational life. For instance, how management attempts to control its workforce.

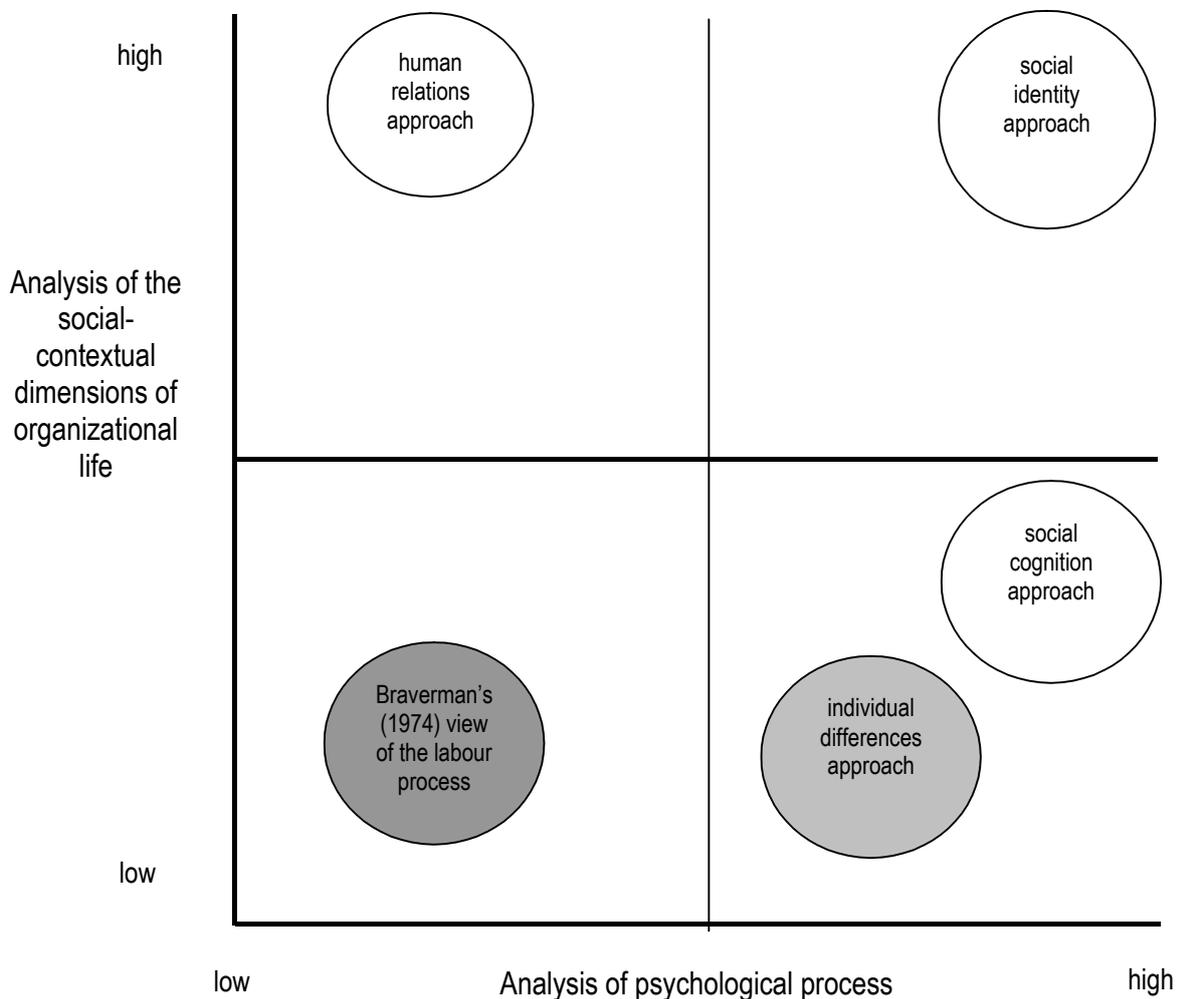


Figure 4.2 Differences between organizational paradigms in terms of their attention to social and psychological dimensions of organisational life

Source: Adapted from Haslam (2001: 23)

Crucially, there is one more vital detail to know about social identity salience and its effects on individual and group behaviour – and this additional detail involves what is called belief structures (see figure 4.3). There are said to be two sets of belief structures – an idea of social mobility and an idea of social change. Haslam (2001) succinctly outlines what these two ideologies mean:

Social mobility beliefs are characterised by the view that individuals are free to move between groups in order to improve or maintain their social standing. They are underpinned by an assumption that a given social system is flexible and permeable. In the workplace, a belief in social mobility might lead to an assumption that it is possible for anyone to rise to the top of an organization if they have sufficient personal acumen or gumption. Social change beliefs, on the other hand, are underpinned by an assumption that it is not possible to escape one's group for the purpose of self-advancement. According to this view, the only prospect for improving negative conditions (or maintaining positive ones) lies in action as a group member. In the workplace this might involve participation in the activities of a professional association or union which actively advances the causes of one's ingroup (2001: 35, emphasis added).

Haslam goes on to suggest that there is a further key strand to social identity – people's shared understanding of status relations leads to different strategies for self-enhancement (see figures 4.4 and 4.5). The basis of the third strand of SIT comes from a very searching question: how does a person's status and the perceived basis of that status, affect the way they set about feeling good about themselves? In other words, a fundamental part of SIT is that individuals strive for positive group evaluations and such a question can only be understood unless we have an idea of the extent to which individuals perceive (see figure 4.4 - p.124):

- a) other group boundaries to be permeable, and,
- b) their group's relative position on a dimension of social comparison to be secure in the sense of being both stable and legitimate (Haslam, 2001: 36).

First of all, an explanation is required of the term 'permeable'. What is meant by permeable is that conditions prevail in the workplace that lead to employees considering whether it is possible to move from one particular group to another. This is unlikely to be an option readily available for most low-level workers, yet where it does occur it is likely to involve promotion to the role of a supervisor or the transfer to a similar level job that has a higher level of informal status. In this sense the higher group's boundaries are likely to be viewed as permeable even if it may take some time and effort to realise such an opportunity. What is more, in this instance, the high status group will probably be viewed by low status workers as legitimate and relations between the two are likely to be stable. In other words, a general acceptance of the status quo by low-level workers and that higher-level workers have a right to exercise authority and certain degrees of expertise.

As indicated before, movement from low status groups to high status groups may be heavily restricted and as a consequence many low-level workers are likely to view the boundaries of high status groups as impermeable. However, by accepting that it is very difficult or near on impossible to easily or quickly move from a low status group to a high status group in the work setting, or sensing that their movement is being unfairly blocked by management, does not necessarily mean that low-level workers will remain in constant acceptance of their lowly status. In other words, individuals may not seek higher status by moving to a higher status group. Quite crucially though, from time-to-time, workers are likely to feel uncomfortable with

their lowly status and as a result of these perceptions, adopt strategies to deal with the problem depending on what resources are available and what opportunities to use these resources befall them. In SIT terms, what this means is that workers having to cope with low status on an ongoing basis (such as front-line workers having to constantly adapt the way they work to accommodate the needs of the product market and not themselves) and are faced with three potential strategies to achieve a more positive status (see figure 4.4 - p.124). Each of these strategies will now be briefly explained with comparisons made to the dimensions of misbehaviour discussed in chapter three.

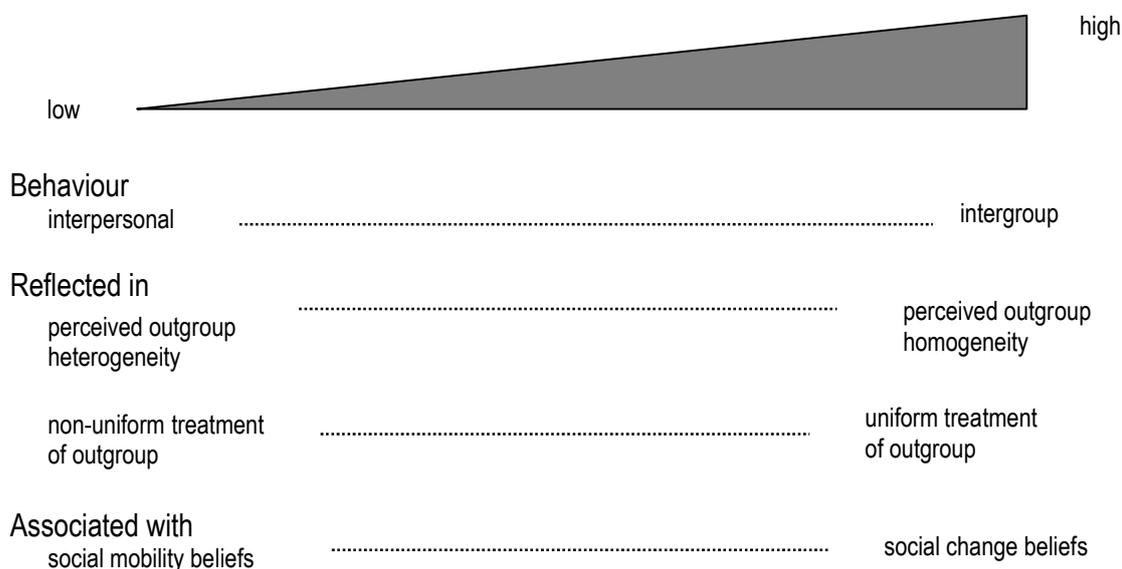


Figure 4.3 Social identity salience

Source: Haslam (2001: 35) – adapted from Tajfel (1978)

A hypothetical basis to understand the three strategies could involve a group of employees faced with being downgraded as part of an organizational restructuring programme. In its simplest form it suggests that individuals could deal with the change in status by independently seeking higher status either within or outwith the organization; or, as part of a collective, seek in some way to improve the status of the group. The state of relations between

the low status group and the high status group instigating the downgrading plan would also be an important factor in the equation. In order and to give them their correct titles, the three strategies of dealing with low status include social mobility in the case of individual action; social creativity and social competition in relation to collective action (see figure 4.4 - p.124).

The first strategy of social mobility suggests that if the group fails to satisfy the status and recognition of the individual then the individual may leave/abandon the group with the desire to join the 'better' one. In one sense it could lead to the individual leaving the organization and possibly employing an external strategy of resistance. An equally likely scenario could involve individuals applying to work in other departments of the organization – either as promotion or as a lateral move – to overcome the negative status often attributed to downgrading. In this sense other suitable groups are viewed as permeable. However, the scramble to disassociate from a low status group may be preceded by a range of underhand tactics so as to smooth the transition from low to high status group. This could be through disassociation tactics, or finding ways to break away from one group to prevent negative identity. In terms of misbehaviour, it could involve rate busting, using sex at work, or any other unrecognised activity to make them appear more attractive to the higher status group.

The second two strategies of social creativity and social competition occur when an individual wishes to achieve a more heightened status, yet unlike with a social mobility strategy; the individual defines themselves in terms of the group's identity. What sets the strategies apart is the quality of relations between the ingroup and the outgroup. In the first case, strategies related to social creativity tend to occur when relations between the ingroup and outgroup could be said to be good or stable. It may also be the case that relations between the two are

so uncompromising that in one sense they could be viewed as stable, but only stable in that the power relations are likely to go unchallenged. For example, a 'take it or leave it' contract between a worker and an owner-manager. In this instance the individual seeks a new way of comparison that would favour his/her group, and hence, reinforce his/her social identity. In brief, in such situations group members redefine their ingroup after re-evaluating the strengths of the ingroup as a means to make the weaknesses of the outgroup more obvious. This in itself could involve a range of behaviour (and misbehaviour such as satirical comments about, or aimed at, management) that may attack, but not challenge, formal power differentials between the ingroup and outgroup. By re-evaluating the strengths of the ingroup, the individuals can build up group esteem, yet leave the formal disparity in status unchallenged. In other words, social creativity is similar in many ways to one particular dimension of misbehaviour. That is, survival strategies are creative ways in which the organization's rules can be interpreted.

With the third strategy of social competition we see a relatively similar situation to social creativity in that both are based on the individual being part of a group that has a social change philosophy rather than a social mobility philosophy (see figure 4.3). A fundamental difference, however, is an assumption that relations between ingroup and outgroup are poor and unstable. It may also be the case that relations between the groups are less rigid than would be typical of a worker and owner-manager relationship, for example, a large bureaucracy where power relations may be clear, yet not absolute. In this instance dealing with low status involves direct confrontation with the high status group. Included in such situations could be acts associated with alternative strategies of resistance like withholding effort in part or in whole. The intention of the act is to get management to acknowledge and

address the group's low status. Having said that, unlike perhaps in laboratory conditions, the outcome of such strategies will not result in the low status group taking over the mantle of high status group, mainly because, for example, that on entering the employment relationship the employee generally accepts a subordinate role to the employer. Instead, the intention is far more likely to involve forcing the high status group to make some sort of concession to the low status group that will allow the low status group to feel better about itself. Social creativity and social competition are therefore closely related, and like the five dimensions of misbehaviour, likely to relate and overlap with each other.

4.3.2 Social identity-related strategies and misbehaviour

It seems reasonable to conclude there is a great deal of commonality between the three strategies outlined above and some of the five dimensions of misbehaviour. Furthermore, it should also be noted that the strategies emerge at the same time as predicted by both perspectives – management exercising control and when social identities are threatened by management prerogatives. More specifically, it would be reasonable to suggest the three main strategies associated with SIT, in some circumstances, are likely to involve breaking organizational rules, slight deviations from formal norms, and conflict unrelated to formal status. For instance, an individual pursuing a social mobility strategy could use underhand tactics such as bad mouthing colleagues and drawing attention to their cultural stereotypes so as to gain an unfair advantage in a promotion contest. It may also be the case that low-level employees use their sexual charms to fuel, in part, mobility strategies. In a similar vein, a worker who quits his or her job in a highly charged situation and in doing so jeopardises, for example, an urgent production run – or misbehaves by externalising their resistance – could also be said, in a way, to be pursuing a social mobility strategy.

Similarities are also be found between social creativity strategies and survival strategies in that these are the very situations where workers use their innate creativity to survive domination, low status, poor career prospects, poor pay, and poor treatment. By laughing and joking in groups, for example, low status is likely to be more tolerable than in a situation where this kind of behaviour does not occur. The attraction of social creativity and survival strategies is a sense of coping on a collective scale and that individuals do not feel singled out by management. Moreover, coping as a group is likely to bring other benefits such as friendship and companionship that may well extend far beyond the workplace. Further similarities appear apparent when comparing social competition strategies and alternative resistance strategies. For instance, workplace resistance usually involves a certain degree of conflict, open hostility and antagonism (see figure 4.4 - p.124) between low and high status employees. What is more, resistance is typically collective, even if in most instances it only involves tacit consent from other group members, and like creative strategies, leads to group bonding, the reinforcement of social identity, and a sense of having shared a history. Having said all of this, none of the strategies associated with SIT discussed so far seem to bear much resemblance to one particular dimension of misbehaviour – informal workplace custom and practice.

It would appear that the reason why strategies that could be associated with informal custom and practice have not been commented upon until now relates to the fact that the discussion so far has focused entirely on individual and group-based conflict. In other words, organizations are as much about co-operation as they are about conflict, although the distinction between the two is often subtle. In brief, SIT deals with the matter of inter-group co-operation in two ways – as a form of ‘merger’ between two similar level groups and ‘negotiation’ between groups set apart by clear power differentials.

In the first instance two groups of similar status may initially be in conflict with each other due to, for example, being required to work together when previously little or no social contact between the groups was encouraged, or perhaps even possible. Studies of such mergers are denoted by raised levels of turnover and groups acting in terms of their pre-merger social identities (Bachman, 1993). However, co-operation of a certain degree between two competing groups can be attained through intervention from management. For example, management offering incentives for both groups to work together, peacefully and productively. In the case of co-operation between groups based on asymmetrical employment relations, merging is clearly not an option. However, finding a degree of common ground by way of negotiation between the two parties is reflective of collective bargaining processes. In more detail, SIT deals with this particular matter by using the term 'dual identification' – when high status groups steer a delicate course between conflict escalation and conflict avoidance (Haslam, 2001: 201). To put it another way, management regimes are often aware that denying low status groups a stable or higher status typically starts conflicts with low status groups. In such situations, management allows a limited degree of dual identification whereby a small number from the low status group gain membership of the high status group. As such, the low status group is appeased by tokenistic offerings from the higher status group, which represent minor changes to the status quo. A formal example of negotiation would of course be union recognition. However, in a more informal sense, it is likely to involve a manager negotiating with a member of a low status group over immediate terms and conditions of work. Having said that, the key to understanding how a dual-identity model of conflict reduction or resolution works is that when low status workers are allowed into the superordinate group they must be permitted the realistic opportunity to express their dual identity. With dual identity,

accord or collusion will only prevail when low status workers are able to make genuine and continued contributions to the high status group decision-making process.

4.3.3 High and low status within low status groups

As indicated previously, even when the terms of reference for this research are set firmly on the notion of low-status workers and their experiences of domination as part of the labour process, low-status workers still have the potential to divide themselves up between high and low status sub-groups, for example, men versus women, experienced versus less experienced, whites versus non-whites, and divisions based on religious grounds. Like with low status groups seeking higher status there are said to be three main strategies (see figure 4.5 - p.125) by which high-status groups (based on perceptions rather than formal authority) seek to maintain high-status. Likewise, it should be noted that a defining feature of all such strategies rests on the social identity salience of the individual in the particular given context (see figure 4.3) and that there is still the option of pursuing conflict resolution (see previous sub-section). As can be seen from figure 4.5 the courses of action open to the high status group could include acts of latent discrimination, supremacising, and open hostility – all of which are likely to involve a degree of misbehaviour. Just one example of misbehaviour that relates to figure 4.5 could include a group of male operatives who have poor relations with their less influential and numerous female colleagues who in turn wish to change how their group as a whole is viewed and treated by management. In this situation we may expect to see acts of a sexist kind and other verbal acts to openly try and stop or minimise the advances of the low status group denoted by females. If relations between the two sub-groups could be said to be secure then the situation is likely to involve light-hearted banter revolving around flattery of an irrelevant kind – yet aimed to serve the same repressive end.

4.3.4 Social identity theory: One last caveat

As a means to summarise a sub-section that has discussed strategies that relate to SIT and acts of misbehaviour, we should be reminded that all the strategies are dependent on the individual being locked into a fixed status. The main point is that in some situations the lowly status of an operative compared to the higher status of a supervisor or manager and the conflict that comes from either trying to close or maintain that gap, may become irrelevant in certain situations. For example, the conflict between low and high status groups could be suspended in the event of a high intake of new operatives. As such, both operatives and management are likely to disidentify from their respective groups, which are in conflict with each other, and temporarily redefine themselves as one unified group with the express aim of making sure new employees conform to organizational norms. However, SIT only explains part of the story and only focuses on the outcome of certain situations, rather than the dynamics that created the situation in the first place. What this means is SIT does not give us the full story as by following the principles of SIT we do not end with the same behavioural outcomes. For instance, we know what objective forces are at work in such situations, yet we do not know how subjective factors play a part in workers shifting their allegiances from one group to another. What is more, it is clear that the sense of feeling part of a salient and legitimate group, and the ability to act on a collective basis, are characteristics that many workers are likely to be drawn towards. So, what exactly are the conditions for collectivism to take root? SIT cannot answer these questions, yet self-categorization theory can, and is where we turn to next.

4.3.5 Self-categorization theory

As indicated previously, self-categorization theory (SCT) emerged as a complement and not an alternative to SIT. In brief, SCT is said to offer a developed analysis of the cognitive processes associated with social identity salience. For instance, early SCT (for example, Turner, 1985; Turner et al, 1987) outlined how individuals define themselves as members of social categories and ascribe characteristics that are typical of these categories of the self (van Knippenberg et al, 2002). In other words, trying to offer an explanation for an individuals' movement along Tajfel's (1978) interpersonal-intergroup continuum (see figure 4.3). More recent theoretical developments (for example, Hogg and Terry, 2000) suggest the main advantage of SCT is that individuals should not be represented as unique individuals but, rather, as embodiments of the relevant prototype – a process of depersonalisation. A further interesting, yet problematic ontological dimension of SCT, is that its core hypotheses are not targeted specifically to issues of social structure and intergroup relations (Turner and Oakes, 1997). What is more, major proponents of a SIA (Turner, 2001) believe it is still important, both intellectually and practically to continue to distinguish between SCT and SIT. In brief, SCT represents a more abstract detailing of social identity salience and denotes where we begin a review of what SCT involves and how SCT and SIT come together, in both theoretical and practical terms.

There are said to be five core assumptions that concern how self-categorization plays a major role in social perception and later on in concrete behaviour. The core assumptions include:

- a) The self is seen as a member of a particular class or category or stimuli. In effect, it is believed that individuals see themselves as similar to other individuals in the same category, and, distinct from other categories. For example, when a worker categorizes himself or herself as a

sales assistant there is an acknowledgement of equivalence with other sales assistants, but at the same time noting a difference between themselves as a sales assistant and, for example, a factory operator.

b) The self exists at different levels of abstraction. However, at higher levels of abstraction the category becomes more inclusive, i.e. in numerical terms, at the very least. For instance, a lowly sales assistant could be subsumed within a higher category of being an employee of a highly reputable business group. What is more, this notion leads to the notion of a 'functional antagonism' (Turner, 1985) where two levels of categorization have the potential to conflict with each another.

c) Relating to point b) most of all, the formation and salience of a particular self-category is partly determined at a more 'inclusive level of abstraction'. Hypothetically speaking, what this statement means is that unless a tangible distinction in status between workers can be made then workers are likely to assume a higher identity that incorporates more workers. For example, where sales assistants and their supervisors face a situation that affects both of them equally, say a redundancy programme, both groups are likely to disassociate themselves from their respective occupational differences and assume a more inclusive worker and subordinate identity.

d) Self-categorization is also partly determined by a category believed by the individual to be more representative of their prototype. This demonstrates the potential for high levels of self-delusion, or even a vulnerable side of the self in terms of managers seeking to manipulate false levels of self prestige, for example, sales assistants may unwittingly categorize themselves as employees of a prestigious business rather than as a member of a trade union that has a reputation for dealing with the grievances and concerns of a wide range of shop workers.

e) The salience of a categorization at a particular level of abstraction leads to the accentuation of perceived intra-class similarities and inter-class differences between people as defined by their

category membership at the same level. In short, if a sales assistant's social self-category becomes salient (see points a) to b)) then the sales assistants will perceive themselves to be more similar with other sales assistants and at the same time different from non-sales assistants. For instance, a sales assistant is likely to hold in regard the opinion of a fellow sales assistant, and disregard the opinion of a non-sales assistant, when faced with a situation typical of the nature of sales assistants' work (based on Haslam, 2001: 45-49).

Essentially, despite the complexity and clear scope for further theoretical development or revision of SCT, the main benefits of considering SCT is that it recasts some of the assumptions of SIT discussed in a previous sub-section (Haslam, 2001). In other words, we are now in a much better position to deal with the notion of workers having a variety of social identities and subsequently we can begin to unravel why workers may act, apparently, in a way that is inconsistent with their formal organizational role. However, whilst the five points mentioned above allows us an understanding of the psychological factors that could lead to workers acting in terms of a particular self-categorization, we are still largely non-the-wiser as to identifying when and why, for example, the potential arises for collective rather than individual action.

	Perceived similarity	Trust	Ability (and desire to communicate)	Mutual influence to	Ability (and desire) to co-operate and act collectively
Self-categorization					
Shared	High	High	High	High	High
Non-shared	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

Figure 4.6 Some predicted effects of variation in the context-based self-categorical relations between two or more people.

Source: Haslam (2001: 560)

Previous social psychological explanations indicate that the greatest determinant in collective action is the individual's sense of subjective identification with the group and perception of the relationship between ingroups and outgroups (for example, Kelly and Kelly, 1994) – with the findings correlating well with the ideas of SIT demonstrated in figure 4.4 (p. 124). However, whilst a shared sense of inferiority and insecure employment relations may predict collective action, the reality could be quite different. What is missing, argues Haslam (2001), are a range of variables that make up the context-based aspect of SCT. The variables represent a point where SCT (and SIT) could benefit from an amalgamation with orthodox LPA. For instance, SCT may predict the likelihood of collective action or social competition, yet it may not occur because of the fear of management reprisals or management strategies designed to repress collective insubordination in the first place (see figure 4.1). In SCT terms, however, figure 4.6 outlines a range of context-based variables that relate to a situation where two or more individuals, in a particular group, go through similar self-categorisation processes. In brief, outlining the chances of collective action (from high to low) when, for example, a group of workers share similar grievances.

In essence, figure 4.6 suggests the actual chance of collective action taking place is largely dependent upon five organizational variables. However, the chances of collective action in situations noted just previously are questionable. In contrast, disregarding the legal implications for now, the absence of perhaps just one of the variables may lead to poorly directed collective action, unorganized individual action or even no action at all. In a sense, these ideas bring us full circle as figure 4.6 encapsulates subjective psychological variables (including perceived similarity, trust and mutual influence) and largely objective variables that are strongly associated with LPA (the ability for low status groups to communicate and act

collectively are very much influenced, although not exclusively, by management control strategies – see earlier on the chapter). A range of work-related research is now considered as a means to further review the merits of a SIA.

4.3.6 A social identity approach in an organizational context

The brief review that follows is by no means an exhaustive indication of the use of a SIA in relation to the study of organizational behaviour. Instead, it is to be undertaken to allow a generalisation of the use of SIA in such contexts.

Academics' papers written on the subject of a SIA have a propensity to be empirical in nature, although a sizeable minority is purely theoretical and tends to be managerially orientated. For example, subjects include organizational socialization (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), superordinate attempts to dissolve sub-group boundaries (Hogg and Terry, 2000), employee identification with the organization (Dutton et al, 1994), dealing with 'troubled workers' (Hopkins, 1997). Like with theoretical papers, a dominant feature of empirical literature is a disproportionate deference of social psychological theorists to the cause of management – indicative in itself of a widespread academic focus on positive aspects of organizations and a use of research methods unsuitable for revealing, let alone considering, misbehaviour (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Vardi and Weitz, 2004). As such, we see research that looks at range of managerial issues including learning from organizational mergers (van Knippenberg et al, 2002), employee resourcing procedures (Goldberg, 2003), corporate culture (Karreman and Alvesson, 2004), employee motivation (van Knippenberg, 2000), organizational performance (Llewellyn, 2004), group productivity (Worchel, 1998), and, worker turnover (Abrams et al, 1998).

Despite the largely practical application of a SIA, a more critical use of a SIA can be detected in a brief, yet fruitful literature search. For instance, Brown (1978) inadvertently came across the potential for intra-group subversion when researching inter-group discrimination at an aircraft engineering company. Kelly and Kelly (1990), moreover, use some SIA principles to demonstrate and assess continuities of 'old industrial relations' attitudes in 'new industrial relations'. From a similar industrial relations perspective, Kelly and Kelly (1994) also consider how a SIA can help explain who is likely to take part in organized industrial action. However, it is the work of Hallier and Forbes (2005) that makes the most relevant use of SIA discussed so far in this chapter. In brief, they use a SIA to investigate and rationalise the behaviour of high status workers who are bound by a strong professional code of conduct – when faced with new management responsibilities on top of established clinical duties. Of particular note is the use of a SIA to explain in detail why doctors, when faced with conflicting objectives, refrain from embarking on social competition strategies. More importantly, a SIA is used to explain strategies doctors took to prevent behaviour that may have resulted in accusations of professional misconduct. Taken altogether, it is clear that a SIA alone has the potential to advance explanations for misbehaviour, yet there is probably more potential if we discuss and address some of the weaknesses of a SIA at the same time.

4.3.7 Summary and limitations of a social identity approach

It is quite easy to see why a SIA is viewed as being a radical and exciting means to view and investigate organizational life. As such, a SIA allows worker behaviour to be examined at many different levels – as an individual, as part of a collective, in a fixed organizational role, and, in the many abstractions of the self. Indeed, such has been the development of a SIA over the past thirty years; a SIA represents a distinct and stand-alone paradigmatic view of

organizational behaviour. What is more, a significant benefit of a SIA, compared to a range of other social psychological and psychological approaches, involves an attempt to deal with the issue of power relations and social structures of organizations. However, whilst it may be the case that misbehaviour could be explored using a SIA alone, a distinct weakness is apparent with a SIA, which cannot be rectified without considering what orthodox LPA has to offer. These limitations and others are now discussed in brief.

The limitations of a SIA identified in this chapter appear to be wide-ranging, but not necessarily over-problematic. This is due in part to the prior review of LPA and how LPA offers critical insights into power and control; both referred to implicitly within a SIA. First of all it seems that the main advocator of a SIA (Haslam, 2001) gives few details of what is meant by 'social factors' other than to leave us to assume that social factors represent the objective conditions by which workers act on or perceive situations to involve. In other words, Haslam's (2001) text is very insightful and explicit when it comes to psychological variables, but weak on classical sociological ideas developed by, for example, Marx (Brown and Lunt, 2002). To compensate for this problem it is proposed that we directly take the main strengths of an orthodox LPA (power and control structures) to represent what Haslam refers to as social factors. This proposition is summarised in figure 4.7.

Further problems and weaknesses that became apparent during the review of a SIA include the following. First of all, there is a sense that a SIA implies conflict is only anticipated in a limited set of circumstances, is rather a benign feature of organizations, and largely unrelated to the objective conditions of the employment relationship. For instance, 'secure' employment relations are not necessarily synonymous with harmonious workplace relations, and even if a

low status group displays no overt response to their objective conditions, and instead adopts a creative way of dealing with conflict, the conflict does not necessarily go away. Further, SIA does not seem to acknowledge that some workplace conflict could be based on forces outwith the confines of the organization, and, can build up in a latent form to be expressed at a later time and often without prior warning. In other words, inter-group discrimination is only one interpretation of events (Brown and Lunt, 2002). A second criticism of SIA concerns how both SIT and SCT were developed through minimal group studies and whether SIT can be generalised beyond the realm of artificial coalitions of subjects performing relatively meaningless and unrewarded tasks (Maass et, 2000; Skevington and Baker, 1989). Furthermore, where proposals have been made to develop or revise a SIA, the reformulation has been mainly achieved through managerial theorists. Similar to the last point on conflict, it seems reasonable to assume that by applying it primarily to what is often seen as negative behaviour, as opposed to positive behaviour, represents largely untested terrain and perhaps fertile ground for further theoretical development or revision. A third problem identified during the review concerns an ontological antagonism between SIT and SCT – SIT is based predominantly on social structure and SCT much less so, although the antagonism appears minimal compared to the antagonism between the two main strands of LPA. In other words, critics argue that the idea of a rational subject at the heart of self-categorization creates a tension (Turner and Oakes, 1997). Although such issues are likely to be quite abstract and ultimately trivial in relation to the current research, it is from a methodological perspective that the greatest problems are likely to occur. For instance, collecting data related to social structures and concrete behaviour, and having to consider individual idiosyncrasies. Finally, a perennial problem of all organizational analysis, and not just a problem for a SIA, is the reality that no theory, so far anyway, is able to adequately transcend the artificial separation of

behaviour within organizations and the complex affect of wider cultural practices. Having said that, a SIA is probably stronger in this respect than orthodox LPA.

4.4 Combining orthodox labour process analysis and a social identity approach

It should be stated first of all that both LPA and SIA represent significant and very broad bodies of work stretching back many decades and mainly because of the need for brevity and relevance there has been little time or opportunity to discuss all the parts of each respective approach. Such circumstances have also prevented the opportunity to discuss in detail the theoretical debates within each respective domain. However, what can be taken from the discussion in terms of advancing explanations for misbehaviour is that it is clear to see that both LPA and a SIA have considerable, yet different strengths and weaknesses. In particular, LPA is especially strong in allowing us to analyse the means by which management regimes can command their employees and in turn significantly shape life on the shopfloor. However, LPA does not go far enough when it comes to explaining why two sets of comparable workers adopt different strategies when faced with the same objective conditions. Furthermore, LPA struggles to deal with cultural subversion and sexual misbehaviour. Like with LPA, a SIA has considerable strengths too – except the strengths of a SIA relate to helping us understand the interplay between psychological processes and social factors. However, a particular weakness of a SIA is that the notion of ‘social factors’ remains an undeveloped part of the approach.

Aside from the fact that both approaches have limitations, it seems reasonable to suggest that the weakness apparent in LPA could be readily overcome by the strengths of a SIA. Likewise

the weaknesses of a SIA could be readily overcome by the strengths of LPA. Figure 4.7 sets out these propositions in much clearer terms. For instance, contemporary versions of LPA have clearly advanced on the work of Braverman (1974), refined the conception of control beyond that of scientific management, as well as developing a widely accepted perspective on the nature of the employment relationship. However, contemporary versions of LPA are lacking in an analysis of the psychological processes at work when workers are subjected to a range of control mechanisms. In the case of a SIA, it can be seen how the greatest strength of a SIA is the ability to offer an advanced understanding of the mental processes of workers in everyday shopfloor situations. Despite this particular strength the SIA does not fully consider the particular social factors of the workplace and certainly not to the extent of LPA. Combining both LPA and a SIA together suggests the makings of a radical social psychological approach capable of making more sense of the five dimensions of workplace misbehaviour outlined in chapter three. To make such proposals, however, requires at the very least an indication of how the combination of the two could be used in practice.

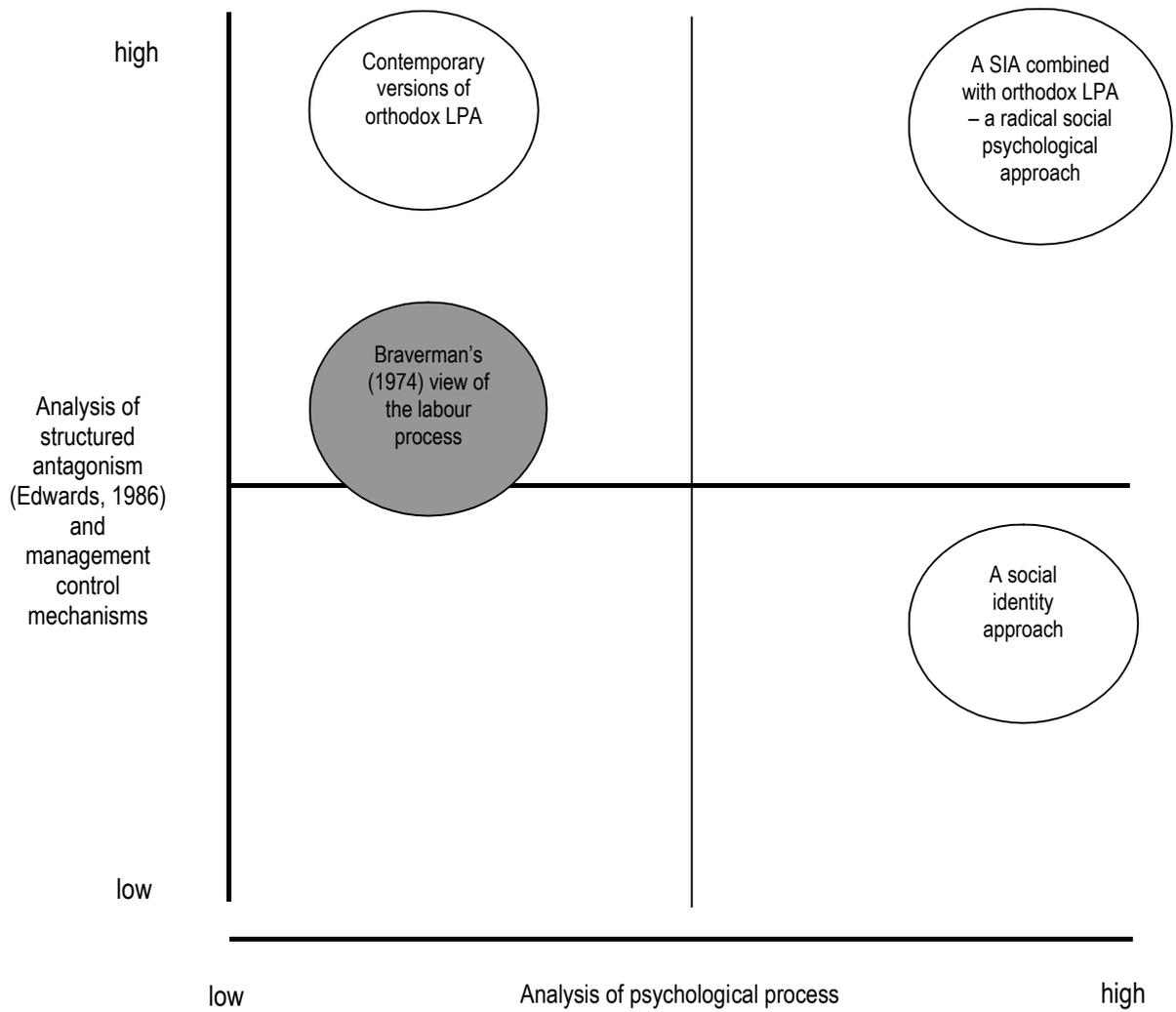


Figure 4.7 Organizational paradigms and a radical social psychology approach

4.4.1 Using labour process analysis and a social identity approach together

Clearly what is required first of all is to develop an accurate description of the context in which low-level workers misbehave. For example, with LPA this would mean gathering data on the nature of the labour process and how management control initiatives (see figure 4.6) are likely to affect worker behaviour. With a SIA data would be required on the groups available to workers and the nature of the social relations between these groups and low-level and supervisory/management level staff. Both sets of variables should represent the basis for designing a research methodology (Chapter Five) and represent the structure for findings chapter (Chapter Seven).

4.4.2 Summary

After a general introduction to orthodox LPA and a SIA, the main achievement of this chapter has been the synthesis of the two approaches to produce a more holistic and critical way of analysing organizational activity. It is believed that that the net result offers the potential to better explain the misbehaviour discussed in Chapter Three. In the following chapter we consider a methodology equipped to deal with the demands of the theories proposed in this chapter and the means by which the data required of these theories can be effectively collected.

Perceived permeability of group boundaries

Perceived security of group relations (legitimacy and stability)

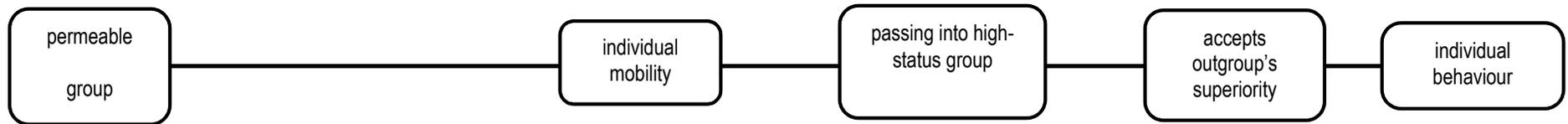
Strategy for achieving positive social identity

Course of action resulting from strategy

Implications of strategy for outgroup and status quo

Form of behaviour

The social mobility belief system



The social change belief system (reflecting motivation to achieve social change)

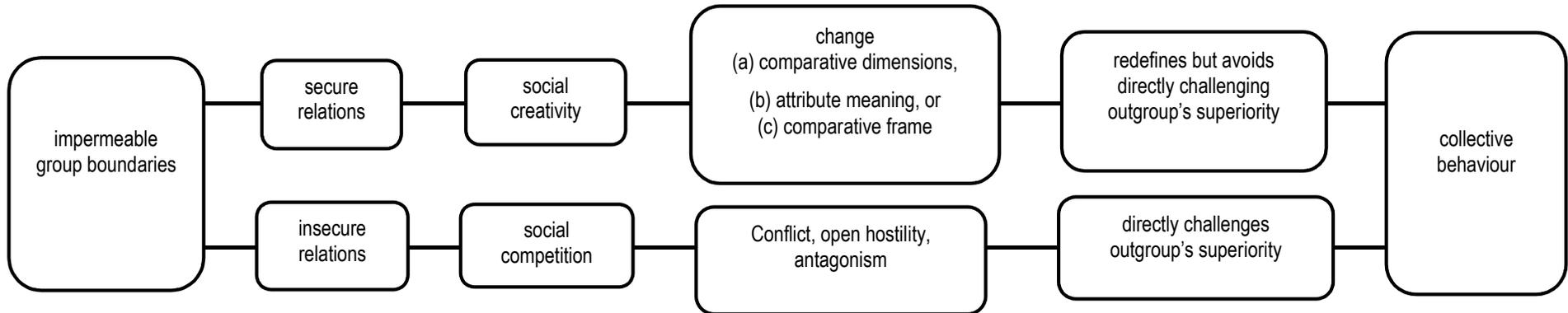


Figure 4.4 The relationship between belief structure and strategies for achieving positive social identity for members of low-status groups

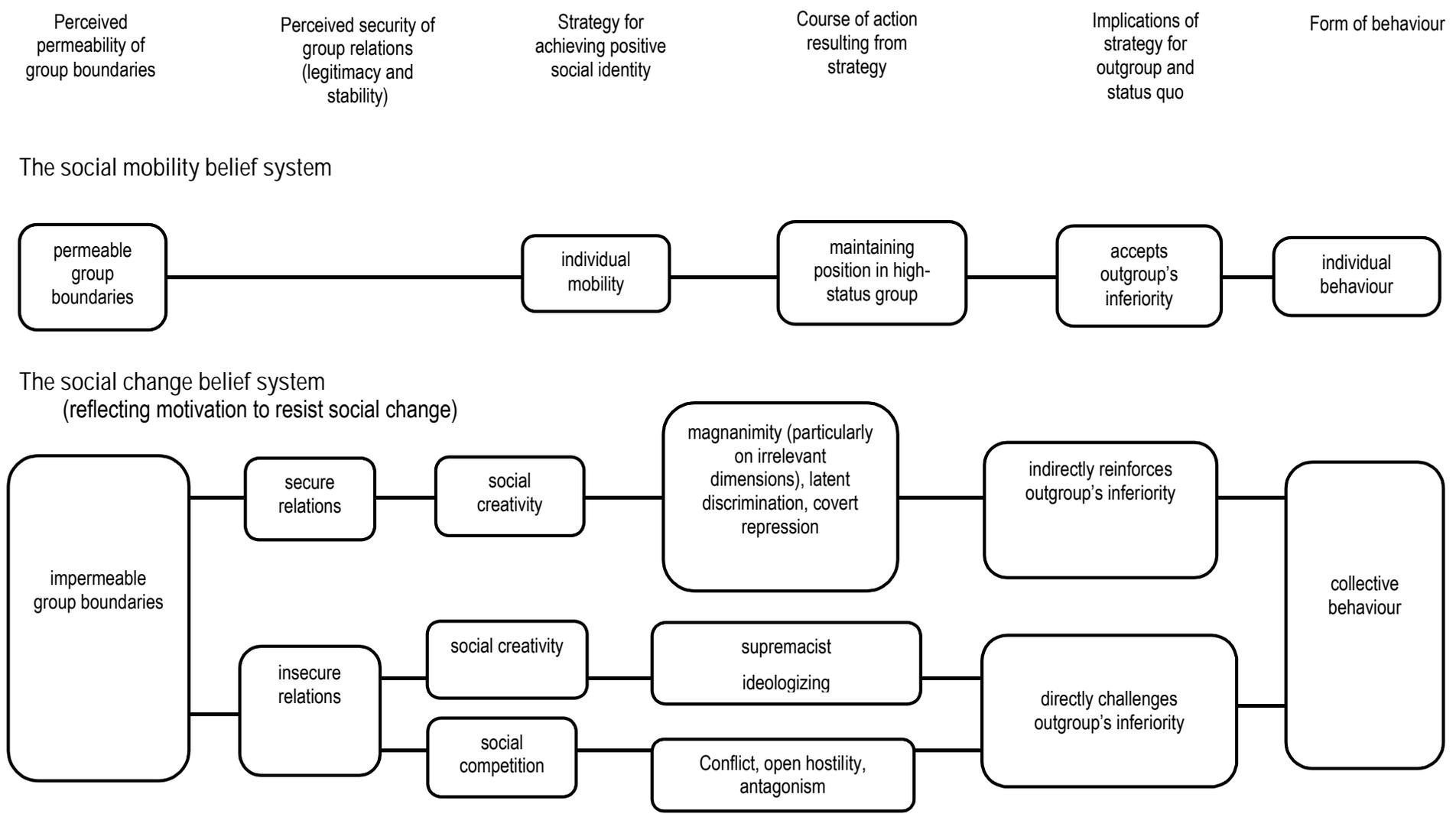


Figure 4.5 The relationship between belief structure and strategies for maintaining positive social identity for members of high-status groups

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCHING WORKPLACE MISBEHAVIOUR

5.1 Introduction

During the course of this chapter methodological decisions are described and discussed. The chapter begins with a brief reiteration of the main aims and objectives of the research. In turn, based on a reiteration of the main aims and objectives of the research, potential and anticipated research problems are outlined. In part two the importance of research design is considered. For instance, considering the importance of aligning research methods with the phenomena being researched. Part three reviews the research methods used in previous research in to misbehaviour. The main purpose of the exercise is to consider what methods are best suited to researching the phenomena in question and to eliminate the least suited. Following on from methods used in previous research in to misbehaviour is a critical review of the methods to be used in the current research. In brief, a means to describe and then evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the chosen methodological approach. The final direction of this chapter involves a review of the data collection techniques. In doing so issues such as entry to the field, data collection in the field and presenting data are discussed.

5.2 Aims and objectives of research

The aims of this research emerged out of Chapter One, the review of literature in Chapter Two and were subsequently refined further in Chapter Three. In essence, the main aim of the research is to further explain why workers adopt a particular strategy in a restrictive situation when a number of strategies may be available to workers. For instance, why in two similar instances of management oppression do one set of workers adopt a resistance-based

strategy and in the other adopt a survival strategy? Indeed, a third option would be to take no observable action at all, for example, expressing the frustration outwith the organization. A further decision could involve a scenario where a worker has a choice between leaving the organization and seeking to make an informal compromise with a superordinate. Similar decisions that need better explanations concern workers (most notably females) subverting the aims and objectives of other similar level workers (most notably males). A further aim of the research includes an improved theoretical rationale for collective and individual forms of misbehaviour.

In Chapter Four we explored these matters from a theoretical perspective. In brief, the aim of the chapter was to bring together orthodox labour process analysis and a social identity approach (Haslam, 2001) to develop a radical social psychological framework for advancing explanations for misbehaviour. By bringing the two together it offers a theoretical framework that incorporates social factors to denote the objective conditions of labour and psychological factors to denote perceptions of the labour process. In brief, the research is a means to further explore the 'choices' available to workers in conflicting situations.

However, quite straightforward research aims are not reflected in the nature of misbehaviour itself as Chapters Two and Three have already demonstrated. In other words, misbehaviour is a complex set of phenomena that needs a significant degree of theoretical and methodological consideration. For example, misbehaviour is viewed differently by different actors in the employment relationship. Furthermore, as the discussion at the end of Chapter Two suggests, academics share between them a whole range of views on misbehaviour. Having said that, if we want to research misbehaviour in an empirical sense then we must

factor into the research design the fact that a typical management regime may take a dim view of activity that many would prefer to keep secret from outsiders. There is also a distinct possibility that workers themselves may not wish outsiders to know about their secret behaviour.

The range and forms in which misbehaviour may manifest also demonstrates an indication of the complexity of misbehaviour. In effect, whilst some forms of misbehaviour clearly relate to the control structures of organizations, other forms are either indirectly linked to such structures or in some cases not at all. Indeed, social factors by way of management control mechanisms may significantly influence the form of misbehaviour, but it is how the workers view their predicament in relation to their available resources and available options that shapes its eventual form. As such, it seems reasonable to assume that workplace misbehaviour can be largely defined in one sense by management control strategies, or the objective conditions of labour, yet in another sense, misbehaviour manifests in relation to or despite the presence of control mechanisms and the threat of disciplinary sanctions.

In conclusion, it seems reasonable to suggest that the aims and objectives of the research, the analytical framework adopted, and, the sheer complexity of the phenomena under investigation is unlikely to be resolved and reconciled within one methodological framework. In other words, there can be no perfect methodological framework because of the complex and subjective nature of the phenomena. As such, a multiplicity of methods could not possibly be contemplated in the scope of a doctoral thesis. Instead, as shall become apparent, it seems sensible to adopt one particular, yet exploratory set of methods, and to base such methods on

previous research contemplative of misbehaviour. We begin that process soon, but in the meantime the importance of research design is reviewed from a number of perspectives.

5.3 The importance of research design

As Bryman (2004: 3) states, 'a variety of considerations enter into the process of doing social research'. In other words, the process of data collection should not be viewed as being atheoretical. Moreover, research methods constitute a central and inseparable part of any research activity (Analoui and Kakabadse, 1989). In this example the current research sets out to better explain, rather than merely find evidence for and describe, a range of organizational phenomena referred to as workplace misbehaviour. The decision to embark on explanatory social research, however, is not made in a vacuum; it is influenced both by the researcher's feelings, beliefs and values and ultimately, the context in which the research is finally done (McNeill, 1990). This does not necessarily make explanatory research biased, but it does mean that social research must be conducted in a fair, transparent and balanced way. Further justification for research design is discussed below.

Mitchell and Jolley (2004) provide a general summary of the value of research design. For instance, to be skilled at research design means we can understand sociological fact and theory, it allows researchers to draw their own conclusions from original research, it allows the researcher the ability to differentiate between useful and less useful information, it allows the researcher to be a better thinker and be aware of what is adequate proof. At a more personal level, being skilled at research design will arguably enhance the chances of research being

published and demonstrate to peers an ability to be organized, persistent and capable of getting things done. Graziano and Raulin (1989: 42) see the importance of research design in a much simpler way – ‘a process of inquiry in which the researcher carefully poses a question and proceeds systematically to gather, analyse, interpret, and communicate the information necessary to answer the question’. In other words, covering the entire process of research starting with conceptualising a problem through to presenting the findings (Cresswell, 1998). However, some social theorists simply believe a good understanding of research design is the only means by which an assessment can be made of the quality of social research (Bryman, 2004). In summary, it seems reasonable to suggest that a lack of attention to research design will almost certainly lead to meaningless data (Analoui and Kakabadse, 1989). There are, however, a range of dimensions to research design beyond that of conceptualising problems, and reviewing theoretical frameworks to explore identifiable problems (see Chapters Two, Three and Four), and, assembling reliable methods of data collection (to be considered later on in the chapter), that is, we now turn to discussing epistemological and ontological issues related to research design.

5.3.1 Epistemological considerations

An epistemological issue concerns the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline (Bryman, 2004). In terms of research design, as discussed in previous chapters, labour process theorists can be broadly divided along the lines of orthodox and structural perspectives and post-structuralist perspectives. Similar tensions emerge when reviewing a social identity approach in that social identity theory emphasises social and objective factors and self-categorization theory stresses the importance of subjective views of the world. In general terms, the two divisions are often

referred to as positivism in that knowledge is derived from the gathering of facts, and non-positivists, such as post-structuralists or post-modernists, who believe we have no direct or unmediated access to the realities about which theories claim to provide (Marshall, 1998: 198). However, as suggested by Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2000), a great deal of research that relates to orthodox labour process analysis cannot be entirely associated with positivism. In more detail, the realist epistemology suggests it is quite reasonable to assume that social entities exist independently of our investigations of them, yet knowing some of these entities can be disputed and are not directly observable, does not rule them out for analysis (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000.). In a sense, realism allows the chance to research what exists to some instead of assuming what exists is common to all, or contending whether some things exist in the first place. Put differently, realism accepts social structure depends upon human agency in that social structure cannot be treated as fixed, yet it rejects the belief that social structure is entirely the creation of individuals (Lawson, 1995: 519).

In effect, by considering epistemology we are exploring a crucial dimension of research design, that is, methods of collecting data are not neutral tools and are linked with the nature of social reality and how it should be examined (Bryman, 2004). Realism, however, demonstrates the benefits of not adopting a singular perspective on social reality. Indeed, Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2001) demonstrate the value of realism by drawing attention to the following. Firstly, realism allows a connection to be made between the particular and the general. Secondly, realism starts on the basis that what exists can be discovered. Third and finally, realism has emancipatory potential because it considers alternative social structures and relations that may lead us to a better understanding of the social structures and relations that play a part in reproducing it. In short, realism has the potential to re-shape conventional

and limited understandings of misbehaviour. It also suggests that realism can play a part in breaking the link between low-level workers and other low status groups accepting poor treatment from a range of high status groups, by critiquing the role of power and identity in such relationships.

By consulting figure 5.1 the value of considering epistemology as part of research design can be clearly appreciated. In essence, figure 5.1 is an adaptation of Kemmis and McTaggart's (2000) work on the four traditional epistemological perspectives. Here it is suggested, like with realism, that believing human and social life to be largely individualistic or group-based, and, that we can only view human and social life in either objective or subjective terms, are false dichotomies. Furthermore, Kemmis and McTaggart propose that the dichotomies should not be seen to as opposites and instead we should view them as being dialectically related. This would mean rejecting the belief that only one is true, accepting the four are mutually constitutive, and, by doing so we can achieve a more comprehensive perspective on behaviour, or in this case misbehaviour.

As can be noted through a further referral to figure 5.1, realism represents a fifth, yet less exact epistemological perspective. What is more, although combining elements of traditional epistemologies, the fifth perspective focuses more on the group-based view of human and social life to reflect the commitment to combining orthodox labour process analysis and a social identity approach as discussed in Chapter Four. This is suggesting that misbehaviour as a result of structured antagonism (Edwards, 1986) is more likely to be characterised by group-based, or even class-based, activities.

PERSPECTIVE	FOCUS	VIEW OF MISBEHAVIOUR	THEORETICAL APPROACH	METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH
Objective	The individual	Committed by individuals, but shaped by rational motives	Cognitive psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positivism - instrumental view of employment relationship - quantitative correlational methods - psychometric tests
	The social	Committed by groups, but shaped by objective conditions	Orthodox labour process analysis and social identity theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positivism - instrumental view of the employment relationship - quantitative correlation methods, i.e. observational techniques
Subjective	The individual	Committed by individuals, but shaped by values, intentions and judgements	Empathetic psychology and self-categorization theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - non-structuralist - practical view of the employment relationship - qualitative and interpretative methods, i.e. interviews, diaries and journals
	The social	Committed by groups, but shaped by history and interactions with social structures	Post-structuralist labour process analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - post-structuralist - situational and continually created view of employment relationship - qualitative and interpretative methods, i.e. discourse analysis
Both objective and subjective	The individual and social	Committed by individuals and groups – shaped by a combination of objective conditions and subjective judgements	Combining orthodox labour process analysis and a social identity approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - realism - ranging views of employment relationship - qualitative and quantitative, i.e. based on observations and interpretative methods

Figure 5.1 Epistemological perspectives on misbehaviour

Source: adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart (2000: 575-579)

5.3.2 Ontological considerations

The issue of ontology has been mentioned several times throughout Chapter Four as contrasting views of labour process analysis and the conflicting nature of a social identity approach were discussed. However, at no time was the idea behind ontology outlined; neither was a connection made between ontology and research design. In essence, the importance of considering an ontological stance can be found in its definition:

Questions of social ontology are concerned with the nature of social entities. The central point of orientation here is the question of whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors. These positions are frequently referred to respectively as objectivism and constructionism. Their differences can be illustrated by reference to two of the most common and central terms in social science – organization and culture (Bryman, 2004: 16, original emphasis).

In effect, ontology is a term used to identify a focus on, or study of, what things exist (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000). For instance, an ontological question could include: what kinds of things exist? In turn, by asking what exists we link in with epistemological questions such as how do we know what kinds of things exist. Clearly, such questions are not specifically related to the research questions reiterated at the beginning of the chapter, but they are indirectly related to the nature of the phenomena being investigated and the nature of the analytical framework to be used to try and answer the research questions.

In terms of research design, an ontological perspective requires a particular position to be taken on the meaning of social phenomena. As Bryman (2004) suggested earlier, it seems we are compelled to choose between objectivist or constructivist ontological positions. For instance, objectivists tend to believe organizational control structures are the main constraining forces that act and inhibit worker behaviour. In contrast, constructivists offer an alternative ontological position in that, for example, organizational control structures are typically in constant change because the ability or desire to control is continually changing. In effect, constructivist ontology would probably be characterised by an acceptance of the idea that management control can constrain worker behaviour, but more importantly, a view would be taken that suggests a preoccupation with management control neglects the fact that order has to be achieved in everyday interaction. In sum, an ontological stance is required that relates to how the research is to be carried out in terms of a theoretical and methodological framework. Its main effect, therefore, is the influence an ontological stance can have on how empirical data is collected and subsequently analysed.

If we return momentarily to one of the main research question, however (that is, why workers behave differently under superficially similar objective conditions), then it would appear that the research questions and the theoretical framework to be used to explore misbehaviour rule out the exclusive use of either an objectivist or constructivist ontological standpoint. If anything, such an approach calls for a contradictory use of both ontologies. In reality, what is required is an alternative to the two traditional ontological positions of objectivism and constructivism. Such a position is put forward by Bhaskar (1989) who believes in what he calls a transformational ontology. With a transformational ontology control structures continue to 'exist' because agents reproduce them in their social actions. For instance, workers subjected

to management control may react purposefully or consciously to their use, but at the same time could actually be unconsciously drawing upon, and thereby reproducing, the mechanisms, structures, powers and relations that govern their actions in daily life (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000). What this means is we have a further option of conceptualising employee behaviour, that is, alternative to seeing misbehaviour as a reaction to a management regime determined to tightly control the labour process, or, seeing misbehaviour as a result of workers mediating their own self-regulatory mechanisms. What a transformational ontology allows, and ultimately directs the data collection exercise towards, is a means to attain a general overview of management control and worker agency, yet further supplement data gathering with information that offers a continued explanation of worker misbehaviour. In brief, to fit in with research design and research question requirements, views of social entities need to be continually revised instead of being pre-assumed as pervasive and omnipotent, or, pre-assumed to be continually re-established and re-negotiated.

5.3.3 Conclusions

Research design in relation to the social sciences is clearly a critical part of research and extends well beyond the consideration of problems, theories and data collection methods. Indeed, by looking at epistemological and ontological considerations we can begin to see how problems can arise from perspectives and theories on certain social phenomena. As such, it seems that more time and resources needs to be aimed at justifying or contemplating what exists and how we know it exists. Emerging from this process, however, is a belief in the ideas of realism in that positivism and post-positivism, as distinct approaches, are not sufficient to deal with the phenomena being researched. More specifically, positivism and post-positivism paradigms appear unsuitable to confront the problems identified in Chapter Two and Three or

the demands of the analytical framework proposed in Chapter Four. We now turn to a less abstract dimension of research design, which involves designing a process to gather data of a particular nature, variety and quantity.

5.4 Previous research on misbehaviour and deciding a research approach

At the beginning of the most recent revival of interest in workplace misbehaviour Thompson and Ackroyd (1995: 629) noted that misbehaviour 'is there if workplace researchers have the time or inclination to look for it'. In their following, much more substantial piece of work, Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) further bemoan the neglect of misbehaviour. For instance, suggesting that researchers may have a 'trained incapacity' to see misbehaviour, many forms of misbehaviour are overlooked because they are not the stock and trade of most disciplines, and that misbehaviour is peripheral or non-essential when developing management theory. Their overall disappointment with the reality of social science and working as a researcher is summarised in the following quotation:

It is often not possible to have that kind of access, time or resources. Sometimes, interviewing managers, a tour around the factory and a chat with the union convenor is all that is possible. But neither the blinkers of specific theories nor the limitations of particular methodologies should be used to close down the potential for digging deeper or seeing differently. Rather, as social scientists, we have to put labour back in, by doing theory and research in such a way that it is possible to 'see' resistance and misbehaviour, and recognize that innovatory employee practices and informal organization will continue to subvert managerial regimes (1999: 162).

In both pieces of work, however, the two theorists appear hopeful in that there are certain methodological approaches suitable for researching misbehaviour. As such, Ackroyd and Thompson believe the best way of 'picking up on what is happening on the ground continues to be the kind of longitudinal, observational study undertaken by McKinlay and Taylor (1994)' (1995: 629; 1999: 162).

Such viewpoints are reciprocated by the other major theorists on misbehaviour – Vardi and Weitz (2004) – who praise the advantages of qualitative, long-term ethnographic research in revealing new fields of knowledge. However, Vardi and Weitz also point out how highly time-consuming such methods are. Moreover, Vardi and Weitz emphasise how an approach of this kind requires generous funding and a commitment from the management of organizations under observation; never mind the ethical dilemmas of ethnographic study. However, Vardi and Weitz (2004: 230-233) ultimately believe that research into workplace misbehaviour should involve the following. First, due to the unwillingness of management to let academics research the phenomenon, and the reluctance of employees to divulge information regarding it, they recommend the use of both direct and indirect measurement methods. Second, the implementation of qualitative research by means of systematic observations. The justification behind this approach is said to be in how such methods can reveal behaviour some may choose not to report. What is more, such methods allow the researcher a far better chance of encountering attempts to conceal or distort what is actually happening. Third, investigation into misbehaviour should be based on an experimental research design that involves longitudinal study as a means to reveal causal relationships.

From a broader perspective it is common throughout social science literature to suggest longitudinal and qualitative case studies are particularly suited to deviant behaviour (McNeill, 1990). Indeed, Bryson (2004) suggests participant observers have found they have been able to gain new insights into resistance at work. Similarly, Hobbs (2001: 212) believes such methods are crucial in highlighting the artificial distinction between honest and dishonest, legal and illegal, and, capable of highlighting how society accommodates low-level deviance into some integral normative order. From a slightly more restricted perspective, theorists who research similar social phenomena as Ackroyd and Thompson – that is, informal and subtle ways employees can resist or shape the rules of work – believe detailed ethnographic work, particularly of the participant observer kind, to be a fruitful way of revealing such forms of behaviour (Edwards et al, 1995: 308).

The general consensus of theoretical observers, it would seem, is self-evident in that longitudinal, qualitative, and participant observational methods are seen as being the most productive and revealing means to research misbehaviour. However, in keeping in line with a thorough commitment to the principles of research design, it would be beneficial to briefly review the methods used by researchers (see figure 5.2) who have studied misbehaviour themselves.

Misbehaviour covered in research	Dimension(s) of misbehaviour	Theorist/empiricist	Details of Methods
– Intra-group conflict	– Informal workplace custom and practice – Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour	Ackroyd and Cowdry (1990)	– Case study – Non-participant observation
– Defiance	– Alternative resistance strategies – External strategies to deal with conflict	Analoui and Kakabadse (1989)	– Participant observation and – Semi unstructured interviews – Case study – Documentary analysis
– Theft	– Informal workplace custom and practice	Anderton and Keily 1988)	– Semi-structured interviews – Informal discussions
– Customary use of company materials and tools	– Informal workplace custom and practice	Anteby (2003)	– Interview (away from work)
– Resistance	– Alternative resistance strategies	Bain and Taylor (2000)	– Case study – Observation of informal worker committee meetings – Interviews
– Resistance – Informal relations	– Alternative resistance strategies – Informal workplace custom and practice	Basler and Stern (1999)	– Semi-structured and open-ended interviews – Multiple case studies
– Making out	– Alternative resistance strategies – Survival strategies – Informal workplace custom and practice	Burawoy (1979)	– Case study – Ethnography – Participant observation – Documentary analysis
– Men's resistance to sex equality in organizations	– Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour	Cockburn (1991)	– Case studies – Non-participant observation – Documentary evidence – In-depth interviews and informal discussions
– Males using sexuality to maintain control over females	– Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour	Collinson and Collinson (1989) and Collinson (1988)	– Case studies – Interviews – Non-participant observation
– Resistance	– Alternative resistance strategies – Survival strategies	Delbridge (1995 and 1998)	– Participant observation and observation – Case study – Documentary evidence – Informal and formal interviews
– Sexual discrimination and harassment	– Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour	DiTomaso (1989)	– Case studies – Interviews
– Fiddling	– Informal workplace custom and practice	Ditton (1977a)	– Covert participant observation – Interviews
– Resistance	– Alternative resistance strategies – Informal workplace custom and practice – Survival strategies – External strategies to deal with conflict	Edwards and Scullion (1982)	– Case studies – Unstructured interviews – Non-participant observation – Interviews – Questionnaire

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Documentary evidence – Use of two researchers
– Resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alternative resistance strategies – Survival strategies 	Graham (1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Case study – Covert participant observation – Informal discussion
– Resistance (humour) through teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alternative resistance strategies 	Griffiths (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Two case studies – Ethnography – Non-participant observation – Unstructured interviews
– Rejection and reinterpretation of culture change efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alternative resistance strategies – Survival strategies 	Harris and Ogbonna (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Multiple case study – Semi-structured interviews – Non-participant observation – Documentary evidence
– Sabotage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alternative resistance strategies 	Harris and Ogbonna (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In-depth interviews – Case studies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Resistance – Informal relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alternative resistance strategies – Informal workplace custom and practice 	Harrison et al (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Semi-structured interviews – Two case studies – Non-participant observation – Documentary evidence
– Theft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alternative resistance strategies – Informal workplace custom and practice 	Hawkins (1984)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Questionnaire – Interviews (individual and group)
– Subversive humour between colleagues and friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour 	Holmes and Marra (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Recorded business meetings
– Males subverting females	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour 	Levin (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Case study – Participant observation – In-depth interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Unofficial, alternative, extra-legal and illegal rewards from work – Fiddling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Informal workplace custom and practice 	Mars (1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interviews – Snowball sampling
– Resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alternative resistance strategies 	McKinlay and Taylor (1996a and 1996b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Case study – Extensive interviews – Participant observation – Employee surveys
– Resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alternative resistance strategies 	Mulholland (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Case study – Interviews – Non-participant observations
– Resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alternative resistance strategies 	Palmer (1996)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Case studies – Interviews – Documentary evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sexism – Resistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alternative resistance strategies – Survival strategies – Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour 	Pollert (1981)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Case study – Non-participant observation – Informal interviews – Interviews
– Resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alternative resistance strategies 	Prasad and Prasad (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ethnography – Case study – Participant observation – In-depth interviews

– Organizational romance	– Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour	Quinn (1977)	– 132 case studies – Interviews – Questionnaire
– Resistance (humour)	– Alternative resistance strategies	Rodrigues and Collinson (1995)	– Case study – Interviews – Documentary evidence (employer and trade union)
– Subverting rules – Informal job satisfaction – Soldiering	– Alternative resistance strategies – Survival strategies – Informal workplace custom and practice	Roy (1952, 1953, 1954 and 1958)	– Covert participant observation – Case study
– Sexual harassment	– Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour	Salzinger (2000)	– Ethnography – Participant observation – Case study
– Resistance – Manipulating the system	– Alternative resistance strategies – Survival strategies	Townshend (2005)	– Extended case study analysis – Non-participant observation – Informal conversations – Semi-structured interviews – Documentary evidence
– Resistance to teamwork	– Alternative resistance strategies	Vallas (2003)	– Multi-site ethnography – Extended case study – Participant observation – Interviews – Documentary evidence
– Resistance – Collaborative fiddles	– Alternative resistance strategies – Survival strategies – Informal workplace custom and practice	Webb and Palmer (1998)	– Case study – Participant observation – Conversations – Ethnography
– Sabotage	– Alternative resistance strategies – Informal workplace custom and practice	Zabala (1989)	– Case study – Participant observation

Figure 5.2 Research methods and misbehaviour

Some basic observations of around forty sociological pieces of research that look at misbehaviour are as follows. First of all, surprisingly, none of the research referred to cover all five dimensions of misbehaviour identified at the end of Chapter Two. What is more, only two examples of research from figure 5.2 gave any significant attention to external strategies to deal with conflict. Indeed, the study that covered the most dimensions of misbehaviour – The Social Organization of Conflict by Edwards and Scullion (1982) – used seven case studies. A second key feature is the widespread use of qualitative methods. In effect, a qualitative

orientation to research is indicative, though increasingly only an indication, of the desire to generate theory in an inductive manner, using an interpretivist epistemological orientation, and, a constructivist ontological orientation (Bryman, 2004). This is in contrast with the current research in that the theory discussed in Chapter Four is characterised by a deductive nature. Third, there is clear evidence of a widespread use of a case study approach. Case studies, it would appear, seem to be a particularly suitable way to study misbehaviour as the phenomena itself is not readily distinguishable from its context (Yin, 2003). This would, in effect, make a case study approach ideal for studying most forms of misbehaviour. A final conclusion based on prior research into misbehaviour concerns the dominant approaches to data collection, that is, a variety of observational, interview and documentary evidence techniques. Combined together such approaches are often commonly associated with an ethnographic approach (Smith, 2001). However, by using techniques associated with ethnography does not make the current research ethnographical. As Tedlock (2000) notes, such methods are about simultaneous emotional involvement and objective detachment. What is more, ethnography is descriptive, atheoretical and guided by what data is salient to the researcher (Vidich and Lyman, 2000). In other words, the current research, like most of the studies referred to in figure 5.2, is driven by theoretical objectives and therefore is not ethnography in the true sense of the word.

5.4.1 Evaluation and conclusions

As such, we are now at the point of stating the research methods to investigate misbehaviour in accordance with a guiding analytical framework. However, we need to consider the following questions first of all. For instance, how does the literature review inform research design, how does theory inform research design, how do the guiding principles of research

design inform the choice of research methods, and, what can we take from the methods used by previous researchers who have undertaken empirical work on misbehaviour? Following on from these discussions we need to further contrast the conclusions of this process with a practical dimension of misbehaviour – that is, misbehaviour as viewed by managers and workers – before outlining the methods to be used in this research.

The literature review suggests misbehaviour could be organized, random, calculated, impulsive, individualistic or collective. Misbehaviour is further characterised by low level forms of co-operation and conflict between groups of varying formal authority and in some cases varying status unrecognised by the organization. Misbehaviour is also a hidden part of organizations and unlikely to be explicitly mentioned in any official documentation unless it is seen as a serious problem by management. Furthermore, misbehaviour is shaped and constrained by objective forces, yet manifests according to how workers perceive their objective conditions, at a particular time. What this suggests is the researcher should be there when misbehaviour occurs or unfolds over time. What is more, objective and immediate questions need to be asked of those who misbehave as the misbehaviour occurs. This, therefore, requires the researcher to have a legitimate reason to be, or have a relationship with, the groups or sub-groups who misbehave. Great deals of these sentiments are also reflected in deductions made from the theory chapter (Chapter Four). For example, the contrasting nature of the variables required of a radical social psychological approach necessitate a means to investigate the reality of management control and its affects on low-level workers. In other words, control mechanisms need to be investigated; yet a means to observe workers expressing their impressions of such control mechanism must also be sought.

The discussion of research design per se also led to a range of important conclusions of a methodological variety. For instance, whilst the process of reviewing methods associated with the literature on misbehaviour pointed towards the adoption of a specific approach to data collection, the following conclusions offer further guidance on concluding a method to further investigate misbehaviour. Guiding principles vary from being obvious to quite abstract. First of all, the research process must recognise and acknowledge that all social research is subjective, but not necessarily biased. Second, the process must be transparent and must allow third parties to make an objective assessment of what and how things have been done. Third, the process must be systematic, yet acknowledge that all research has pragmatic elements. Fourth, epistemological and ontological considerations act as a means to be aware of, and make it known (especially during data presentation and data analysis), that every attempt has been made to establish what exists and how we know it exists. Finally, the research methods must reflect the principles of realism, that is, a means to try and explain why low-level workers reproduce control structures in their own actions.

From the review of previous research into misbehaviour, and the methodology used in such instances, a range of further conclusive comments can be made. It would seem first of all that previous research suggests the current research would benefit from a multiple case study approach, conducted in a longitudinal manner, with the express aim of gathering qualitative data by way of observational and interviewing techniques. A further source of qualitative data should also include the use of official organizational documentation. Indeed, the case for using such an approach is overwhelming, as figure 5.2 clearly demonstrates. The main dilemma, however, to come from the discussion is that the express aims and objectives of the vast majority of the research that refers to misbehaviour was not initially aimed at advancing

explanations for misbehaviour. For instance, only Delbridge's (1995 and 1998) research explicitly refers to the term 'misbehaviour' (almost certainly prompted by a working paper of Thompson and Ackroyd's (1995) *All Quiet on the Workplace Front?*), and even then, the main premise of his research was workers' experience of just-in-time and lean production methods. Clearly, the rigour and nature of the research referred to in figure 5.2 suggests such methods can reveal a great deal about misbehaviour, yet it seems reasonable to note that the vast majority of research that refers to misbehaviour is not based on an initial premise of investigating misbehaviour. In other words, it raises the pertinent question of whether the same researchers would have been granted access to the organization they researched if they had openly declared that the main aim of their research was to find out more about everything you should not be doing at work. We end this section by revisiting the suggested methodological approach deemed suitable for the current research and in the process consider one particular dilemma – the controversial nature of the phenomena under investigation and in particular consider how managers and workers may respond to being part of research project that would scrutinise behaviour they may prefer to keep secret.

The main question to contemplate, therefore, is whether researching misbehaviour should be conducted in a covert manner, that is, unbeknown to managers and workers. This issue has already been addressed to a certain extent at the beginning of this section, but there are further reasons as to why employers appear resistant to researchers researching misbehaviour. A quote by Anteby (2003) outlines the reality of researching such activities:

...[P]erruque [known in the UK as 'homers' or 'foreigners'] is officially banned by internal codes of conduct, and punishable by firing, the topic per se remains taboo in the factory. This can be

explained by fear of corporate retaliation but also as a way to protect coworkers. Requests by the author for temporary employment at Pierreville were turned down and management discouraged other research on this topic inside the factory (2003: 222-223, original emphasis).

Further evidence that employers are likely to be reticent about outsiders knowing more about misbehaviour that occurs on their premises is provided by Bain and Taylor's (2000) failed attempt to gain access to Telecorp for the purpose of researching a range of acts that relate to low-level forms of industrial conflict:

Given sensitivities regarding the issues of conflict [i.e. reflected in a unionisation campaign] which emerged, it proved impossible both to conduct formal interviews with management to gain access to the organization for the purposes of observation (2000: 8).

An alternative means to research misbehaviour is the use of covert methods as a way of preempting employer reticence and interference. For instance, Graham's (1995) study of a new Japanese car transplant is a particular case in question. In effect, it seems far from likely that the management regime of a brand new car factory would grant access to critical researchers over and above granting access to less critical researchers. As such, it seems no coincidence that Wicken's (1987) positive account of work organization at Nissan's Washington car plant went before Garrahan and Stewart's (1992) more critical insights.

The problem of whether to research misbehaviour has another dimension to it other than how management regimes tend to view misbehaviour. For instance, Roy's (1952, 1953, 1954 and 1958) rich accounts of a wide variety of misbehaviour only seemed possible because he made

every attempt to become 'one of the boys on the line' (1952: 427). Further support for a covert approach is based on an assumption that informal work groups are notoriously good at avoiding being observed. As a consequence Roy believed the only feasible way to observe certain forms of misbehaviour was to don a 'diving suit' and go 'down to see what it looked like at the bottom' (1954: 255). The enduring nature of Roy's contribution to our knowledge of acts such as making out is no doubt related to his methods of obtaining data on misbehaviour. Indeed, some might say that covert participant observation as a method of advancing knowledge on certain subjects has been neglected over the years. However, a few examples of the use of covert methods have been noted in contemporary research. For instance, Analoui (1995) justified his covert research of sabotage at Alpha on the grounds that such an approach allows an understanding of the underlying processes involved in acts of a highly sensitive and controversial nature.

Realistically, deciding whether to adopt an overt or a covert approach when researching worker 'behaviour' is probably a straightforward decision. Whereas managers and workers are likely to feel reasonably comfortable if asked about a positive side of their work; are the same attitudes likely to emerge if the main focus of the research project is deviant or illicit organizational activity? Moreover, misbehaviour could also represent a dimension of an organization's competitive advantage. Further, misbehaviour could be part of a work group's bargaining capacity. As a result, a covert approach may bring with its own range of strengths, weaknesses and ethical problems (discussed in the next section), but the main advantage of such an approach, in this sort of situation, are clear and convincing. That is to say, researching misbehaviour clearly requires researchers to surmount a great deal of misconception, mistrust and perhaps the only feasible way of doing this is to adopt a covert

approach. For example, researching misbehaviour by way of any other manner would require researchers to overcome a minimum of two typically closed off situations – the organization governed and protected by management, and, the work group (or groups) governed and protected by workers. In short, a covert approach brings with it certain strengths and weaknesses, yet the reason to research misbehaviour in this way relates to pragmatism as much as anything else.

5.4.2 Summary

Having reviewed the empirical and some theoretical literature on misbehaviour it appears that misbehaviour would be best explored by applying a longitudinal case study approach using data collection methods associated with ethnography. However, due to broadly held assumptions about misbehaviour – that is, the nature of misbehaviour and the way in which management and workers view misbehaviour – the approach would be best undertaken in a covert fashion. The following section reviews the proposed range of methods.

5.5 Research method, technique and approach

In order, this section begins by reviewing the case study method, then moves on to reviewing the three main data collection techniques – covert observation, covert interviewing and covert use of documentary evidence. The section ends with a critique of the ethical dimension of an overt approach.

5.5.1 Case study method

A definition of a case study method is put forward by McNeill (1990). He believes a case study method to be 'a single example of whatever it is the sociologist wishes to investigate' (1990: 57). A broader and more insightful definition suggests a case study method is 'an exploration of a "bounded system" or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context' (Cresswell, 1998: 61). As such, it appears that the main exponents of case studies favour multiple sources of qualitative data, such as documents and reports, participant observation and unstructured interviewing (Bryman, 2004). Further, a case study method is said to be a specific form of inquiry; notably, one which contrasts sharply with two other influential kinds of social research: the experiment and the social survey (Hammersley and Gomm, 2000:2). Moreover, Gillham (2000) provides an insightful overview of a case study method. He believes a case study to be a unit of human activity embedded in the real world; which can only be studied or understood in context; which exists in the here and now; that merges with its context so that precise boundaries can be drawn (2000: 1). Whilst the case can be focused at any level of human activity, such as individual, group, organization, industry, the current research looks at the misbehaviour of low-level workers, in a distinguishable context.

Yin (2003), however, believes there are three distinct types of case study – exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. In turn, three further distinctions can be made based on whether a single or multiple case approach is used. As outlined before, the current research involves multiple cases of an explanatory kind – that is, with view to explaining how events unfold in a range of similar organizational contexts.

In more detail, multiple-case studies are a favoured methodological approach because they can be selected to repeat each other. By pre-selecting similar case situations (low status workers with minimal levels of formal discretion) the benefits are of either predicting similar results (literal replication) or contrasting results for predictable reasons (theoretical replication) (Yin, 2003). As such, it seems we are likely to learn far more from multiple-cases of misbehaviour than a single case approach. However, if depth of issue is of significant importance to the research it is believed that one researcher should restrict themselves to no more than four case studies (Cresswell, 1998).

The key benefit of a case study is to bring out processes in certain contexts (Stake, 2000a). This can be achieved because a case study method emphasises an intense examination of a setting (Bryman, 2004). Some further advantages include the fact that case studies can take us to a world most would not have an opportunity to go, they allow us to see the world through the researcher's eyes, and, the case study can, on a personal level, inspire confidence in the researcher who can explore a phenomena on his or her own terms (Donmoyer, 2000). However, what specifics can be taken from a case study method is a far more contentious subject. For instance, Hammersley and Gomm (2000) suggest case studies can be viewed as a method or a methodological paradigm. The current research is to use case studies as a method and not a means to view the world. What is more, the two theorists believe there are four main benefits of a case study method. The first benefit is case studies can provide a basis for wider generalisations or providing others with findings that can feed into wider generalisations. A second benefit of a case study method is that causal processes can be investigated in their natural environment (Graziano and Raulin, 1989). A third benefit relates to theory in that a case study can be used to evaluate theory used to explain phenomena in a

bound system, or, it can be used to try and understand how a case fits in with a wider societal context. A fourth and final benefit of a case study method departs from any belief that a case study can be generalised. In this situation a case study can be used for discovering symbolic truths. In other words, what may be true of one in-depth case study could be used to critique the findings of less in-depth social surveys. A final benefit suggests case studies can conclude by making complex proposals for further investigation (Stake, 2000b)

Limitations of a case method are largely dependent on how the case study or studies is applied and conducted. For instance, a standard criticism of a single case study method is that the findings derived from it cannot be generalised (Bryman, 2004). Indeed, it has been suggested that the main trouble with generalisations from case studies is that they do not apply to particulars (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). What is more, there are a range of problems and limitational issues with multiple-case study research. For example, Dyer and Wilkins (1991) believe the use of case study method may result in the researcher paying less attention to the specific context and more to the way in which the case can be compared. What is more, starting with the intention of making inter-case comparisons neglects the advantages that a more open-ended approach could bring (Bryman, 2004). Further problems can also be attributed to justifying whether a case is worthy of study, or whether the case itself can be set within firm confines. The result could be researching within contrived boundaries (Cresswell, 1998).

In sum, the case study method, or in this case a multiple explanatory case study approach, represents a feasible and in-depth way of trying to make sense of processes that occur within the confines of a bounded system. In the current research this would be the shopfloor. The

strengths and limitations of a case study method, however, are dependent upon having realistic expectations of what can be achieved from using such a method. A particular limitation worth noting and worth returning to a latter stage is the question of generalising case findings.

5.5.2 Covert participant observation

In essence, using observations as a technique to gather data that relates to a range of social phenomena makes the researcher the main instrument of social investigation (Burgess, 1991). Moreover, what distinguishes participant observation from other forms of data collection is that it is 'naturalistic' and involves creating an account rooted in the natural setting – very different from the artificial situations associated with formal interviewing and laboratory research (O'Neill, 1990). More specifically, participant observation per se involves immersion of the researcher in a group for an extended period of time, observing behaviour, listening to what is said in conversations both between others and with the fieldworker, and asking questions (Bryman, 2004). Indeed, Cresswell (1998) believes the use of observations as means to gather data involves a step-by-step process of:

- Selecting a site to be observed
- At the site, identify who and what to observe, and for how long. Use gate keepers and key informants to help the process.
- Determine the role of the observer, i.e. 'going native' as a complete observer or as an outsider.

- Design an observational protocol for recording field notes, i.e. notes about your experiences, hunches, and learnings.
- Record aspects of the informants, the physical setting, particular events and activities, and your own reactions
- Start with limited objectives in the first sessions of observations, i.e. take fewer notes and confine attention to observing.
- After observing, slowly withdraw from the site.

The use of participant observation in the current research, however, is defined by a covert approach. In effect, overt participant observation usually involves the researcher openly participating in the daily life of people under study; the covert researcher takes on a 'disguised role' (Becker and Geer, 1969).

The advantages of using covert observations are varied. In terms of selecting a site to observe there are few or no problems of access or seeking permission to research a particular setting (Bryman, 2004). For instance, rather than seeking authority to research, a covert approach would require the researcher to secure employment with an organization characterised by a tightly controlled labour process and an abundance of low level workers. Identifying groups to observe and infiltrate, however, presents a different set of problems, although covertness is said to speed up the process of gaining acceptance by co-workers (Hodson and Sullivan, 1990). Indeed, it is suggested that covert observations are the least disruptive, least likely to modify behaviour and well-suited to the studying of shopfloor culture and experience (Graham, 1995). Further, there are advantages in asking questions as events occur (Bollens and Marshall, 1973), sharing first-hand the world that the 'deviants' see (O'Neill, 1990), and the

potential to observe patterns of opposition embedded in what are often mundane situations (Gottfried and Sotirin, 1991). Aside from some procedural convenience, it would appear that main advantages of using covert observations to further advance explanations for misbehaviour is that data would be gathered in a natural setting and the researcher would have minimal influence on such activity.

Like with all methods of collecting field data there are disadvantages with making covert observations. A covert approach also presents many ethical dilemmas (an issue discussed in a later sub-section). Examples of the weaknesses associated with a covert approach overlap to an extent with the ethics involved in researching without informed consent. For instance, Mitchell and Jolley (2004) believe covert observations are akin to spying on participants, collecting data without informed consent (even in overt situations), and, making field notes as events occur in such situations is inherently tricky, never mind the fact that the researcher may have to rely on a faulty memory of what happened. What is more, it is believed that a covert role can preclude the observer from much social intercourse (Knights and Collinson, 1985). A further concern is that being unable to access a wider range of social interaction; the researchers may be drawn disproportionately to those who are of easy access. There are also procedural problems with using covert observations, such as, making fieldnotes, being unable to use other methods, and anxiety about detection (Bryman, 2004). Despite making claims about limited effects on the research settings, there is also the realistic possibility that the researcher may subtly influence the research subjects (Graziano and Raulin, 1989). In sum, there are a variety of weaknesses associated with covert observations, but the main issues appear to be related to the method's inflexibility.

5.5.3 Covert interviewing

Clearly, covert interviewing does not refer to structured interviews where there are a clear set of research questions to be investigated or where the interviewer is assumed to have power over the respondent who is given a subordinate role in this context (Burgess, 1991). Instead, there are a number of terms that could be more closely associated with the notion of covertly attaining verbalised information from workers, for example, unstructured interviewing, unidentified interviewing, interviews as conversations, guided conversations, and unstructured methods. What is obviously distinctive about a covert approach to interviewing is how a single question can be asked of the worker and then the worker can respond freely, with the interviewer simply responding to the points worthy of being followed up (Bryman, 2004). In other words, there is little or no power relationship at the core of an unstructured interview and compares well to having an everyday conversation. A further distinction of the covert interview is that the interviewee is unaware they are being interviewed. In this situation the flexibility of having a guided conversation is that the interview can 'ramble on' or go off on tangents and allow insights typically discouraged when using structured or quantitative data gathering techniques. The main advantage is that the researcher need not slavishly follow a schedule (Bryman, 2004). Having said that, consistency is still required of such an approach, especially as the current research is reliant upon the replication of investigatory methods through multiple case studies.

The benefits of conducting unstructured interviews without the consent of the research subject adds to the advantages of covert observations, as it allows the researcher the chance to obtain details of what the researcher did not witness for him or herself (Burgess, 1991). Further advantages suggest covert interviewing allows the researcher to make effective use of

the researcher and research subject relationship, attain data difficult or impossible to attain using other methods, allowing the researcher to formulate problems as they go along and to explore situations where the link between variables is not explicit (Dean et al, 1969). What is more, the researcher can also follow up on ambiguous responses (Mitchell and Jolley, 2004). In a broader sense it is believed that covert and unstructured interviews allow access to a great breadth of data – allowing an attempt to understand complex behaviour without imposing any priori categorisation (Fontana and Frey, 2000). Briefly, the advantages of covert interviewing appear to be in the flexibility that an unstructured approach can offer. Covert interviews also increase the chances of the researcher being viewed entirely as an insider.

There are, however, a number of disadvantages associated with covert and unstructured interview techniques, although some of these problems are clearly dependent upon the personal attributes of the researcher. For example, Dean et al (1969) believe there is inevitability that the researcher will build stronger relationships with certain kinds of informant, which will provoke a certain kind of bias in the data. Further problems can also be predicted as the nature of the approach suggests the interviewer may be unable to take command of a vital situation, the researcher may be forced to remain alert for relevant data, need to be extremely skilful so not to appear inquisitive, or, end up making an unsought influence on the subject (Riecken, 1967). In effect, there is the chance that the researcher may direct misbehaviour in a manner out of character with the case in question, as well as the chance of bringing out bias via the non-verbalisation of 'correct' answers. As such, the research subjects may not know they are research subjects, but they may still wish to give socially desirable responses to make the interviewer like them or think well of them (Mitchell and Jolley, 2004).

In summary, there is clearly a wide-range of strengths and weaknesses associated with covert and unstructured interviewing. The main advantages and disadvantages of such an approach, however, appear to relate to the skill of the researcher in social situations. If this is the case then data collection of this kind is likely to require a great deal of forethought and ingenuity.

5.5.4 Covert use of documentary evidence

Documents are believed to offer sociologists a rich source of data. Indeed, the impetus for making and keeping documents, such as a range of personal and public documents, is because we live in a literate and record-keeping society (O'Neill, 1990). In relation to researching workplace misbehaviour this means securing access to anything of relevance that can be read. For example, consulting company documentation that relates to human resource policies or quality initiatives. Furthermore, companies produce many documents; some documents that are freely available to the public (for example, annual reports, mission statements, press releases, etc. in either print form or available to view via the Internet); and some that are not in the public domain (for example, job descriptions, company newsletters, organizational charts, minutes of meetings, memos, internal and external correspondence, manual for recruits, etc. that may come in print form or available on an organization's Intranet) (Bryman, 2004). In relation to the current research such documents should be viewed as primary sources because they have a direct relationship with the people, situations or events that are to be studied (Burgess, 1991).

The value of company documents to sociologists is varied. In relation to the current research, documentation represents an alternative source of data. By collecting documents covertly there is also the simple advantage of not disturbing the participants (Reynolds, 1979). A third

benefit of considering documentary information is that it provides data which can be used to examine social categories and social processes (Burgess, 1991). In other words, documentary evidence may be best used with data obtained through other collection methods. For instance, comparing formal guidelines with actual practice and misbehaviour. What is more, documents can also help show up divergent interpretations among groupings of key events and processes. For example, different groups are likely to interpret documents according to their position or status in the organization (Forster, 1994). A further advantage of using documentation that derives from work organizations is that they are more likely to be authentic and meaningful (in the sense of being clear and comprehensible to the researcher/employee) (Bryman, 2004). It seems that the main advantage of covertly using company documentation is that it represents a means in which comparisons can be made between what is formally required or expected by the employer and what actually happens.

A particular problem with using company documentation without informed consent is that the privacy of the company or those noted in the documentation may be infringed (this issue is covered in more depth in the next sub-section on ethics). In effect, even if this method involves an anonymisation of the organization's most obvious characteristics and its employees, it still represents an undisclosed use of information assembled for new analysis (Reynolds, 1979). However, there is still a range of dilemmas associated with the covert use of documentary evidence. For example, how do we know the documents are authentic or represent the latest company stance on a particular matter? Could the documents disguise a bias? Could there be crucial information available in non-collected documents? And, how do we analyse and present the documents in the first place (Burgess, 1991)? More specific to the current research, Bryson (2004) believes company documents are likely to represent a

particular point of view that may not reflect the official line. As a consequence, it would be wiser to view company documentation as a by-product of organizational activity, rather than as organizational fact. Moreover, it may be best to concentrate on the content of the documentation as a means to highlight how management treat their employees.

No matter how it is attained, analysed and presented, documentary evidence is likely to offer a valuable alternative source of data when researching misbehaviour. This is due to the nature of the phenomena and how a common view of misbehaviour is directly related to official versions of events. Using a covert approach, however, may mean that some documents are unavailable to the researcher. Having said that, using a covert approach may allow access to documents or other written artefacts that may not be presented or available to an overt researcher. Whatever the merits of a covert approach may be, we are yet to discuss what all this means in terms of research ethics.

5.5.5 Research ethics and a covert approach

Research ethics are said to be a process of decisions that must be made by the researcher before observing even a single subject (Graziano and Raulin, 1989). The most common measure of research ethics is the extent to which the proposed research is consistent with the ethical guidelines of the researcher's professional association – in this case the British Sociological Association (BSA). Guidance provided by the BSA (2004) on covert research suggests the following:

31) There are serious ethical and legal issues in the use of covert research but the use of covert methods may be justified in certain circumstances. For example, difficulties arise when research participants change their behaviour because they know they are being studied. Researchers may also face problems when access to spheres of social life is closed to social scientists by powerful or secretive interests.

32) However, covert methods violate the principles of informed consent and may invade the privacy of those being studied. Covert researchers might need to take into account the emerging legal frameworks surrounding the right to privacy. Participant or non-participant observation in non-public spaces or experimental manipulation of research participants without their knowledge should be resorted to only where it is impossible to use other methods to obtain essential data.

33) In such studies it is important to safeguard the anonymity of research participants. Ideally, where informed consent has not been obtained prior to the research it should be obtained post-hoc (2004: 4-5).

It seems reasonable, therefore, to be remindful that a strong argument for a covert approach has already been made, and that the official guidelines from the BSA clearly allow the use of covert methods in such circumstances. However, the guidelines for covert research presented by the BSA make clear reference to a number of specific issues that must be considered separately from a means to an end assessment: for instance, discussing issues of consent, privacy and anonymity in relation to the research subjects. A further issue worthy of discussion is the potential for covert research to harm the reputation of sociology and sociologists.

Indeed, the issue of informed consent is said to be the most 'hotly debated' area within social research ethics (Bryman, 2004). As such, many have often argued that research subjects

should be informed about the research in a comprehensive and accurate way, and should give their unconstrained consent (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1993). The need for informed consent appears to be related to the fact that some researchers have flagrantly violated the privacy of unknowing research subjects in the past (Punch, 1986): for example, bio-medical research undertaken on children, prisoners, and mentally ill patients. However, using covert methods in the manner proposed is fairly harmless when compared to a range of invasive research experiments. Further, it is not the intention, nor is there good reason, to undertake the current research in an intrusive and controlled way. Neither is there evidence to suggest that researchers who have used a covert approach in the past have flagrantly abused their advantages. Therefore, the question that remains does not concern whether informed consent should be attained; it concerns whether the aims of the research are worth achieving and whether the researcher can act in a responsible manner in trying to achieve those goals. It is apparent that the goals of the research are certainly worth achieving, but more importantly, the goals of the research could not possibly be met if the researcher was to act in an irresponsible manner. Having considered the unfortunate situation of not being in a position to seek informed consent for the current research project, we must instead turn our attention issues of privacy and anonymity.

As Bryson (2004) suggests, covert methods are deemed to be violations of a principle of privacy on the grounds that research subjects are not being given the opportunity to refuse invitations of their privacy. In this situation research subjects could reveal information they may otherwise decline to give. What is more, the issue of privacy is invariably linked to assurances of anonymity. However, as Punch (1998) suggests, assurances of anonymity cannot always be watertight. For instance, researchers tend to choose sites near their

institutions thus making them easier to identify; some institutions cannot be disguised such as the police force; and, there is still the possibility that the research subjects may find out about the research done on them. It seems that if individuals have been denied the right to privacy and we cannot be certain that anonymity can be guaranteed, then we must focus our attentions on what can reasonably be achieved to address as much as possible these potentially serious concerns and not pretend otherwise. With the privacy of research subjects and the research objectives in mind it seems reasonable to suggest the following. First of all, it should be noted that the intention to research misbehaviour must consider the nature of organizations (profit making) and the nature of the labour process to achieve the goals of the organization (tightly restrict the activity of low-level workers). In other words, the intention of the research is to find general comparisons between organizations and not to sensationalise individual cases (if indeed that was found to be the case in the first place). Secondly, the research is concerned with relatively minor acts of misbehaviour, which are likely to be common in some way to all organizations. As a result most acts of misbehaviour are probably well known to most employers and their employees, yet it is the secretive dimension in relation to the organization and the work group that presents the greatest dilemma. Third and finally, all measures should be taken to anonymise the organization, certain characteristics of the organization, and the individuals who form the main basis of the current research. In sum, the outcome is by no means satisfactory for all parties to the research, but there is some comfort in the fact that the phenomena that forms the basis of the research is in many ways of low organizational significance and the manner in which it will be investigated is likely to cause no or minimal harm to the research participants.

A final ethical consideration is the issue of professional integrity. Indeed, Burgess (1991) believes professional integrity, certainly when it comes to covert research, should involve sociologists being mindful of how their research could be used by others and how future researchers may be affected when researching workplace misbehaviour. More worryingly though is the belief that the use of covert methods may lead others to believe sociologists are renowned for using untrustworthy techniques (Bulmer, 1982). The thrust of the argument is that sociology will suffer in the long run even if it becomes mistakenly believed that sociologists cannot be trusted. Ultimately there is no simple answer to the above, but it seems unreasonable to imagine that a long-established discipline is more renowned for its methods than its contribution to knowledge. The only answer to such a problem is for the researcher to play down the methodological approach and present findings and conduct an analysis of the findings that justifies its use.

5.5.6 Conclusions

This section has looked at a case study methodological approach, and, covert participant observation, interviewing, documentary analysis and research ethics. In doing so the process considered what each involves as well as considering their strengths and weaknesses, and, some of their practical implications. The next section considers practical implications in much greater detail.

5.6 Fieldwork and data

This section contemplates the practical side of fieldwork. For example, outlining how entry to the field of research, assimilation into group activity, collecting data in the field, methods to minimise subjectivity and methods of recording data, are discussed in the methodological literature. The final sub-section reviews issues related to analysing data and methods of presenting data.

5.6.1 Access and fieldnotes

One of the key and most difficult steps when undertaking overt or covert research is gaining access to a social setting that is relevant to the research problems in which you are interested (Bryman, 2004). What is more, as Burgess (1991: 45) states, 'access influences the reliability and validity of the data that the researcher obtains.' The main point, it would appear, is that activities that occur during the first stages of the data collection process are likely to influence the ways in which those who are to be researched define the research and the activities of the researcher. Given the covert nature of the study and lacking initial contacts or official gatekeepers, it seems that a great deal of prior planning and the use of wider work-related experiences will be the best way of ensuring a good start to the fieldwork. Indeed, as Smith (2001) suggests:

Fieldworkers never know what organizational door will close in their faces, what meetings will be convened to which the researchers are spontaneously invited, or what change in organizational fortunes may lead investigators down new avenues of enquiry (2001: 227).

Gaining access to a social setting, as discussed previously in the chapter, also involves gaining access to, or building rapport with, the groups on the shopfloor. 'Joining the group' is said to be a particularly crucial stage of the research especially as a covert researcher (McNeill, 1990). For instance, the general guidance on such matters suggests little should be expected from the first few days in the field where time should be taken to become familiar with the organization and work routines. The next stage of the familiarisation process involves getting into conversations with fellow workers and getting to know their names and nicknames; denoting the first stages of building a picture of interpersonal and inter-group behaviour. Some researchers with prior experience of a covert approach encourage similar researchers to make use of their own personal skills and attributes to gain access to groups (Becker, 1963). However, probably the most commonly encouraged strategy is to remain inconspicuous, or as Polsky (1967) suggests, 'Initially, keep your eyes open, but your mouth shut.' The main advantage of not appearing to stand out at the beginning of the fieldwork is that if you look and listen, rather than set about commanding interaction with research subjects, you are likely to get information on things you may not have the sense to ask about in the first place.

After the familiarisation process is a time when the ideas based on observations and discussions should begin to crystallise. At this stage the researcher goes about building relationships with fellow workers and certain individuals who have been judged to be key informants (McNeill, 1990): for instance, experienced and long tenured workers who may be more familiar with the research setting than new employees. This should involve building relationships with key informants, who may have certain knowledge of misbehaviour, and enable the researcher to penetrate a world hidden to the outsider. What is more as Barker (1984) suggests, the researcher should then move from a 'passive stage' of looking and

listening to an 'interactive stage' denoted by the chance to ask research subjects more searching questions. Finally, towards the end of the fieldwork, the researcher will be able to test out ideas and identify clear patterns of misbehaviour. At this point the researcher will continue the fieldwork at another organization or end the fieldwork entirely.

Collecting data on misbehaviour, however, is likely to come with several practical problems, mainly because the researcher will be heavily restricted in certain ways by the covert role. For instance, unless the role the researcher is employed to do permits unquestioned note taking, then other strategies must be considered. For instance, covert researchers such as Graham (1995) made intermittent notes on the line using a clipboard officially meant to be used to for remarks about damage to car bodies. Ditton (1977b) used staff toilets to make extensive notes on the ins and outs of workplace pilfering. And even though Delbridge (1998) was an overt researcher, he still had to make do with collecting insights and observations on various scraps of paper that had to be elaborated on away from the workplace. It is likely, therefore, that collecting data in the field will involve what Emerson et al (2001) calls 'pre- and initial writing', or making mental notes of certain details and impressions, and, jotted notes based on key words or phrases while literally in or very close to the field. Away from the field, however, it is vital that mental notes and quick jottings become full field notes – essentially amplifying and making additions to mental and jotted notes (Bryman, 2004).

A final practical consideration concerns the matter of making objective notes. As Bryson (2004) suggests, there is a range of general principles to guide this process. The principles include writing down notes as quickly as possible after seeing or hearing something interesting, the writing up of full and detailed fieldnotes at the end of everyday, the use of a

Dictaphone to record initial notes, making clear, vivid notes and copious notes. O'Neill (1990), however, offers more specific advice on how to remain objective when taking initial notes. He believes researchers should try to be open-minded and receptive as possible, monitor not only the actions of the workers but of yourself as well, and, write the account as a means to record a particular way of working life. Having said that, some theorists believe emotional and evocative fieldnotes may, for example, facilitate more accurate reconstructions of features of a setting or scene at some later point (Emerson et al, 2001). It seems that full fieldnotes should be based on attaining objective accounts of misbehaviour, yet it should be acknowledged that there is value in subjective accounts too.

5.6.2 Analysing and presenting data

In essence, qualitative data cannot be analysed without coding, with coding allowing the data to be used efficiently and effectively. A more pragmatic reason to code is based on the fact that fieldnotes often involve a sheer mass of material and can sometimes amass to several thousands of pages (Burgess, 1991). Coding, moreover, involves categorising data along lines of the initial research questions, theoretical frameworks and what actually happening during the fieldwork. Further important dimension of data coding is said to involve regularly reading and re-reading fieldnotes, making notes about observations, considering how the data fits in with general theoretical ideas, considering coding data in several ways, using as many codes as are required at the beginning, and, not equating coding with analysis (Bryman, 2004). Data codes that relate to the nature of this thesis are outlined in figure 5.3. The data codes, in effect, represent the many variables that form the basis of the radical social psychological framework developed in Chapter Four.

However, coding is not as straightforward as it would seem as many important aspects of original observations could be lost during the search in the data for similar themes (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Moreover, a common criticism of coding is that by plucking chunks of text from fieldnotes, such as a particular comment by a worker, the social setting can be lost (Bryman, 2004). Therefore, data retrieval and data analysis is usually a slow process that necessitates researchers to continually comb and recomb their fieldnotes (Burgess, 1991). In other words, the benefits of acquiring rich, lengthy and insightful qualitative data can also represent a weakness with such an approach. For example, if the researcher does not make continual efforts to review the growing data bank, and how it may end up being used, the data may become largely meaningless and as a result could be applied in a biased way.

<p>ORGINFO – General features of organization</p> <p>LP – General features of the labour process at each case study</p> <p>GROUPS – All group memberships associated with and available to low-level workers</p> <p>GROUP IF – Feature of informal shopfloor group, i.e. denoted by status, saliency of group (see figure 4.6 in chapter four), culture and demographics, and, relationships with other groups</p> <p>SOCREL – Nature of the relations between the main groups that low-level groups belong to and supervisory or management groups</p> <p>CNTRL – What forms of control management use and how it may affect the behaviour of low-level workers</p> <p>DIM 1 – Alternative strategies of resistance, i.e. denoted by individual, collective or pseudo collective nature</p> <p>DIM 2 – Survival strategy, i.e. denoted by individual, collective or pseudo collective nature</p> <p>DIM 3 – Informal workplace custom and practice, i.e. denoted by individual, collective or pseudo collective nature</p> <p>DIM 4 – Cultural subversion strategies and sexual misbehaviour, i.e. denoted by individual, collective or pseudo collective nature</p> <p>DIM 5 – External strategies to deal with conflict, i.e. denoted by individual, collective or pseudo collective nature</p>
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Figure 5.3 Coding fieldnotes and misbehaviour

Presenting the data, moreover, represents quite a particular challenge to the researcher. For instance, as Van Maanen (1988: 6) suggests, reproducing the cultural practices of an organization is not just about 'access, intimacy, sharp ears and eyes, good habits of recording, and so forth...culture and cultural practice is as much created by writing (that is, it is intangible and can only be put into words) as it determines the writing itself.' In effect, a participant observer, through fieldnotes, can only offer a particular means of representation. Van Maanen goes on to suggest that the participant observer can represent (in this case) organizational life in one of three forms – realist tales (marked by their absence of the author), confessional tales (where the experiences of researcher are centre stage), and, impressionist tales (based around striking stories to draw the reader's attention). It would seem, therefore, as Emerson et al (2001) notes, that the researcher should represent the world they are researching within the confines of a given textual form. Taken altogether, this suggests the researcher can have a significant influence on how the research findings come across to the reader as the researcher is in charge of the narrative style. In most instances this is likely to involve the researcher moving between a neutral and impartial stance, to one that has the aim of impressing upon the reader certain views of either the research subjects or the researcher.

5.7 Summary

This chapter began by reiterating the aims and objectives of the research. It went on to discuss the importance of research design, how previous researchers researched misbehaviour, the main research method and data collection techniques to be used for the covert research, issues when undertaking fieldwork, and considerations of data analysis and

data presentation. The outcome of the chapter is a methodological framework developed as a means to compliment the research questions and the theoretical framework adopted earlier in the current research. The methodological framework to be applied to the current research involves the use of a realist perspective, a case study approach, and most data is to be gathered by way of covert participant observation. Further means of collecting data includes interview as discussions and the collection of organizational documents. The final section considered the practicalities of undertaking covert research and ended with an outline of codes to guide the fieldwork, data analysis and the presentation of data from the field. In Chapter Six the current methodological framework is explored from a particular perspective. Here, due the nature of the methodological approach, matters specifically related to the fieldwork are explored.

CHAPTER 6: DATA COLLECTION AND THE RESEARCHER

6.1 Introduction

Before considering the findings from four organizations on management control, social identity and misbehaviour, we must first of all offer some relevant details of the fieldwork. The review starts with a descriptive overview of the research programme, for example, dates, length of time spent in the field, time and taken to gain access to organizations. After the overview details are provided of how the researcher gained access to organizations, how access to groups was achieved, how fieldnotes were taken, and how the researcher made decisions to end each episode of fieldwork. All data, incidentally, is taken from an extensive field diary kept by the researcher during fieldwork that stretched from March 2001 to July 2002. The diary is 156,018 words long and based on observations, unstructured interviews and ongoing thoughts, reflections and analysis of the researcher (see figure 6.1). Further data used in this chapter comes from documentary evidence such as newspaper advertisements for the jobs being researched.

6.2 Details of fieldwork

6.2.1 General details

The process of collecting data got underway at the beginning of March 2001 and ended some sixteen months later on the 29 June 2002. The data was collected from four organizations. During this time the researcher adopted a dual role of researcher/hygienist, researcher/food host and waiter, researcher/stockroom assistant, and researcher/outbound call operator. The aim of the researcher was to target organizations characterised by a tightly controlled labour process, low status employment and an environment that did not prohibit social intercourse

(Knights and Collinson, 1985). A further plan of the researcher was to seek a range of employment that was typical in some way of low-level and low-skilled work. The time taken to access each of the four organizations varied from as little as five days to as many as 46 days. Time taken to gain access to each organization did not affect the study as the time spent awaiting access was used for a range of other research-related activities.

Time spent in the field at each of the four organizations did not vary as much as the time taken to access them. For instance, fieldwork lasted for seven weeks (reasons for ending fieldwork are discussed later in this section) at SubCallco (all names of organizations have been changed to prevent recognition) and twelve weeks at HotelRest. Aside from SubCallco, however, the average time in the field was around ten to eleven weeks. In terms of the actual time spent in the field, the researcher spent a minimum of 200 and a maximum of 270 hours observing work-related activities. In total, the time spent observing workers amounted to around 900 hours, although it does not reflect the amount of time and effort spent travelling to and from the organizations and time spent on amplifying and making additions to mental and jotted notes (Bryson, 2004).

Organization	Jobs researched	Date initiated access	Date secured access	Access lead time (days)	Dates and length of fieldwork	Hours of observation (approx.)	Diary (words)	Total period of research (days)
FoodCo	Hygienist	March 1, 2001	17 April, 2001	48	27 April to 30 June, 2001 – 10 weeks	270	22,366	122
HotelRest	Waiter	August 15, 2001	30 August, 2001	15	3 September to 20 November, 2001 – 12 weeks	220	30,859	91
BargainChain	Stockroom assistant and sales assistant	January 3, 2002	January 8, 2002	5	January 9 to 12 March 2002 – 10 weeks	220	29,581	78
SubCallco	Outbound call operator	27 March, 2002	11 May, 2002	46	15 May to 29 June 2002 – 7 weeks	200	73,212	94

Figure 6.1 Fieldwork details

The number of weeks and hours spent researching each organization did not correlate with the amount of diary data collected. That is, the word count of each research diary compared to the length of time spent in the field at each of the four organizations. For example, the researcher recorded around 25,000 words based on observations, unstructured interviews and personal analysis and reflection, at three of the case studies. However, at SubCallco the work count was over 70,000. The reason for the higher work count relates to the nature of the labour process at SubCallco. For instance, the researcher took lengthy notes at training events and more notes were needed to reflect the greater range of activities at this particular case study. Finally, the total period spent researching each of the four organizations varied between 78 and 122 days. The discrepancy is due in its near entirety to the time spent gaining entry to each of the respective organizations. All of the main details of what has been discussed in this sub-section are summarise in figure 6.1.

6.2.2 Gaining access to organizations

How access was gained to each of the four organizations is detailed in figure 6.2. As can be seen, there are variations in the details of gaining access to the organizations. What can be learnt from gaining access to organizations is now briefly discussed. As Burgess (1991) suggests, access influences the reliability and validity of the data that the researcher obtains. It could also be said that by following the recruitment and selection process by which all similar employees must follow it could aid understanding of the behaviour of employees once fully employed. In effect, recruitment policies are examples of the power of organizations to enact environments (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). What is more, recruitment is part of the ongoing process of socialising individuals and teams (Hollway, 1984), as well as representing

a neglected part of organizational control and the labour process (Thompson and McHugh, 2002).

As set out in figure 6.2, the process of gaining entry to each of the organizations began with the researcher responding to a range of employment-related newspaper advertisements. In the first case – FoodCo – a local press advertisement for process operators and nightshift hygienists declared, ‘Exciting opportunities have arisen within this Food Manufacturing Company’. A clear condition of employment suggested, ‘These individuals must be able to work as part of a team, communicate well and have a flexible approach’. A similar approach was also noted at the second case study – HotelRest. HotelRest set about recruiting a range of restaurant and kitchen personnel with the hope of attracting, ‘...people who care enough about their work to go the extra mile’, but in doing so also offer, ‘reliability, enthusiasm and a positive “can do” attitude’. What is more, HotelRest emphasised how successful applicants could look forward to ‘...a friendly work environment, full training and development and a great benefits package’. Access to BargainChain began when the researcher spotted a job on the notice board at the local Job Centre. The notice made it clear that a local retail outlet wished to recruit a ‘stockroom person’ with the conditions of employment missing except to reassure all those who were interested that pay for the job met ‘national minimum wage’ requirements. Most of the small card was taken up by the job description of a stockroom assistant: ‘Duties will include the unloading of stock from vans, merchandising, stock control, keeping the area clean and tidy and any other duties as required. Experiences preferred but not essential as training can be given’. The advertisement that signalled the start to the process of gaining entry to SubCallco resembled in many ways the approach taken at FoodCo and Hotelrest. Indeed, in large letters across the top of SubCallco’s newspaper advertisement were the

words – ‘Ready for success? Now you’re talking!’ Two photographs of a young man and a young woman wearing headsets typical of call centre work dominated the advertisement. To attract new workers SubCallco used the advertisement to emphasise the hourly rates of pay for call operators (around 25 per cent above the minimum wage). A further statement by SubCallco gave an indication of the type of person they would prefer to employ:

Are you looking for a fresh start in an exciting, expanding business? Are you looking to take your career in a challenging new direction? Are you looking to make more use of your communication skills? If you’ve answered ‘yes’ to any of these questions, then it’s time to take a look into [SubCallco] Limited.

No actual job title went with the advertisement, yet the following remark made it reasonably clear what the job entailed – ‘maintaining levels of customer service and making out bound calls’. SubCallco also seemed keen to point out that the new recruits would be maintaining levels of customer service in a ‘state-of-art-facility’.

The first recruitment and selection process that the researcher went through involved an aptitude test. It was at this time that the researcher took an early chance to practice making mental notes, with view to making written notes about situations and experiences once away from the organization. For instance, whilst the researcher was sitting in a room waiting for what turned out to be a rather simple and routine test on product quality, and health and safety, he took note of a discussion conducted with a fellow job seeker about what it might be like to work for FoodCo:

I spoke to a guy at the test and he told me that his brother had worked there before. He said, 'keep your nose clean and you'll get on. Just get your work done, don't cause any trouble and no one will bother you' (Fieldnotes 11/4/01).

Organization	Method of access
FoodCo	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advertisement in local press 2. Application form (posted) 3. Aptitude test (based on issues related to product quality, and health and safety) 4. One-to-one interview (based on personal competencies) 5. Medical 6. Confirmation by telephone
HotelRest	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advertisement in local press 2. Application form (posted) 3. Observed group/team task (based on selling) 4. One-to-one interview (based on personal competencies) 5. Confirmation by letter (including contract of employment)
BargainChain	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advertisement in Employment Services 2. Application form (posted) 3. Job offered on meeting shop manager
SubCallco	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advertisement in local press 2. Application form (posted) 3. Aptitude test (based on interpreting information and numeracy) 4. Confirmation of completing first stage by letter 5. One-to-one interview (based on personal competencies and attitudes to customer service) 6. Computer-aided assessment (based on entering data from verbal commands and keyboard familiarity) 7. Confirmation immediately after assessment and later by letter

Figure 6.2 Access to organizations through recruitment and selection

At SubCallco the typically tense and uncomfortable affair of going through the selection process prompted the following remarks about the reality of being a covert researcher. The following diary extract was written on the basis of what happened just after a tough numerical-based test:

After the test was over the women out of a group of 10 potential recruits began chatting away whilst the men, including me, kept themselves to themselves. Then a guy sat next to me asked how I had gone on, but before I could even say much on the matter he launched into telling me his recent life story, i.e. how he was recently separated, just out of the army, unemployed, had children to look after, etc (Fieldnotes, 23/4/02).

This is just one example of the downsides of covert research in that the researcher would inevitably face situations he had little control over (Reicken, 1969). Indications of what to expect at each organization in terms of misbehaviour also became a feature of this stage of the fieldwork. For instance, a team activity that formed part of the selection procedure at HotelRest indicated to the researcher that his fellow new recruits were unlikely to be obedient workers:

We spent about 15 minutes as a group (I did most of the leading) working on how we would sell a random object to a potential customer. At the end of the 15 minutes each one of us was required to speak for one minute as we tried to sell an extension lead to the selection team. During the time spent working on our presentation it was quite clear that the others did not want to do it and not just because of shyness; I sensed that they just didn't care that much about making an impression and earlier discussions with them indicated that the job was pretty much guaranteed anyway (Fieldnotes, 23/8/01).

The selection interviews at each of the organizations were straightforward affairs and revealed more of a desire to recruit customer-orientated employees rather than a belief that this could actually be achieved. At FoodCo, HotelRest and SubCallco, for example, the interviewers all seemed wearied with asking the same questions and awaiting the same feigned responses,

such as, how conscientious the interviewee is at dealing with customers and how good they are at working in a team. However, at BargainChain, the line manager conducting the selection process offered the job of stockroom assistant to the researcher without asking any interview questions. The researcher later learnt that stockroom assistant positions at BargainChain are usually filled in this manner. By experiencing the selection interviews first-hand the researcher learnt a great deal about the organization. A diary entry made that day reveals the kind of information that became available during this particular selection procedure:

During what turned out to be a brief and uncomfortable conversation with the manager, her only really noteworthy comment was, 'as you can see we are not Next or Marks and Spencer but we do have standards that we have to maintain'. This, I interpreted, was a way of acknowledging the surroundings (messy) and the image of the store (discount and low quality), yet still expecting things to be done in a certain way at a certain time (Fieldnotes, 8/1/02).

Further experiences of gaining entry to organizations include attending a medical at FoodCo. However, even a standard procedure allowed the researcher to have guided discussions with company personnel. Indeed, with little prompting the nurse who performed the medical began to talk at length about a range of issues that included what to expect when working on the nightshift as a hygienist. For example, the nurse revealed how many operators on the day shift expressed an interest in nightshift work because the pay was higher and the job less taxing. Further general observations that demonstrate the value of researching the recruitment and selection procedure indicated that all of the four organizations struggled to fill their low-level vacancies. Observations also helped the researcher gain insights into the lengths each organization went to as a means to play down recruitment difficulties.

Details of how researchers gain access to organizations are probably omitted from most empirical literature. In this instance the process of gaining entry to each of the four organizations has been discussed at length. However, the main value to the researcher of taking part in the recruitment and selection procedure is to experience in a particular way, the way in which organizations portray themselves to new employees. It also a time to get an understanding of the promises, whether explicit or implicit, made by the employer to the new recruit. For instance, in two of the case studies, organizations made bold statements about what they claim to stand for, but despite making further statements about what they expected from new employees, made quite vague claims about what they had to offer them in return. Finally, the recruitment and selection procedures allowed the researcher to build rapport with fellow colleagues and at the same time ask of them a range of probing questions. Building rapport with fellow new recruits also served a purpose in that new recruits were typically dispersed throughout the organization and therefore allowed the researcher to utilise new friendships as a means to get to know a greater range of workers.

6.2.3 Gaining access to work groups

The process of joining the group (McNeill, 1990) at each of the four organizations began during the recruitment and selection processes. The process of infiltrating a range of shopfloor groups also continued during induction and various other training events. As recommended by Becker (1963), to smooth the process, the researcher used his relatively long and varied working history to negotiate entry to shopfloor groups. As expected, the first week or so (slightly longer at the first organization) was spent concentrating on getting a 'feel' for the job, becoming acquainted with the lay-out of the shopfloor and other parts of the workplace, and, getting to know a wide range of personnel at the same time or soon after. The following diary

extract briefly details the reality of being employed as well as researching an organization's shopfloor:

I made only a few observations on this shift as I was trying to learn the job and had to get used to the demands of the job and night working (Fieldnotes, 28/4/01).

The researcher found that being new to each organization and a novice to the jobs to be observed, presented few problems of a research-related variety. For example, established personnel seemed keen to inform the new recruit of how things 'worked' on the shopfloor. In such situations the researcher also took the opportunity to ask what was expected of him in terms of being a new start, what things or people should he be aware of so as to get on as quickly as possible, as well as asking people about themselves so as to start the process of building rapport and confidence in the researcher as a trustworthy member of the group. An example of becoming familiar with the job and getting to know fellow workers was the basis for a diary entry at the beginning of week three at HotelRest:

Generally speaking I feel comfortable for the first time since starting here. I am beginning to get to grips with the job and I can now concentrate on other things such as data collection. Also, I am getting to know the other staff and building rapport so that informal discussions are easier to undertake (Fieldnotes, 14/9/01).

By the third study the confidence and abilities of the researcher grew to such an extent that he could manage at an early stage of the fieldwork to familiarise himself with the work, lay-out of the shopfloor and personnel, and get to know fellow workers within days of taking up employment:

It's only my second day, but at lunchtime I tried to break the ice with Jeanette and Nicola (close friends). At first neither seemed keen on conversation, but this soon changed and they quickly became easy to talk to. I asked the usual questions (what is it like here, how long have you worked here, etc?) (Fieldnotes, 10/1/02).

However, access to the social dimension of shopfloor groups was by no means an easy and unproblematic experience for the researcher. For instance, at FoodCo the researcher took more than a month to get on terms with what he viewed as being a 'core' or 'masculine' group' (an influential group of males discussed in chapter seven). At HotelRest, being partly employed as a food host (and waiter) required the wearing of a uniform that supervisors also wore. Despite having no formal authority as a food host, the following diary extract demonstrates how looking different from the main research subjects had an effect on the researcher's confidence:

On entering the restaurant for my first proper shift I became instantly aware that I was wearing a different uniform than the others. I felt especially uncomfortable when someone said only supervisors wore a different uniform. I was also uncomfortable because I did not want to stand out on my first day (Fieldnotes, 7/9/01).

Further into the fieldwork the researcher became less and less self conscious (certainly at the start of a new case study). What is more, by accident more than anything else, that is, the nature of the jobs – a stockroom assistant and an outbound call operator, conferred upon the researcher an unexpected degree of freedom to explore the shopfloor, as well as become acquainted with the full range of shopfloor personnel. For instance, the role of a stockroom assistant involved supporting all other members of staff at the retail outlet, and created ample

opportunity for social intercourse and observations. Likewise, at SubCallco the first two weeks involved a fairly laid back training event that was also in part a rather active and insightful team building exercise. In brief, the ability of the researcher to infiltrate shopfloor groups exceeded initial expectations, although the process also presented a range of difficulties. However, little time in the field was ultimately wasted as time spent trying to gain the trust of influential group members presented the opportunity to get to know more about peripheral groups and their activities.

6.2.4 Taking notes in the field

Overall, making initial field notes at each of the four organizations presented few difficulties, although the means to make notes varied from case to case. What is more, the researcher quickly developed what he believed to be the best approach to gathering data and information on a covert basis:

There is no question about it the data just comes to you. You may have to be very patient but it arrives eventually. That is, just observing and listening represents the majority of data I have collected. And not only that, the data comes to you whether you asked for it or not. The key to getting the information is to be on one hand compliant and on the other knowing when to be awkward to extract information from authoritative or key figures, i.e. this may mean doing something wrong or acting stupid to provoke a reaction. In other situations, it is essential to find a balance between being friendly and sociable as possible. When I did ask questions, they were rarely more than what any enthusiastic learner would ask when starting a new job, i.e. getting to know what is acceptable, who to pay attention to (whether management or employees) more than others, asking people for the latest gossip, etc (Fieldnotes, 5/6/02).

However, accurately preserving the detail made from observations and guided discussions in note form presented a number of challenges. To limit the problems that may come from reflective recollections, the researcher pursued a range of strategies that related to the nature of the work he had to perform. For instance, mid-way through the first case study, the researcher began a diary entry about the reality of making fieldnotes when working in a covert manner:

I should mention the method I use and the difficulties I have in making notes. The method involves rare opportunities to make notes on the toilet and a personal brainstorming session shortly after the shift on all the events of the night. Further notes are sometimes added. Some physical information is obtained but is very scarce and difficult to obtain. Attaining information from notices and other management communications is not really an option as both are rare. Difficulties include not being able to write whilst I am working. The result is some information and ideas cannot be written down for several hours (Fieldnotes, 26/5/01).

Later on in the fieldwork the difficulties of making fieldnotes ended at the point where the researcher became more adept at knowing what he could 'get away with', in terms of balancing the role of a researcher with the role of a worker. Further, being moved to another job after being accused of not working in an appropriate manner by his supervisor resulted in unexpected data gathering opportunities:

The shift to a new job has enabled me to make better notes and more easily. That is the job is not intrinsically linked to the hectic start of the shift and the pace of the work is spread out much more over the entire shift (Fieldnotes, 15/6/01).

In the second case study the role of the researcher (in this case a food host) allowed notes to be taken on a much easier and open basis. Furthermore, like with all of his colleagues, the researcher was encouraged to take notes during team and training events. However, from time-to-time the researcher took the newly found freedom to make notes for granted. As a result, his behaviour began to arouse a little suspicion from an attentive supervisor:

David asked about my notebook today. I had been writing in it quite openly and for more than a few seconds. He asked if I was writing an 'idiots guide to being a host'. He also asked me more about what I was doing at university. I do not think he suspects anything though (Fieldnotes, 2/10/01).

At BargainChain the ease by which it was possible to make notes reached its peak. Indeed, the researcher had a stockroom all to himself, which acted like an office where he could retreat to at any time. Not only was it easy to make notes at BargainChain, the relative freedom of the job permitted the taking of analytical notes too. Like at HotelRest, note taking was fairly easy to perform at SubCallco. In more detail, training and team exercises, a relatively private desk to work at, and an adjacent toilet, meant that observations and details of guided discussions became short note form within minutes of them happening. However, despite the favourable conditions at SubCallco, a range of research problems presented themselves to the researcher. In one instance this involved being late for work and having to make calls from a more conspicuous part of the network of desks. A second difficulty emerged during prolonged team briefing sessions. That is, it was impossible to make immediate notes in a situation that provided the background for a good deal of the misbehaviour at SubCallco.

6.2.5 Leaving the field

As a covert researcher, and may be even sometimes as an overt researcher, the decision to end data collection at a particular organization may not turn out to be at the researcher's discretion, or on the grounds of theoretical saturation (Goulding, 2002). For instance, Analoui and Kakabadse (1989: 13) believe covert methods can represent a, 'long, laborious and often dangerous process, with the danger of "getting sacked", one's cover "being blown" or being made "redundant" ever present'. Aside from the danger element, the researcher came close to leaving the field prematurely on several occasions. For instance, a chargehand at FoodCo was not happy with the performance of the researcher, the relationship between the researcher and the manager at HotelRest broke down towards the end of this particular episode of fieldwork over an unwillingness of the researcher to work overtime, the routine and repetitive background music at BargainChain nearly forced the researcher to leave the job on the grounds of mind-numbing boredom and annoyance. At SubCallco the researcher also ran the risk of losing his job as several call operators from his team were laid off five weeks into the fieldwork. What is more, domestic issues presented an ongoing threat to the research project as a whole.

From the researcher's perspective, it seemed that a sense of experiencing nearly all that could be experienced at each organization presented itself after about four to five weeks of observations. In every case, however, the researcher was drawn back into the process of gathering data by a range of unexpected events. Having said that, after around ten weeks of fieldwork the researcher sensed that he was gathering similar data over and over again. In effect, the researcher noticed how most misbehaviour appeared to occur on a cyclical basis, as the following diary entry suggests:

I didn't come in today with the intention to hand in my notice, although the feeling had been with me for sometime. I'd been holding out for whatever information I could get from a training course, even though I've not really had any significant information for a while (Fieldnotes, 20/11/01).

The researcher made a similar remark in his BargainChain diary, at the start of the tenth week of fieldwork:

I decided whilst working today to call it a day. There is no real reason to stay around and gather data that is of little or no extra value (Fieldnotes, 12/3/02).

A key to understanding the decision to end each episode of fieldwork relates first and foremost to the work routine of each respective job. That is, the labour process at each of first three organizations was highly repetitive and prescribed and as a result patterns in misbehaviour appeared clear cut. For instance, at FoodCo management required the same cleaning process to be performed night after night. To accommodate some of the problems that can come from a repetitive and mundane job, the function manager authorised longer rest breaks to alleviate some of these problems. However, hygienists remained dissatisfied despite being offered longer rest breaks. As a consequence they regularly tried to command even longer rest breaks. A great deal of this activity went unnoticed by the function manager, yet periodically the function manager tried to curb such practices. The process of securing favourable conditions and then losing them appeared to re-occur over a four week cycle.

In the final case study the researcher did not have much say in when the fieldwork at SubCallco would end. What happened in this situation related to the nature of the work – management continually organizing and re-organizing groups in order to fulfil a range of sales

projects (called 'campaigns'). Indeed, after seven weeks such a change occurred and as a result the researcher had to decide whether to continue collecting data at SubCallco or not. In the end the researcher decided to end fieldwork at SubCallco based on the following decision:

As soon as I knew that I was going to miss out on the [InsuranceCo] campaign (even though I was pretty sure that it would almost be like a completely different study) I made my mind up to leave. There was nothing left for me to do except to be part of a group of four operators and then to take my chances after that (Fieldnotes, 28/6/02).

Leaving the field for the final time, however, proved to be a time of reflection for the researcher. The following and final diary entry outlines the researcher's overall experience of fieldwork, after many months of intense data collection:

Up until departing SubCallco I have felt little or no emotion about leaving any of the other workplaces. Compared to other organizations I had researched and worked for I did not have that sense of utter relief. I quite liked working here, even though at times the work was boring. I will miss some of the operators because SubCallco appeared to be quite a cheery and sociable place to work. Today is also a milestone, as I will no longer be gathering any more data. What is more, I feel a real sense of achievement in that I have done so much and that it has all been done to the best of my abilities, and in doing so, I have learned so much about many things other than misbehaviour. It is definitely an experience that I will look back on and probably be amazed by what I have done and been through. Ultimately, the greatest achievement is trying to make sense of what millions of people must do everyday – i.e. work in pretty awful and mundane jobs. I feel an enormous sense of having done something truly unique and sense I am now armed with all the data and information I could ever have expected to attain. However, I also feel set up for life knowing and I would never

belittle or undervalue what many people pass off, quite ignorantly if the truth be told, as misbehaviour (Fieldnotes, 28/6/02).

6.3 Summary

Accessing the four organizations, gaining access to shopfloor groups, keeping fieldnotes and deciding when to leave each organization clearly came with its downsides. However, the process brought with it many rich opportunities to gather data on misbehaviour. First of all, the researcher learnt what it is like and could mean for workers to go through the recruitment and selection process at each of the organizations. The researcher also benefited from learning about each job through work colleagues. In effect, it forced the researcher to learn more about things that in any other situation he may have been passive or unreceptive to. Secondly, the researcher developed relationships with a range of workers (most notably peers) that may not have been possible in other circumstances. What is more, adopting a dual role of worker/researcher compelled the researcher to learn about the work in hand and how shopfloor relationships play a part in generating both consent and resistance to the goals of the organization. Finally, skills developed in a non-research-related capacity helped the process by allowing a natural flow of data and information between research subject and researcher. Clearly, presenting findings from the four case studies is not just restricted to the experiences of the fieldworker. In Chapter Seven the context and incidences of misbehaviour from four organizations are described and discussed.

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter the centre of attention shifts from the researcher and actual methods of data collection to the research findings that relate to the main objectives of the study. Based on presenting a holistic contextual view of workplace misbehaviour, the order for each case starts with a general overview of each of the companies under investigation. Following on from general background material is a section that looks at the labour process at each of the four case studies in question. In the subsequent sections we explore in more detail the main themes of the thesis, that is, groups and social identities, social relations between groups defined by differing social identities, management control, and, typical forms of misbehaviour in accordance with the five dimensions proposed and discussed in Chapters Two and Three. As in Chapter Six, the majority of data is reproduced from the researcher's personal diary kept during fieldwork. Any further data presented comes from anonymised organizational literature or secondary literature that cannot be identified as it may help identify the organizations being researched. Due to the need for conciseness and a lack of space, however, it is only possible to reproduce a small portion of the data gathered by the researcher in its original form. For most part the findings presented are generated from a substantial data bank and represent several incidences rather than one in particular.

7.2 FoodCo

7.2.1 FoodCo the company

FoodCo was founded as an independent company in 1962 and is situated in a small town on the Forth Valley estuary. By the mid-1970s FoodCo employed around 150 people and employment levels remained steady for the following two decades. During this time it was primarily the scene for the production of fresh potato chips and part-fried chips for the catering industry. More specifically, FoodCo supplied many staff canteens with its produce. In the 1980s FoodCo became unionised and currently recognises a union (whose name is withheld to protect the identities of the research subjects) for the purpose of collective bargaining, for all shopfloor employees.

However, the late 1980s and early 1990s proved to be difficult times for FoodCo mainly because of a sharp drop in demand for its main products. In 1993 a multi-national corporation that specialises in 'chilled foods and fresh produce' purchased FoodCo and since then the company has seen a steady rise in numbers employed (currently around 300) and a virtual revolution in the products the company manufactures. At first the change involved supplying a range of supermarkets with potato-related products and with it came a radical change in business and human resource practices (HRM). For example, Foodco no longer supplies industrial caterers and instead makes 'luxury' pre-prepared meals exclusively for an 'upmarket' high street retailer.

The company's working practices are now virtually unrecognisable from those of a decade ago. For instance, relatively steady 'Monday to Friday' work patterns are now the bastion of the few and there are no premium payments for weekend work unless it is classified as

overtime – it seems the changes were not resisted by the workforce mainly because the organization was facing an impending liquidation. More recent changes have seen the introduction of a pension scheme, company operatives receiving relatively generous pay increase and the first ever prospect of paid sick leave (pending). Despite these unprecedented initiatives and above inflation pay increases, pay levels remain low (approximately £4.80 per hour – at the time the National Minimum Wage was £4.20 per hour for workers over 22 years of age) for fast-paced and highly quantifiable work, and labour turnover and fluctuating seasonal demands require an ongoing commitment to recruiting operative-level workers. However, positions immediately above that of an operative are usually filled from within the organization.

Around 45 per cent of all manual workers are believed to be members of the union. The union is influential in terms of bargaining over rates of pay and other general terms of employment. However, the influence of the union on day-to-day shopfloor activity is limited, especially since the relatively recent introduction of shift working and quality initiatives. More generally, the union struggles to have an effect on the main HRM strategy of employee flexibility, that is, constant demand for overtime working and matching labour with both short-term and long-term fluctuations in product demand. The hygiene function, the focus of the research at FoodCo, is an isolated and distinct part of the organization and is typified by below average union membership levels and no shop steward representation.

7.2.2 The labour process of FoodCo's hygiene function

Whilst food operatives represent the vast majority of all those employed at FoodCo, the emphasis of this study is the work of the hygienists who work every night between 10 p.m. and

6 a.m. An early observation made by the researcher suggests the following about the work of a hygienist at FoodCo:

It seems that the guy I spoke to at the selection process was correct. By and large shopfloor employment relations are good and this is mainly due to the fact that what is expected of you is very clear and what is expected of you is easily achievable (Fieldnotes, 11/5/01).

Much further on in the data collection process the researcher developed his ideas of work as a hygienist as the following diary extract demonstrates:

It's clear that this job, after a few days, can be done on autopilot. However, even though the process is just about exactly the same every day, it is nowhere near as repetitive or tyrannical if it were compared to assembly line work. The main thing is the operative has the chance to perform the task slightly different each time, no one is standing immediately over you, and the job requires you to work both independently of and in sequence with others. Having said that, boredom is still a major factor and an ability to be good at day dreaming is a must (Fieldnotes, 10/6/01).

As the title of the job suggests hygiene is a main goal of job, that is, creating an environment fit for the hygienic production of food. However, to create such an environment necessitates particular hygienist attire and a process to ensure that the hygienist does not contaminate his or her own work. The following extract describes what is expected of a hygienist before entering the manufacturing environment and when, for whatever reason, the hygienist has to leave and return to the shopfloor:

1. Put on hairnet

2. Put on haircover
3. Put on overall
4. Swing over barrier (between locker room and wash facility)
5. Put on steel toe capped white Wellington boots
6. Put on white coat to denote the area you are about to be working in
7. Wash hands with antibacterial soap
8. Go through door into 'high-risk zone'
9. Wash hands again with antibacterial soap
10. Apply sanitiser to hands
11. Put on plastic gloves (and plastic sleeves if appropriate)

On leaving the shop floor for whatever reason, all gloves should be removed (and disposed of), the white coat should be left in high-risk zone, and Wellington boots are to be left in the washroom. However, hairnets must be kept on at all times during the shift. On re-entering the procedure must be followed again (Fieldnotes, 11/5/01).

The work of a hygiene operator varies little from day to day; therefore it would be appropriate to briefly describe the range of work performed on each shift. A typical day, in order, would include most or all of the following:

- A. A general clean up of all excess waste, for example, food refuse and contaminated food containers
- B. Some machines partly disassembled to aid cleaning programme
- C. Removal of all useable food products to the refrigerated area

- D. Sorting of all removable machine parts, tools, drain covers and other general measuring instruments for individual cleaning (taken to tray wash)
- E. Remaining artefacts to be repositioned to enhance accessibility for hygienists
- F. Delicate machinery to be covered up to prevent damage

Operations A to F performed in first hour of shift

- G. All machinery and walls to be rinsed down with water to remove all excess food products
- H. Machinery and walls to be sprayed with detergent to aid the removal of all traces of food (particularly starches and oils)
- I. Machinery and walls to be scoured (manually) to ensure that the detergent is applied everywhere (the detergent must stay on for a minimum of 20 minutes)
- J. All detergent removed by thorough rinsing with water (normally after the main break)
- K. All machinery and walls sprayed with a sanitising chemical
- L. Floors flooded with sanitising chemicals
- M. Excess fluids from the machinery and floors drained off to prevent accidents

Operations G to M represent the majority of shift

- N. Cleanliness and bacteria samples taken from pre-designated and some random areas

- O. Areas that are sensitive to this process are cleaned separately with an undiluted sanitising chemical

- P. All other equipment removed at the beginning of the shift are cleaned in a machine called the tray wash (separate activity to all above)

- Q. Finally, area is returned to normal with all parts previously removed put back in place or re-assembled

Operations N to Q performed in last hour of shift (Fieldnotes, 11/5/01).

The shift itself is organized around three overlapping shift patterns (the researcher worked a regular four-day shift pattern starting on Friday night and ending Tuesday morning, overlapped by two five-day-on/two-day-off shift patterns) with around 20 from 30 members of the hygiene function being present at any one time. Each shift requires the employment of two 'chargehands' who work a Monday to Friday regime. At the weekend the chargehand role is undertaken on a part-time basis by two hygienists given the title of 'relief' chargehand. Chargehands undertake the work of hygienists and the style of supervision tends to involve managing from afar and only intervening in certain circumstances. There is also a function manager, but he does not work on the shopfloor. The function manager works from Sunday night until Friday morning. There is no relief manager at the weekend. All chargehands and the manager are male and the function has a history of being a male only shift. However, the last few years have seen more and more women join the hygiene function and the current ratio of men to women is around four to one.

Further details of the work include the need to work in refrigerator-like temperatures (around six degrees Celsius). The technology used by the hygienist is low-level, has remained largely unchanged for many years, and no formal qualification or experience is required to take up the job. In general, the shift typically starts with a flurry of tacitly organised activity, allows for two breaks (one of 15 minutes and one of 30 minutes), before petering out and taking on a relatively relaxed demeanour in the final hour or so. The shopfloor is denoted by constant blaring music from a local 'middle of the road' radio station, which makes work in one sense less monotonous, but it also makes casual conversation with colleagues difficult. Despite the relatively rigid and pre-determined organization of work many informal practices co-exist with formal practices (to be discussed later on in this section).

7.2.3 Hygienists and group memberships

Overall, hygienist work is performed by people who are dedicated to their job. By and large hygienists are not workers on their way to a higher career either within or outwith the organization. In terms of identity, working as a hygienist at FoodCo brings with it a number of formal organizational-related group memberships. Outlined in figure 7.1 is the full range by which hygienists could hypothetically re- or self-categorize themselves as. At the lowest and least inclusive level of abstraction is that of a new employee. Realistically, however, only new employees could categorize themselves as new employees. Increasing initially in levels of inclusiveness, the hygienist could first of all categorize themselves as being a member of the hygienist group. In this group hygienists would share a job-based identity with about 25 fellow employees. At the next level of abstraction – team membership – the group would expand to include a chargehand, yet would halve as the shopfloor at FoodCo is organized around the activities of two evenly numbered teams. Further levels of categorization also include that of

the function; this would include both teams and the function manager and bring the total membership to around 30. A final level of identity is that of the organization, and as indicated before, numbers in the region of 300 members (or employees). There is one further organizational identity hypothetically possible – that of the holding group which owns FoodCo – but to think that low-level employees regularly or readily identify with a multi-national corporation probably represents an abstraction of identity too far. One further note on organizational-related identities posits the belief that it is team identity that hygienists are most likely to subscribe to. In effect, under optimum working conditions, the team represents the main reference group for hygienists. This is because being a team member is both encouraged and rewarded by the function manager, and, hygienists actively engage with their work through the team (see later sub-section).

There is a range of other group memberships available to hygienists – some of which concur with formal organizational groups and some that do not. First of all though the chances of promotion for a hygienist are limited and the only realistic chance to embark on a social mobility strategy is either to apply to work on the day shift as a food operative (viewed by most as an inferior choice of group membership) or to leave the organization and find work elsewhere (turnover for the hygiene function is very low compared to the manufacturing function). Group memberships available for hygienists to join whilst still staying in the role of a hygienist include being a member of the trade union recognised by FoodCo, or becoming involved in the staff forum set up to deal with employee grievances and welfare. As indicated before, trade union membership amongst hygienists is below average when compared with the rest of the organization. What is more, the union is viewed with a great deal of suspicion by the hygienists as the following diary entry suggests:

...I asked Pauline if many people were in the union and she replied, 'Oh aye yeah, there's quite a few; I used to be a member, but I haven't got around to rejoining yet'. I also asked if there was a union representative on this shift. She wasn't sure so she called across to another table. Jack [chargehand] answered her question by saying that there wasn't. The question, however, raised a number of further responses with the most prominent comment being, 'The union's not worth a fuck. I've been here five years and in my time they've never shown any interest in us'. Pauline seemed changed by the remarks and added in her reply how the union, 'Take your £1.80 every week and you never hear from them again', and how, 'this is the second time I've worked here and I don't know if I'll join again' (Fieldnotes, 11/5/01).

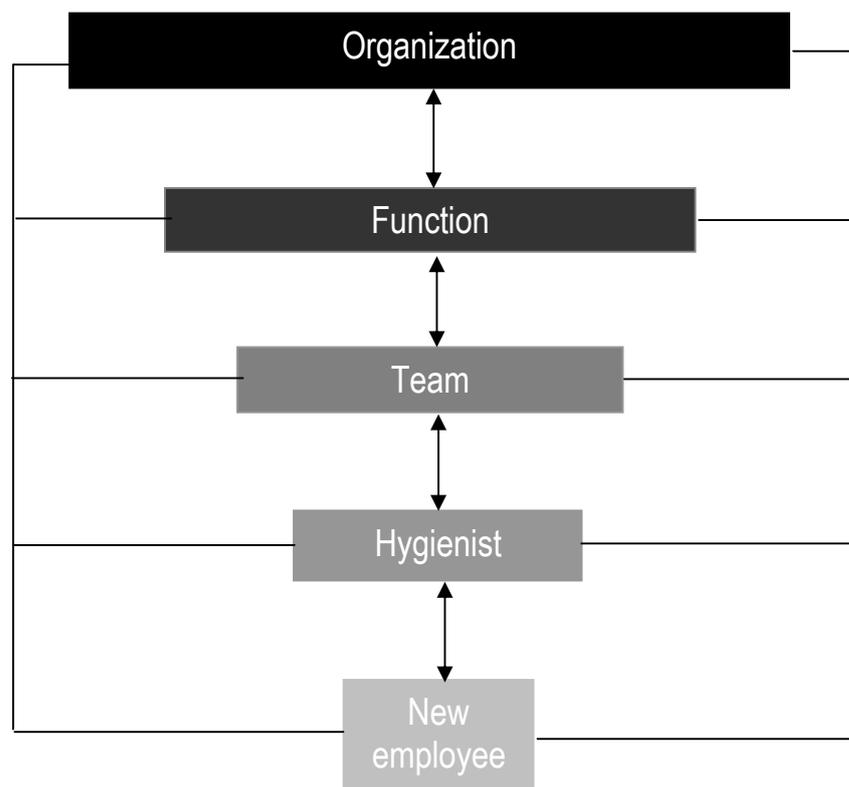


Figure 7.1 Levels of hygienist identity

Further investigations into the matter of the staff forum led to a brief conversation with a shop steward who worked on the day shift. The shop steward commented on how the union had

secured all but one of the seats on the newly set up forum and the union was in the process of making sure it would not challenge the communication channels that run between management and employees via the union. The shop steward went on to further disparage the staff forum and referred to it several times as a 'glorified talking shop'.

It appeared that neither the union nor staff forum offered any real or immediate benefit to hygienists struggling to deal with low morale. Indeed, instead of formal groups designed to represent and defend staff came a range of sub-groups designed, in an informal fashion, to serve the same purpose. Entry to such groups, however, was by no means a straightforward affair; nor was it guaranteed. For instance, notes taken on observations of hygienist behaviour quickly uncovered three shopfloor sub-groups – a dominant masculine group made up mainly of long-tenured male hygienists and chargehands, a feminine group made up of female hygienists, and, a far looser coalition of hygienists characterised most of all by an apolitical nature and workers working on after retirement age. Unsurprisingly, membership of each group was based on personal characteristics more than anything else. Indeed, new employees, incidentally, seemed drawn to sub-groups that reflected their own personal characteristics. However, at certain times and in certain circumstances, mobility between the groups occurred, even if the move took quite some time to happen:

Jane [initially member of feminine sub-group] appears to be in the process of being promoted to the masculine group. With working seven days a week she has got to know the men quite well and tonight she was sat at their table playing cards with them! (Fieldnotes, 29/6/01).

The key to social mobility, as expected, appeared to concern an individual believing that their ingroup did not live up to expectations, yet the outgroup did. Secondly, it involved the

individual learning what is and what is not acceptable to the new group so as to be accepted by its members.

In sum, clearly there are a range of groups and social identities available to hygienists at FoodCo. Some groups, however, appear to be more desirable and useful than others, although it is the team group that should be considered as the main basis by which hygienists make comparisons. What is more, the difference between groups is quite subtle and an uninitiated observer may well struggle to make the distinction. Having said that, there is a range of rival sub-group identities that compete with the team identity, with each in turn offering a sense of purpose and status, in certain situations. In particular is the group denoted for its masculine traits and in many ways represents a serious alternative to the officially recognised team and union. Finally, it should be noted that there is no orderly pattern to the groups available to hygienists and only by observing the behaviour and misbehaviour of hygienists are we likely to get an idea of the importance or unimportance of each group.

7.2.4 Social relations on the shopfloor at FoodCo

On the whole, the main shopfloor relationship – between team and management – appeared to be secure and stable, although a great deal of this stability can be attributed to a range of informal practices (see next sub-section on misbehaviour). Further reasons for the high levels of quietude seemed to relate to the fact that a great deal of the monotony of the job is cancelled out by manageable workloads and a relatively high degree of autonomy. However, from-to-time, conflict did emerge between the parties. This tended to happen at end of the shift:

Yesterday morning Bob [function manager] reprimanded all the workers who were set to clock off at 5.57 a.m. He claimed all workers should not clock off until 6 a.m. and anyone caught doing this in the future would be 'quartered' and given a warning. I clarified this matter with the chargehand who said all workers had a three-minute late allowance per day and this could be used at the start or at the end of the shift. However, he also informed me that workers should not leave the shop floor until five to the hour and if they did they would find it difficult to be out of the factory in two minutes (Fieldnotes, 8/6/01).

Despite occasional conflict between team members and the function manager, incidences of the like were quickly forgotten once hygienists refrained from such activity. As a result employment relations continued to be noted by a general acceptance of the status quo. Probably a more fractious relationship appeared to exist between the function and other functions within the organization, as the following diary extract suggests:

Larry [hygienist] didn't seem happy with the announcement that the production shift may spill over into ours and as a result disrupt how we do things, even if the demand is temporary. He said of them – meaning the production shift: "they don't fucking like us anyway, and this just causes more tension between our shift and theirs". For me this is growing evidence of a serious and ongoing rift between night and day shifts (Fieldnotes, 4/6/01).

In essence, from the function manager to relatively new hygienists, there seemed to be a shared sense of disdain for the rest of the organization, particularly the parts related to manufacturing. In reality, the quality of relations between the two parties was poor, yet there was also a sense that little if nothing could be done to alter these social relations. The basis of the conflict appeared to be based on the fact that many managers at FoodCo viewed the

hygiene function as a 'luxury' and less important to business success than, for example, the manufacturing function. Indeed, the researcher often made notes of how the hygiene function, unfairly, seemed to represent a 'forgotten' or 'silent' shift.

Probably the only situation where it could be said that there were openly insecure shopfloor relations occurred between the masculine and the feminine sub-groups, although it should be noted that for most of the time male and female hygienists actively co-operated with each other. When disagreement occurred, mainly over a gender-based division of labour tacitly supported by the function manager, formal allegiances quickly broke down and were replaced by gender-based allegiances. The following extract demonstrates how blatant the discrimination could be:

The first incidence of the night involved Jane having a significant dispute with a member of the core group. In brief, she felt he had been given 'all the bad jobs' and denied the chance to get involved with a wider variety of jobs and tasks. The extent of her aggrievement was reflected in how she seemed to come from nowhere and by the time I even noticed her she was venting her spleen to Jack the chargehand. Without being given a chance to fend off her demands, Jane, without seeming to draw breath, continued to complain about not being given enough work to do. Caught like a rabbit in the lights of a fast approaching car, Jack appeared to have little choice but to make an immediate concession to the irate hygienist. At break time you could sense, perhaps even smell, the sensation of success coming from the table occupied by female hygienists. In contrast, the table occupied by many of the men on this shift seemed unusually subdued (Fieldnotes, 4/5/01).

In such situations the feminine group clearly embarked on strategies of social competition so as to challenge the outgroup's apparent sense of superiority. More importantly though, this

kind of behaviour demonstrated how hygienists could swiftly categorize themselves in a different way and how the objectives of that group identity dictated the behaviour then on.

A particular form of management control played a significant part in the social relations of shopfloor at FoodCo. For instance, teamwork clearly offers hygienists a very real feeling of belonging and represents an identity that many hygienists probably did not want to jeopardise by contravening its formal purpose. Nevertheless, team identification did not satisfy the status of all individuals, all of the time. In such situations hygienists appeared to shift their allegiances from one group to another. However, when the team identity becomes less salient and different group memberships replaced them, hygienists behaved differently than they would if they remained loyal to the team identity. In brief, such is the general acceptance of the status quo at FoodCo; it would be reasonable to suggest that from observing the quality of relations between most groups, we are on the whole more likely to see creative, non-challenging and co-operative forms of misbehaviour. Having said that, an element of the status quo is viewed by some hygienists as illegitimate and is where we are likely see more than insecure relations, that is, the very conditions for open social conflict and competition.

7.2.5 Controlling hygienists

It would be impossible and impractical to discuss in detail all the control mechanisms at work on the shopfloor at FoodCo. Instead is a representative sample of how control plays a part in keeping hygienists as low status workers and in another way keeping the status quo for the benefit of organizational elites. The reason to consider management control, at FoodCo and at the three other case studies, relates to the fact that management can use control strategies to influence what groups employees may be drawn or not drawn to. A further consideration

concerns how a social identity approach, at present, does not fully account for the influence management may have on the social identity of its employees.

Other than teamwork and quality control initiatives, a range of other control mechanisms prevailed at FoodCo. For instance, the recruitment and selection procedure mentioned in the previous chapter, company unionism, welfare schemes, shift systems and the built-in rigidity of work noted in a previous sub-section. Moreover, working practices noted at FoodCo, such as rules concerning clocking on and off and the sanctions that come with being late, are after all, widely recognised and a common understanding not just at FoodCo, but across manual and low-level employment. Demonstrations of the nature of rules that govern employees at FoodCo are exemplified in a diary extract about holiday leave:

The main notice board at FoodCo doesn't have much detail on it, but what it does make clear is the employees' holiday entitlement – four weeks and four days per year (excluding bank holidays). The notice says one week must be taken before the end of April, two weeks in the following three months, and one week after this time, but before the first week in December (to avoid conflict with the surge in demand at Christmas). The four remaining days can be taken at any other reasonable time. However, management stipulates a final say in how holidays are taken and no more than 25 per cent of staff can be off at anyone time. To request time off you must get a 'holiday form' from the canteen. Requests for holidays or leave of absence (paternity leave and trade union activity) must be submitted two weeks in advance (Fieldnotes, 27/4/01).

The researcher discussed the issue of holidays with a range of hygienists and came to the conclusion that no one really cared that much about the holiday arrangements. It may be that

this form of control is readily accepted because the rules have a long history, are subject to union consent, are clear, and in turn clearly relate to the nature of the business.

A further example of control is denoted by FoodCo's use of 'buddying up' to socialise new employees. Buddying up appears to represent a method by which new employees are inducted into the ways of the organization by experienced members of the shopfloor. The following extract demonstrates how this process leads to a smoother acceptance of management objectives:

After a brief tour of the shopfloor it was back to canteen for the second break of the night. After the charge hand said a few welcoming words to the new cohort of employees he went on to explain how all of us would be 'buddying up' with an experienced member of staff for the rest of the shift and all of tomorrow. We'd be learning the job and getting to know what was expected of us (Fieldnotes, 24/4/01).

However, when subtle forms of control did not work there was also traditional authority to fall back on as the following statement suggests:

Bob handed out a series of verbal warnings tonight because a couple of female hygienists had been caught taking extra smoking breaks. Subsequently, at break time, Bob announced to everyone that the informal break allowance would be revoked if people over-exploited the unofficial cigarette break (Fieldnotes, 21/5/01).

The handing out of verbal warnings was not particularly controversial in itself as two hygienists were clearly caught doing something they should not be doing. However, in reality, the

punishment appeared harsh and arbitrary. Not only that the punishment involved a threat to revoke a practice that did not officially exist. The warning also represented evidence of covert discrimination against females. A final dimension of explicit control goes beyond the idea of keeping low level workers either content in low status jobs or offering workers decision-making powers. In this instance it is the possibility of promotion and more importantly how the conditions for promotion may affect the behaviour of hygienists. Based on a series of observations the researcher noted the following pertinent points about promotion at FoodCo:

It has become apparent to me over a period of time that internal job advertisements refer in consistent detail to attendance and timekeeping requirements. Not only that, it seems the higher you want to go at FoodCo must be matched by an increasing commitment to good attendance and timekeeping. For example, a hygiene operator job calls for a good record of attendance and timekeeping. However, for a chargehand or quality monitoring position the desire for a good attendance and timekeeping record becomes crucial, and even higher still – a management position requires an excellent commitment (Fieldnotes, 8/6/01).

In essence, a wide-range of control is in place at FoodCo. It varies from quite subtle forms to a very explicit variety. It also demonstrates that controlling low-level and low-skilled workers is by no means a simple or straightforward task, that is, clearly a lot of thought and energy goes into making sure hygienists accept their lot. By and large though, most of the control at FoodCo appears to be based on a great deal of mutual agreement between the manager, the chargehands and the hygienists. However, when mutual understandings break down there is always the formal authority of management to rely on and the threat of remove favourable working practices.

7.2.6 Misbehaviour at FoodCo

Despite management adopting a range of control mechanisms, a whole range of misbehaviour was still evident during ten weeks of fieldwork at FoodCo. Indeed, the misbehaviour fell into all five dimensions of misbehaviour. There was, however, little evidence of misbehaviour of a sexual kind. The first forms of misbehaviour recorded by the researcher were immediately obvious and would easily fit into the dimension of informal workplace custom and practice. Such open misbehaviour involved hygienists taking elongated breaks and openly pilfering a limited range of company goods. Having said that, all of these acts were permitted with the explicit authority of the function manager. What is more, should the privileges be abused or any other breaches of discipline occur, then the manager reserved the right to revoke the favourable practices. In other words, being allowed to misbehave in this way allowed hygienists to feel better about their objective conditions, and in another way, misbehaviour served as an extension of management control.

Most hygienists, as a result of favourable informal concessions, however, did not become a slave to their formal identities and occasionally lashed out at chargehand or management. For instance, below is an example of hygienists demonstrating their frustration with immediate authority:

A joke was made in the changing room (most workers present). One man reached for a hairnet, but it fell over the barrier. He went to get it but Pauline passed it too him instead. At this point he said he was glad that he did not have to reach over because he may have got a verbal warning (a reference to Elaine and her experiences with Jack) [see below for details of the conflict between Jack and Elaine]. Jack was present for this and no one laughed; yet a few smiled (including me).

Jack responded to the 'dig' by suggesting, 'They say sarcasm is the lowest form of wit' (Fieldnotes, 27/5/01).

Hygienists, as indicated above, seemed averse to direct confrontation with the immediate authority of the chargehands and manager, and resorted to more indirect forms of retribution. In more detail, hygienists seemed less interested in challenging the status quo and far more content to exploit an often-lax system of shopfloor control. Of particular note were observations made of misbehaviour during the function manager's days off:

I was disappointed to see that Jack was working tonight (as overtime) and how that would probably mean shorter breaks. However, tonight appeared to be an exception as Jack (with others) openly commanded the workforce to get things done as quickly as possible so as to create longer breaks. It didn't make sense at first, as he's a stickler for rules. However, a quick word with him later after a tip off from one of his closest colleagues suggested he was peeved at the time taken to process his application for promotion (Fieldnotes, 18/5/01).

What stands out the most about this common form of misbehaviour is that the chargehand, normally strict on rules when the function manager is present, directed the work so as to create even longer breaks than informally permitted. This act, in effect, represented the misbehaviour of the sub-group defined by masculine identity. Most hygienists seemed content, at such points, to join the masculine group and collude with their misbehaviour.

As time went by and as the researcher became more familiar with his surroundings a number of clear and regular survival strategies were observed. An example includes:

Tonight I spoke to one of the retirees who works in the 'potato shed' shed. He is part of a small group of workers who tend to always go back to work when Bob would expect us to do. It seems that he and others are not the greatest conformers after all and he told me of all the places where he and others could 'hide', even when the manager was in. Apparently, it's also much warmer in the potato shed than on the main shopfloor (19/5/01).

However, it was the conflict between some of the male and female operatives that provided the most hostile forms of misbehaviour and could easily be equated with the dimension of cultural subversion or social competition. A typical example of how female hygienists were sometimes treated includes the following:

After the first break I was ready to start to learn the tray wash routine from Elaine when she walked into the room seemingly upset by something or someone. On asking what was wrong it appears she'd had another 'run in' with Jack – this time it was over dropping a protective sleeve cover on the floor and not picking it up. Jack had witnessed Elaine dropping the sleeve and had asked Elaine her to pick it up. Elaine point blankly refused (it may have been because she felt that she was being victimised or treated like a child; it may have been because she was being deliberately provocative) and an argument flared up as a result of neither party willing to back down. I only caught part two of the dispute first hand and it involved Elaine taking off her immediate safety gloves and declaring that she'd 'had enough' of the situation. Jack duly accepted her resignation and began to inform her that he required the immediate return of her clock card and locker key. When she returned he just took them from her and let her walk away without saying anything more than a slightly sarcastic 'thank you' (Fieldnotes, 25/5/01).

In this incident the chargehand picked on probably one of the more vulnerable members of the female hygienist group. Indeed, such was the intensity of the confrontation that the hygienist

did not feel she could fight back. Instead, she externalised her resistance. Female hygienists did, however, fight back against their male oppressors. Having said that, as the example below suggests, when they did resist men they did so in a well-measured and organized fashion:

This evening I probably witnessed the most open act of defiance I've seen since I started here. I say it was defiant, but it wasn't aggressive; nor did it cause any disruption. If anything it was symbolic of how the women are quite graceful when dealing with men who seem to take every opportunity to 'wind up' their counterparts. The act itself involved female hygienists unilaterally deciding to take their first break 30 minutes before the usual time. I wasn't there to witness it happen, but I hear Bob did not object to it once he knew the reasons behind their action. The women claimed they were fed up of the burping and farting competition emanating from the table occupied by core group members (Fieldnotes, 20/5/01).

Misbehaviour varied in great detail and seemed to reflect the nature of the many different social groups and social relations that characterised the shopfloor at FoodCo. However, it would appear, as suggested in earlier chapters, that management control, or perhaps the lack of management control, also played a significant part in misbehaviour. For now though, we stop short of embarking on any further analysis of misbehaviour until data from all three case studies has been.

7.2.7 Summary of FoodCo

FoodCo in one sense represents a time gone by in that it is part of a dwindling manufacturing industry and part of a dwindling private sector willing or inclined to recognise trade unions. In another sense though FoodCo represents everything modern about contemporary

manufacturing in that FoodCo has recently implemented a wide-range of quality initiatives and will probably bring in more quality initiatives in the future. However, despite the contemporary nature of the changes, the work of the hygienists continues to be denoted by low skill and low pay. Further, against the backdrop of major organizational changes has seen a union dwindle in influence when it is needed more than ever. Overall, observations at FoodCo seemed to suggest hygienists had a rather tough existence.

In amongst their tough existence, however, hygienists have clearly found ways to deal with the permanence of lowly status. Indeed, this is all the more remarkable as senior personnel at FoodCo seem to have forgotten the very people who make new investment and new product lines work, day in and day out. Informal concessions won from local management clearly represent a way in which low morale can be dealt with and so does the exploitation of gaps in management control strategies. Such concessions may also be evidence of social competition prior to the fieldwork. In other words, there is evidence to suggest that low level workers may on the one hand accept they can do little to change the way they are treated by management, but on the other, demonstrates how they are also acutely aware of, and quick to take advantage of, any laxity and contradictions in their environment. What is more, there is evidence to suggest that where certain hygienists feel a genuine sense of grievance, they retain the capacity to act upon it. In effect, the appetite for social change by way of social competition may be repressed at present, yet the frustration occasionally surfaced occasionally through individualistic acts of defiance. However, for now, hygienists seem to lack the appetite to tackle broader and more fundamental grievances. What is more, the lack of appetite, however it has come about, appears to be related to a disconnection between the hygienists and the trade union that is supposed to support their interests.

7.3 HotelRest

7.3.1 HotelRest and HotelCorp

HotelCorp the corporation was originally founded in the early twentieth century, yet HotelCorp UK and HotelCorp were in many ways separate organizations until 1987. The HotelCorp that is the centre of attention in this case study is a large hotel in a small town in central Scotland. Until 1997 the building and the site of HotelCorp belonged to a small chain of British hotels. Before 1997 the hotel partly recognised a trade union. HotelCorp does not recognise trade unions and the union was subsequently de-recognised when HotelCorp took full charge of the hotel. The hotel in question has four-star status, although during the period of research HotelCorp openly communicated to its staff that five-star status was being actively sought. HotelCorp was badly affected by the terrorist attacks in the USA in September 2001 – both in the UK and internationally – and its main effect on shopfloor activity is a cut back in the recruitment of waiting staff.

HotelRest is the catering facility of a hotel that is part of the Hotelcorp chain. Hotelcorp describes itself as a 'global hotel' and in the year 2001 employed over 10,000 people in the UK alone. Its most recent management initiative is the introduction of '[Service] Standards', or in Hotelcorp's own words, 'maintaining corporate standards through brand identity, brand position supported by behaviour, attitude, product consistency and performance'. Service Standards involve the regulation and routinisation of all dimensions of work, which are clearly documented and disseminated to employees through formal documentation, team meetings and training sessions.

At the research site, Hotelcorp employs around 250 employees. The hotel's restaurant takes up to 270 'covers' at one time despite having an overall hotel capacity approaching 400. However, there are significant retention problems for the 60 employees that work in HotelRest. The aggregate turnover at HotelRest is over 50 per cent despite Hotelcorp's strategy of compulsory training and development programme focusing on necessary '[job-relate] skills' (JRS for short). The JRS programme has a strong emphasis on teamwork. Completing JRS training can, supposedly, be up-dated to a nationally recognised vocational qualification (NVQ level II for waiting staff and level III for supervisory staff). Moreover, completion of training entitles each employee to what Hotelcorp promotes as being a lucrative hotel-related package of benefits. This includes greatly reduced admission to the adjacent health club and highly discounted room rates throughout Hotelcorp's chain of hotels. However, JRS was not viewed as particularly effective at either engendering loyalty or retaining employees. One full time member of the waiting staff, Jimmy, explained how it had taken nearly a year to complete the JRS training and nearly two years later he was still awaiting his health club membership. Some members of staff had been with the company over a month and had, to date, received no JRS training. At team meetings employees frequently complained about waiting for their card entitling them to the benefits package. Although one employee, when commenting on the discounted room rates noted, 'you get the smallest and smelliest room that they probably couldn't sell anyway.'

HotelRest serving staff are supposed to work in groups of approximately ten employees, yet staff shortages often reduce this figure to between five and eight. The composition of the shift varies day-to-day dependant on scheduling. Towards the end of the research period, the team was frequently augmented with agency workers. As well as the serving staff there are about

ten individuals working in the kitchen as chefs and kitchen porters. The hotel classifies both serving and kitchen staff as members of the HotelRest team, however there is a clear separation between the waiting and kitchen staff. Importantly, as the fieldwork was carried out in the restaurant rather than the kitchen this is the main focus of the research.

The HotelRest serving staff are an even mixture of waiters and waitresses, the rest are supervisors, 'hosts' or team leaders (six), two assistant managers (who performed more of an administrative role and were rarely seen on the shopfloor), and one 'hands on' restaurant manager. All supervisory staff and assistant managers were promoted from within; quite rapidly in some cases. However, the restaurant manager was recruited from outwith the company. There is also a dedicated trainer who works approximately 25-30 hours per week. Pay for waiting work is low with those aged 22 and over receiving an hourly rate on a par with the national minimum wage (NMW). Waiters and waitresses aged 21 years or below (the majority of the waiting group) earn less than their older counterparts, but higher than the NMW for this category. Supervisors and hosts earn about ten per cent above the NMW.

7.3.2 The labour process at HotelRest

Work on the shopfloor at HotelRest, as previously indicated by the reference to Service Standards, varies little from day-to-day. In contrast, work routines vary quite dramatically from how they are designed to how they are actually acted out and experienced by the waiting staff. However, to offer a taste of the daily routine of the breakfast and lunch waiting staff, the researcher made one particular diary entry to sum up all that tended to happen on a day-to-day basis:

All staff must wear the prescribed uniform – in this case a yellow shirt, black bow tie, black trousers and black shoes. Hosts, supervisors, and assistant manager and manager wear turquoise shirts and blue ties. The manager wears a purple shirt and a dark blue tie. The uniform appears to be a very important part of the work here and certainly lets everyone know who is and who isn't in charge. Personal grooming and hygiene are big issues as well.

The breakfast shift staff starts at 6 a.m.; however, some waiting staff start work at 7 a.m. or 8 a.m. The difference is often based on what time staff prefers to start work at. At 6 a.m. the main duty is to complete the set up of the restaurant, which is begun by the previous evening shift. In exceptional circumstances a night shift may get involved. Setting for breakfast includes sorting out cold buffets, juices, cereals, bread, jams, butter, milk, glasses, serving spoons, and plates. This has to be done in accordance with a check-off sheet carried by supervisors. The set up also requires setting up the food in a decorative fashion. However, the chefs are responsible for all hot food.

When other staff come in at 7 a.m. the main focus is on polishing glasses, preparing cutlery for re-sets, polishing cutlery for lunch and dinner. The supervisor and host meanwhile monitor standards and make frequent progress checks. Sometimes the restaurant is prepared for large parties, that is, tables re-arranged for large groups of holidaymakers.

At around 7.30 a.m. there is normally a team briefing where the supervisor allocates waiters and waitresses to work in a particular section. There are four sections and in ideal circumstances two waiters or waitresses are allocated to each section. The remaining waiting staff work on re-sets and any other required duties such as room service.

The doors are open to customers at 8 a.m., but it is usually 8.30 a.m. before things start to get busy. At this point the preparations stop and all waiters and waitresses take up their stations, in each section. The work of a waiter or waitress is quite simple – in accordance with [Service]

Standards; customers must be approached within two minutes of being seated and offered the chance to order tea, coffee and toast. Waiting staff are also obliged to take orders for non-standard meals, that is, fish dishes and poached eggs.

Waiting staff are also responsible for clearing tables once guests leave. [Service] Standards dictate that tables must be clear within five minutes of the guest leaving and re-set if need be for breakfast guests arriving later on in the serving. This is particularly the case on Saturday and Sunday when the hotel typically reaches its maximum capacity.

The restaurant closes its doors at 9.30 a.m. Waiting staff begin the clearing up process when the pressures related to serving guests tail off. However, waiting staff must do this discreetly whilst guests remain in the restaurant. When all guests have gone, waiting staff can use large trays to move rubbish and plates. Reusable foodstuff is put back whence it came.

Once the restaurant is completely cleared all tablecloths are taken off and taken to the laundry. The removal of tablecloths usually signals the first break and typically happens between 10.15 a.m. and 10.45 a.m. Occasionally the break is cancelled if, for example, there are not enough staff to do the tasks in time.

The morning break usually lasts around 20 minutes and on the way back from the canteen waiting staff call at the laundry again to pick up fresh laundry. On returning to the shopfloor, waiting staff are usually subject to another team briefing about how to set up for the lunch serving.

Lunch settings can vary somewhat – that is, catering for a range of small groups to a large conference. As a result of the variation, tables are set up according to information handed out by supervisors and management. Normally two staff set up each section, but if the job needs to be

done quicker than usual, as many as four or five set up each section. All co-ordination comes from supervision or management; that is, waiting staff merely take orders.

If the lunch setting is finished before 11.45 a.m. a second morning break is granted by management. However, this is rare unless guest numbers are low for both breakfast and lunch, and, there is enough waiting staff to do the job in the first place.

Completion of the second setting usually signals a further team briefing. The briefing usually involves allocating waiting staff to different sections. Lunch itself typically involves various forms of buffets, that is, some are basic and some are much more extravagant. Generally, waiting staff tend to initially serve soup, clear up soup bowls, guide guest to the buffet, and then clean up after the buffet. A general clean up occurs once all guest have departed – anytime between 1.30 p.m. and 2.30 p.m.

The end of the lunch serving tends to mark a short lunch break of around 15 minutes. However, if the waiting staff are behind schedule (normally caused by staff shortages) the lunch break is cancelled. Once the lunch serving is cleared preparations are made for dinner. At around 2 p.m., especially when it is expected to be busy during the evening, some of the afternoon workers start their shift. The shift typically ends at 3 p.m. and by that time the full quota of afternoon shift workers are usually present. Again though, if there are staff shortages, morning shift workers are put under pressure to stay on and work around one hour of overtime.

During the shift waiting staff may be expected to answer the restaurant telephone (mainly for room service calls) and be the first point of call for customer queries and complaints (Fieldnotes, 15/10/01).

In general the waiting staff seem content to follow highly prescribed work routines, especially on the rare occasions when everything goes to plan and adequate staffing levels are in place. However, the waiting staff, in certain situations such as after a hectic part of the shift, often verbalise their discontent with the way work is organized around them. For instance, after a busy breakfast serving the researcher discussed the highly routinised nature of the work with a waiter. In effect, asking him how he viewed work at Hotelrest. After venting his feelings he calmly concluded by suggesting to the researcher that HotelRest is 'McDonalds with chandeliers'. Equally critical comments often emerged about the way in which waiting staff are expected and encouraged to work, that is, as a team. During a similar conversation, this time with around five waiting staff, one waiter remarked how teamworking at HotelRest is really 'everyone for themselves'. In essence, there were two distinct dimensions to work at HotelRest – one where everything goes like clockwork and nearly everyone seems content to play a part of, and, a second dimension where work is intolerably stressful as staff struggle to cope with the workload.

7.3.3 Waiting staff and group memberships

It became clear from observations and other interactions with waiters and waitresses that for most, employment with HotelRest would only be a short or transitional affair. That is to say, nearly all of the waiting staff are students of some sort and working part-time as many students do, or if not, they were young people from overseas (for example France, Germany, New Zealand, Australia) and working as a means to subsist during a lengthy period of travel and adventure. However, a small number of waiters and waitresses (four in total) are not students and whilst waiting work did not seem to represent a career of choice, such staff were clearly more engaged with their work than their younger or more mobile counterparts. It would

therefore seem reasonable to assume that the vast majority of waiting staff are unlikely to overly identify with the many group memberships encouraged by management. Further, being far outnumbered by less committed staff is likely to have some affect on how long tenured staff interact within formal group settings, for example teamworking.

Formal identities encouraged by management at HotelRest are outlined first of all in figure 7.2. As can be seen from the figure the lowest level of identity involves association with a group of trainee waiters and waitresses. This is by far the largest group at HotelRest, mainly because few waiters and waitresses complete the JRS training scheme. Further up the scale is a smaller, yet more salient group. In effect, even if training to be a waiter or waitress brings with it few immediate rewards, certainly in terms of pay, there is still a sense of achievement and moreover, a sense of difference from waiters and waitresses who are in the process of training. As indicated before, it is the team identity that probably represents the most salient identity on the shopfloor at HotelRest, and whilst workloads are manageable, almost certainly represents the basis by which waiting staff make comparisons with other groups. This is due in almost its entirety to the fact that management and HotelRest are committed, certainly in one sense, to teamworking. Observations confirm that waiters and waitresses seem content to co-operate with each other in most circumstances. Beyond the team identity is a function identity that relates to all those who work for HotelRest. At this point it would include hosts, supervisors, assistant managers and the restaurant manager. Management encourages a function identity – that is, particularly through a compulsory monthly function meeting – and moreover, functions within the organization are compared with other functions by way of secret auditing. At this point group identities become quite abstract and involve an organizational identity – this particular outlet of HotelCorp group, and further still, a corporate

identity of HotelCorp the global corporation. Unlike at FoodCo, there is a distinct possibility that some waiters and waitresses may view themselves as being members of a corporate group, as the brand of HotelCorp is both nationally and internationally recognisable. What is more, organizational literature obtained by the researcher refers to a current business plan designed to create 'one company, one team'. There is one further social identity available to waiting staff – that of belonging to the organization's forum for employee issues (which also has a corporate level format), however, management rarely encourage waiting staff to use the staff forum and most leave before even pursuing local grievance channels (see subsequent sections). For the waiter or waitress, moving from one of these groups to another, except where training is concerned, merely requires them to redefine their group affinity and loyalty.

There is, however, a range of sub-groups at work on the shopfloor at HotelRest. In brief, the sub-groups really represent quite a long list of friendship groups. There are some distinct features of the friendship groups worth noting. First of all they only tend to become salient when the restaurant is busy (see later sub-section on misbehaviour). Second, the friendship groups tend to be based around friendships that were in place before employment commenced. In other words, students in particular applied on mass or later recruited friends to work at HotelRest. Third, some friendship groups emerged as a result of a divide between trainee and trained waiting staff. Further friendship groups existed but they tended to be coalitions between individual waiters and waitresses of a mature and long-tenured nature, and, supervisory or management staff. In this instance, loyalty, long tenure and maturity is often rewarded by favourable working practices. Like with their formal counterparts, shifting to a sub-group identity simply requires a re-definition of group loyalty.

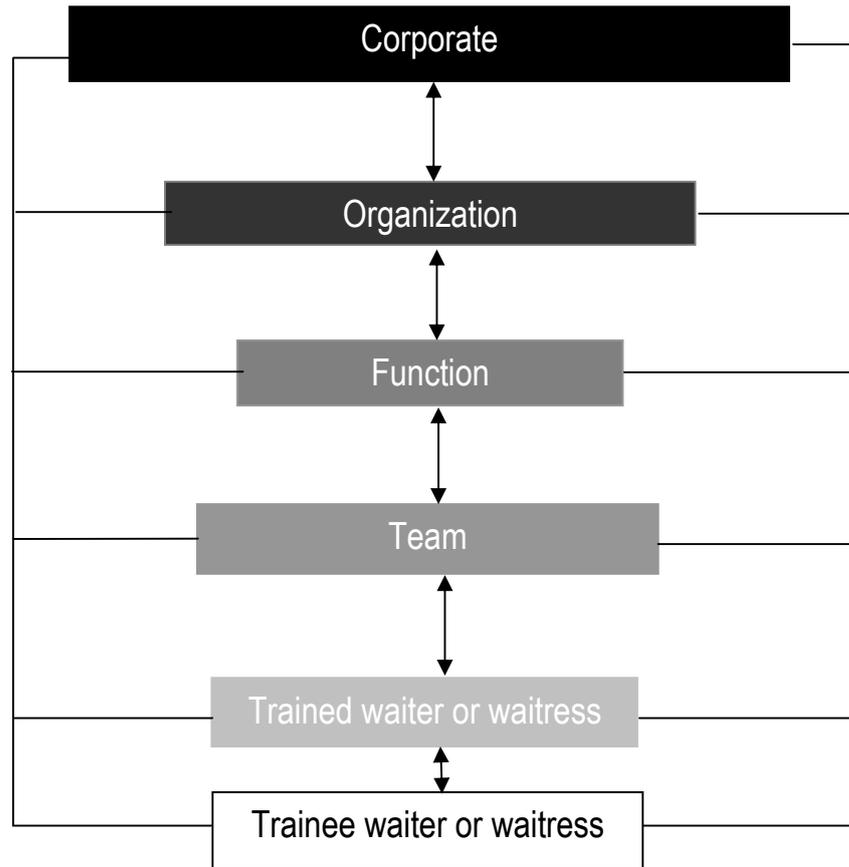


Figure 7.2 Levels of waiting identity

Concurrent to formal organizational identities and sub-groups is a range of groups that are relatively easy for waiting staff to consider moving to. As expected, each movement would require an individual embarking on an act of social mobility. For instance, there is a range of similar opportunities to waiting available within HotelCorp. These include easily attainable jobs such as bar working, being a porter, leisure attendant, coffee bar sales assistant, or a room attendant. A short visit to the HRM department would be all that is required in most cases. There are also a range of transfer opportunities available throughout HotelCorp's chain of national and international (a working permit would be required) hotels. Indeed, HotelCorp prints a recruitment magazine each month and is subtitled 'For [HotelCorp] people on the move'.

Promotion from the lowly position of waiter or waitress is also a distinct possibility. Indeed, the researcher attained a host's job without any previous experience of waiting work. The researcher also found out from the HotelRest manager that any waiter or waitress with a degree of 'gumption' would be asked to be a supervisor or even an assistant manager if they show outstanding commitment and understanding of restaurant work. As indicated previously, all but the restaurant manager started work at HotelRest as a waiter or waitress. A final group that waiting staff could join is one that relates to another employer. Staff turnover at HotelRest is around 50 per cent and represents the most common form of social mobility at HotelRest.

7.3.4 Social relations on the shopfloor at HotelRest

The quality of social relations between the waiting team and various levels of management seemed to vary from one extreme to another. At one extreme several of the supervisors seem keen to nurture a trusting relationship with the rest of the waiting team as the following diary extract demonstrates:

The first incident worth noting today was when I was working with Louise [supervisor] on the door. She suspected that a guest we had just sat down was in fact a so-called mystery guest. We did not find out whether it was true or not, but one had been due for a while and it wasn't worth getting it wrong. As a result of this Louise quickly disseminated information amongst the waiting staff, making sure waiters and waitresses knew where this person was sat. It's true we did quite poorly at the last survey, but Louise made it quite clear that despite the fact that she might have 'blown' her contribution, she did not want anyone else named as being incompetent (Fieldnotes – 7/9/01).

In contrast, a number of other supervisors treat the waiting team with a degree of contempt; as if harsh discipline is the only way of interacting with subordinates:

During the breakfast serving I observed several staff waiting, namely Jimmy, Mourag, and Johnny being humiliated by Joe [supervisor]. In one of the instances, as if to prove a point to the customer, Joe hurried along Johnny as if he was not working hard enough. He seemed to want to portray an image of doing that 'little extra' for the customer, but it came across as degrading and at the very least, unnecessary. To me he was trying too hard to live up to his image of being the so-called HotelCorp employee of the month. The customer seemed embarrassed, the waiter was humiliated and this just about summed up a curious interpretation of customer care (Fieldnotes – 2/10/01).

The result of the contradictory styles of supervision, however, did not lead to confusion. In other words, the waiting team had no trouble determining whom they could trust and whom they could not. Having said that, the waiting group had no say in who would supervise them and the typical response would be to co-operate as best as they could with the friendly supervisors and to do as little as possible for the other supervisors (more details later). It is difficult to know what created two contrasting styles of supervision styles, but it could just be the case that one half of supervisors got their habits from the restaurant manager, that is, the relationship between the restaurant manager and the waiting group was poor to say the least as the following excerpt demonstrates:

Jimmy [a long serving waiter] had a 'bust up' with Pierre [HotelRest manager] today. It appears to be on the back of an escalating tension between the two. After openly stating that he wished to 'kick' Jimmy's 'butt' over an issue related to re-using dirty dishes and cutlery, Pierre eventually apologised to him. However, later on during a team briefing, Pierre seemed to retract everything he had privately said to Jimmy in a way I can only describe for now as 'teamwork talk'. Aimed specifically at Jimmy, he talked about letting colleagues and the company down, and how they we all would have to work harder if we didn't conform to his style. It was clear that he was referring to this morning's altercation (Fieldnotes – 2/10/01).

Space does not permit the chance to reproduce many more incidences of the restaurant manager treating an already stretched waiting team so badly. Suffice to say, it would be more than reasonable to suggest the relations between the manager and the waiting group is poor. However, as will be seen later on in the sub-section on misbehaviour, the waiting team was simply not organized enough or did not share enough in common to respond as a collective. As consequence, responses to poor treatment tended to be on an individualistic or friendship group basis.

On the whole, social relations between the many friendship groups on the shopfloor did not seem to be an issue. That is, to say, the friendship groups seemed to co-exist without much tangible recognition of the other. If there was any tension, that is, between more mature and long serving friendship groups, and, friendship groups of the younger workers, over, for example, the 'horseplay' of young workers, it certainly did not manifest into anything significant. What probably quelled a great deal of conflict between the friendship groups, and as previously mentioned before, is that mature and long-serving waiters and waitresses tended to be given favourable duties by supervisors. In effect, annulling in a way many gripes and grievances that long serving waiters and waitresses had and affording them an elevated status within the team. Occasionally, moreover, there were slight tensions between those who had completed their training and those who had not, but again, none of the waiting groups seemed to have an appetite for feuding with their colleagues. The main reason for a great deal of ambivalence probably relates to the fact that most of the waiting group worked part-time and were not stuck in the job, and, the real enemy, after all, was a number of supervisors and the restaurant manager.

Further social relations worthy of commentary concerns the relationship between the restaurant and the other functions within HotelCorp, and, the whole organization and other parts of the HotelCorp chain. In other words, management at the site tried desperately to encourage competitive relations between different functions, but aside from a little urgency during comparative auditing exercises, there seemed to be few, if any, signs of this business strategy manifesting in the attitudes of the waiting groups. Neither, moreover, did a monthly comparative survey between the many outlets of HotelCorp in the UK, stir up anything more than a little short-lived fuss. In brief, waiting staff do not seem inclined to get involved with the politics of the larger organization, and in the context of the restaurant, despite being badly treated on a wide scale, appeared largely averse to engaging in shopfloor issues, whatever shape or form they came in.

7.3.5 Controlling waiting staff

HotelRest management control waiting staff in a number of contradictory ways. The most obvious form of control has been discussed in that the restaurant manager and some of the supervisory staff seem content to manage in an authoritative manner. However, and as indicated earlier in the proceedings, the authoritative styles also often spill over into despotism. In amongst the authoritarianism is a more humanistic style of supervision in that some supervisors apply strategies that engage and motivate staff to work in a particular manner.

Control of waiting staff, however, is also the duty of quite a significant HRM department, which connects with central HRM strategies developed at HotelCorp's headquarters. Indeed, HRM is widely used at HotelRest. For instance, the selection procedure noted in Chapter Six is quite a

lengthy and in-depth affair aimed at securing people willing to subordinate themselves to a highly prescribed customer care regime. Again, space does not permit more than an overview of the HRM practices used at HotelRest. For instance, newly employed waiters and waitresses are subject to a day long induction day entitled the 'Spirit of [HotelCorp]' – designed to make the beginning of employment at HotelCorp 'as interesting and informative as possible'. There is also a follow-up to the induction after several weeks of employment by what is called a 'development day'. Here issues such as 'meeting customer needs', 'product knowledge' and 'complaint handling' are revisited. Further HRM strategies used at HotelCorp include attitude surveys, full training (as discussed previously), reward schemes (mainly based on benefits related to the company itself), exit interviews, team briefings, a variety of glossy magazines, elaborate notice boards detailing a vast range of information, employee of the month awards, and regular team meetings. HotelCorp also makes use of employee involvement initiatives and of particular note during the data collection exercise was the start of a 'business plan cascade' – involving mostly low level staff (not just waiting staff) and representing a flow of information from HotelCorp executives, through regional functions, to general managers, and finally ending with hotel teams. The plan is designed to make HotelCorp the 'preferred choice in the UK and Irish hospitality'.

Further details of management control start with the recent introduction of what have already been referred to as Service Standards. Service Standards are measured each month by secret auditing. Restaurant staff usually become anxious each month as they try and spot the so called 'mystery guest' who conducts the secret auditing process. Service Standards for waiting staff, according to HotelCorp, are said to be 'detailed minimum standards of performance'. There are numerous Service Standards for waiting staff to follow, although just

a small demonstration of Service Standards clearly highlights their wide-ranging and strict nature. A sample of Service Standards for waiting staff includes:

- have a full and up-to-date knowledge of hotel products and services
- ensure all telephone calls are handled politely and efficiently, ascertaining and accurately meeting the caller's needs
- maximise selling opportunities by adding customer value at every opportunity
- to provide prompt, friendly and efficient breakfast, lunch and dinner service which accurately meets customer needs
- to handle complaints promptly and professionally, demonstrating genuine care and concern

To be able to meet the standards required of Service Standards waiting staff are also instructed to display the following behaviour codes – customer service focus, have a positive impact, be motivated and committed, be flexible and maintain a high team focus. Further objectives are set on an individual basis. This approach places the emphasis of control on the waiter and waitresses, that is, so that they take responsibility for their own actions and for their peers. However, in practice, the waiting staff are not managed in a way that allows semi-autonomous working. As it was, in busy and hectic situations, waiting staff struggled to maintain many of the Service Standards. What is more, traditional forms and ideologies of management control conflicted with the main basis of Service Standards, that is, teamworking. Added to this, management and supervision just did not have the resources to police the use of Service Standards during busy times or when the restaurant was short staffed. As a result, a conflicting mix of HRM policy, arbitrary management controls and expectations, and high

levels of staff turnover resulted in at best a superficial allegiance to HotelRest's main customer-orientated objectives. However, many of the waiting group either feared confrontation with the hotel manager and some of the supervisors, or, viewed working at HotelRest as little more than a temporary means to an end.

7.3.6 Misbehaviour at HotelRest

Waiting staff indulged in quite a range of misbehaviour, although there seemed to be no real evidence of cultural subversion. What is more, only a small amount of sexual misbehaviour in the form of inoffensive flirting and innuendo occurred between waiting staff. By far the most common form of misbehaviour recorded whilst the researcher worked on the shopfloor involved the activities of friendship groups. In more detail, when the restaurant is not so busy, it is common for small groups of waiters and waitresses to disengage from their work and indulge in varying degrees of horseplay – a kind of way to survive the monotony of waiting work:

During the re-set after breakfasts, several waiters (all young) began fooling around with fruit. They stood in a group of three, about thirty feet apart, and began throwing a few oranges to each other. They were told several times to stop doing it by the supervisor before finally halting the game. Later, when speaking to Glenda [trainer] about this specific matter, she said, 'we let them fool around as long as they get their work done and don't hurt anyone'. This was in contrast to a memo we were recently given concerning a now legendary orange-throwing incident and a smashed glass bowl. This particular incident happened just prior to me starting here and led to a waiter receiving several surgical stitches to a hand wound (Fieldnotes – 10/9/01).

Some young waiters and waitresses are also of the habit of surviving the working day by taking advantage of the fact that managers and supervisors are often limited in the amount of time they can spend monitoring the activities of the waiting staff, as this diary entry demonstrates:

Ray [waiter] told me about the act of 'disappearing' when going to get the room service trays and spending time talking to room attendants. In other words, taking advantage of lax management and weakly nurtured team-based peer pressure, and in the process taking far longer than needed to perform a rudimentary task (Fieldnotes – 27/10/01).

Collective (on a team basis) and open acts of resistance and defiance, however, were not common at HotelRest. When resistance or defiance did occur it was usually indirectly targeted and done in a way so that management or supervision did not know who had done it. For instance, waiting staff were constantly told not to take food that was meant for guests, but rarely did any of the waiting staff take notice of such commands. Further acts of resistance and defiance generally included refusing to follow Service Standards, but again, this may have occurred in view of the customer, but not in the view of management or supervisors.

Acts of defiance and resistance did occur though, yet they were typically acted out outwith the organization, that is, leaving the job without notice (sometimes during the shift), not calling in sick when absent, being late for work. Having said that, such unauthorised activities occurred so frequently at HotelRest that it questions the extent to which they could be classified as defiance and resistance and in actual fact be referred to as informal custom and practice – mainly because unauthorised lateness and absence is, in the main, tolerated by management. The following diary excerpt suggests why some of the waiting staff believe this is the case:

I asked around today if anyone is formally disciplined if staff do not call in when they are sick or late. In a word the answer is a big no. Jimmy explained what happens in such situations by saying, 'There's no problem with that. You can come in when you want. They give you a bit of hassle but they're not going to sack you or anything. Pissing you off big style wouldn't get them anywhere and they know that'. I also took this to mean that management don't care too much about staff leaving without notice (Fieldnotes, 25/9/01).

As indicated previously, informal custom and practice is also a feature of the few friendship groups that span the divide between the waiting group and supervisors. The following passage suggests how this tacit agreement tends to work and why they may occur in the first place:

Mourag [full-time waitress] it seems keeps away from the main role of the waiting group, that is, serving guests, and instead, spends most of the time setting up, replenishing, and cleaning up the buffet arrangement. She has not been granted any official dispensation, yet a brief discussion with her suggests she has some sort of unspoken agreement with management and supervisors that allows her to focus on less arduous tasks. In return it appears she spends a certain amount of time each day helping new waiting staff find their way around the kitchen and restaurant (Fieldnotes – 7/9/01).

As the data suggests waiting group misbehaviour is mostly non-confrontational and organized around small friendship groups. However, a widely shared grievance with management is a common feature of HotelRest as a high degree of commitment and effort is required of HotelCorp for little reward and recognition in return. What appears to be happening is that the conditions are just not right for collective ways of dealing with widely experienced, persistent

and ongoing problems. Clearly, moreover, the demographics of the typical waiter or waitresses plays a part in what appears to be an apathetical reaction to low status work. What is more, a further key theme to emerge from this sub-section on misbehaviour is how inadequate friendship groups appear to be in times of serious trouble. In other words, friendship groups are clearly useful as a means to survive work and for minor acts of defiance and resistance, yet beyond that point, if genuine internal mobility options are not a realistic option there seems little recourse for waiters and waitresses other than put up with how they are treated or leave. In other words, when the work becomes difficult to cope with friendship groups become the ingroup. Yet, when work intensifies further, there are no satisfactory shopfloor groups for waiters and waitresses to escape to.

7.3.7 Summary of HotelRest

HotelRest has a range of clear and distinguishable characteristics. First of all, whilst it may be a major player in the hospitality and catering industry, it still has to work on its competitive edge, that is, the main justification for Service Standards, and, its intra-hotel and inter-hotel strategies. For waiters and waitresses this translates into being subjected to a rather sophisticated range of HRM and quality management strategies. Indeed, it would be no surprise to find that many new employees are attracted to HotelRest based on how HotelCorp claims to train and develop its staff. However, the reality of Service Standards and HRM strategies, for waiters and waitresses at HotelRest, deviates somewhat from what is claimed in the corporate literature. Indeed, probably the most obvious and compelling contradictions appear to be the persistence of traditional management styles when it is claimed that teamworking practices are the order of the day. What is more, waiting staff become especially disillusioned when having to tolerate pitifully low staffing arrangements.

Despite poor conditions and contradictory management practices employees of HotelRest have found a range of creative ways to deal with some of their frustrations. Most of the time it involves small coalitions, sometimes in groups of no more than two to three people, working together to deal with the conditions that are unlikely to go away, even if tourists levels quickly return to the levels of post-terrorist activity. Even then small friendship group activity does not always result in complete misbehaviour, or total withdrawal from work, as the findings suggest friendship groups can still be characterised by a work ethic. However, friendship groups have other norms and values that include not having to put up with poor treatment from management. After all, waiting staff do not have a credible representative body to call upon at times of trouble, and waiting work in itself is highly repetitive, has to be conducted in a highly prescribed fashion, can involve humiliating and degrading treatment from management, and above all else, commands absolute minimal wages. It is therefore not surprising to find that the majority of the waiting staff at HotelRest become less committed to their work when put under stresses and strains far outside their ability to control. That is, no amount of teamwork can overcome gross understaffing and poor management skills. HotelRest therefore is fortunate in that it can readily recruit from the local student population because in any other situation HotelRest would also most certainly have to pay more for hiring labour and probably come up against much sterner forms of misbehaviour.

7.4 BargainChain

7.4.1 BargainChain the company

BargainChain became a publicly listed company in the early 1980s. Essentially, BargainChain is a high street store that has seen better days. It claims to offer 'high street quality at discount

prices', but in reality it is said to provide 'poor quality merchandise in a bunch of particularly unattractive stores'. The original founders sold BargainChain to the current subsidiary for £50 million in 1990. By 1997, after a series of failed management initiatives, its stock value dropped below £6 million. As of the year 2002, it was still falling. BargainChain in its entirety employs around 2,000 people in the United Kingdom, has 130 outlets, and the pay for sales and stockroom staff, like its prices, is low, and equates with the National Minimum Wage (as of January 2002 its lowest level staff earned just £4.10 per hour). BargainChain does not and has never recognised a trade union. Such was the state of affairs during the time of the research exercise; it came as no surprise to find that BargainChain was declared bankrupt in the year 2003 and the outlet that this research took place in closed down as a result. No buyer could be found for a company already struggling in a 'fiercely competitive discount market'.

As of January 2002, this particular outlet of BargainChain employed 17 people. The 17 include one shop manager and one supervisor. The other 15 are made up of 11 sales assistants and four storeroom assistants. Officially only two of BargainChain staff are considered to be full-time staff employees – the store manager and one sales assistant. Unofficially, several staff, including the supervisor, regularly works enough hours to be considered full-time. BargainChain the retail outlet is open seven day a week. Staff are officially required to wear a company uniform, but none do. Instead, some of the more long-term employees wear similar-styled clothes commonly adorned by sales assistants in other high street stores. A lax attitude to appearance is also reflected in the layout of the store. For instance, BargainChain's floor space is denoted by cluttered aisles and poorly presented goods. Moreover, the building BargainChain occupies is not purpose built (it was originally a town house) and lacks a lift to take customers with mobility difficulties upstairs – where the greatest variety of BargainChain's

goods can be found. For employees and stockroom assistants in particular, this means manually lifting heavy boxes containing new merchandise to higher floors. Behind the scenes BargainChain is even more disorganised. The backroom area is unheated (bear in mind the research was done in winter) and several of the storerooms are clear health and safety hazards.

Other significant characteristics include the use of a tannoy system so that isolated sales assistants can communicate with other employees and management. A series of codes characterise a mostly formal use of the system. However, communication by way of the tannoy system is often performed in a lacklustre fashion. In the background a looped tape plays over and over; the tape is changed but once a month. The looped tape plays a range of popular music from the last forty years and occasionally interjected with promotional messages. For the researcher and many of the research subjects, the constant and repetitive nature of the music equates with a highly uncomfortable experience. For instance, hearing songs such as 'Daddy Cool' by 'Boney M' every 30 minutes, several times a day, day-after-day would leave most people slightly traumatised. The researcher felt fortunate to learn that had he started the research in December he would have been subjected to a Christmas tape, that is, Slade, Roy Wood, Chris Rea, Greg Lake and many others. Alongside the looped taped a series of combined television and videos sets, set out at various points on the first floor, play looped promotional material.

The store itself is set out on two floors; the ground floor is dedicated to women's clothes and jewellery. The first floor is much larger than the ground floor and split into five sections: men's clothes, shoes, baby clothes, lingerie, and household. Formal company policy decrees that no

more than one employee should work in one section (including those who work on the checkout) at anyone time. Other company policies include unpaid breaks (including tea breaks), breaks must be taken on a rota, sales assistants must sell storecards when working on the checkout, checkouts should only be emptied when a second employee is present, employee's bags can be searched as they leave company premises, and, all employees must remain vigilant for store thieves. A specific code relayed over the tannoy system is used to encourage all employees to attend any major incident.

Staff facilities are poor. A series of company notice boards outside and within the communal staff room contain information as much as several years out of date. They are cluttered with out-of-date company promotions and memos from company headquarters. In brief, on first observation it seems that there is an abundance of information for employees – however, a second glance reveals something quite different.

Finally, the main staff room is squalid with dilapidated lockers and is positioned directly across from the store manager's office. The door of the manager's office is, incidentally, always kept open. Those who smoke have a separate room where various company policies and documents for employees are stored in a decrepit cardboard box, under an unused table. However, few employees use these facilities except for a quick drink during the afternoon break. Only employees who work an eight-hour day are entitled to a one-hour lunch break, and even then, most chose to spend the vast majority of that time in the much brighter and welcoming surroundings of the adjacent shopping mall. The main consequence of such poor organization is a high turnover of staff, even though there are a small number of people who have worked at BargainChain for a number of years. Indeed, during ten weeks of observations

six sales and stockroom assistants left BargainChain. Such is the level of turnover; four of the six who left BargainChain during this period began working for BargainChain after the fieldwork began.

7.4.2 The labour process at BargainChain

The lowest level of employee at BargainChain can be divided between sales assistants and stockroom assistants and makes this particular case study slightly different from the three other case studies. That is to say, the other cases are based on one particular group of low-status workers. However, there is some overlap between the two sets of workers, for example, some duties are shared, the two groups are expected to work and co-operate with each other on a day-to-day and on-going basis, new sales assistants may work for a while as a stockroom assistant as officially no employee can work on the checkouts until satisfactory references are obtained or they have completed a three-month probationary period. In an ideal situation, all stockroom assistants should be trained to do the job of a sales assistant and be expected to fill in for them when the store is busy or the retail outlet is short-staffed.

The work of sales assistant was observed over several weeks and a diary entry of the researcher details their main activities:

I don't want to belittle the work of a sales assistant, but there doesn't seem to be that much technical skill involved in this kind of work. Sales assistants spend most of their time completing customer transactions, that is, taking the customers' cash, cheques and credit cards in return for BargainChain products. Sales assistants are also expected to sell store cards during such interactions. Sales assistants are responsible for a range of other tasks not specifically related to the exchange of money for goods. For instance, whilst using the tannoy system, sales assistants

make a range of announcements that relate to sales promotions, seeking general assistance from other staff, and, raising the alarm if a shoplifter has been detected (using a coded message). Except for the sales assistant who works on the ground floor, sales assistants are expected to join in with housekeeping duties such as 'merchandising' (sorting out new and misplaced goods so that they appear more appealing to customers), cleaning and sweeping, taking part in the daily 'recovery' exercise (a general tidying up of the shop within one hour of closing), and taking part in any auditing activity. However, such a description only tells the story of one dimension of sales assistant work, that is, sales assistants are by-and-large kept very busy by demanding customers and at this particular retail outlet – a demanding manager (Fieldnotes, 28/01/02).

Both customers and the shop manager on the other hand put stockroom assistants under far less pressure and scrutiny. As a result, the activities of the stockroom assistant are, on the whole, undertaken at a more leisurely pace. The following extract outlines the typical work of a stockroom assistant:

I've been working here as a stockroom assistant for around four weeks now and can honestly say that I know everything there is to know about this kind of work. The main point worth noting is how basic and monotonous the job really is. In essence, the stockroom assistant is responsible for a small range of prescribed activities. First of all, the stockroom assistant brings in delivered goods and takes them to the stockroom adjacent to where they will be put on display. Even then the vast majority of goods go straight on display (performed by stockroom assistant). Secondly, under direction from management or supervision, stockroom assistants are responsible for replenishing the store's shelves, especially when seasonal goods return to fashion or a product is bulky and is sold in large quantities. Thirdly, stockroom assistants are frequently asked to move shop fittings and goods around the shop, that is, the store is re-organized on an almost daily basis. Fourthly, stockroom assistants are expected to get involved in setting up shelving, searching out price tags,

security tags and promotional material from what is referred to as the 'graphics' room. Fifthly, stockroom assistants often join forces with sales assistants in activities such as cleaning, sweeping, merchandising, recovery, and auditing. Finally, stockroom assistants are normally the employees called upon by sales assistants when querying a price ticket or requesting a replacement good for a customer (Fieldnotes, 4/02/02).

The work of both a sales and stockroom assistant are based around completing a range of rather simple and pre-arranged tasks. Any autonomy is more of a result of temporary over-staffing, or lax supervision, than by design. However, whilst the task-centred part of the work involves little skill, many other demands are placed on such low-level employees. In brief, management made little if no attempt to make their work more interesting or appealing and as a result most sales and stockroom assistants quickly grew dissatisfied with their work. Having said that, a small number of more creative employees managed to survive the monotony and pressure. The relevance of these employees is discussed in more detail in subsequent sub-sections.

7.4.3 Front-line staff and group memberships

Being a sales assistant or a stockroom assistant means something different according to different employees. In simple terms for now, some take their work and commitment to BargainChain very seriously, whilst some clearly see BargainChain as just another employer where skills can be practised and money can be earned, while waiting for a more attractive option to present itself. In some instances, some view work at BargainChain as merely a means to earn money whilst being a student of some sort. As a result of a distinct lack of commonality across the members of front-line staff, certainly in terms of what is to be achieved by employment at BargainChain, there appears to be a lack of cohesion within the

group as a whole. Indeed, shopfloor affairs are not dominated by one particular group, especially when employees are busy or under pressure. Yet, like in previous cases, we must at least consider formal group identities before contemplating the other groups available to low-level employees.

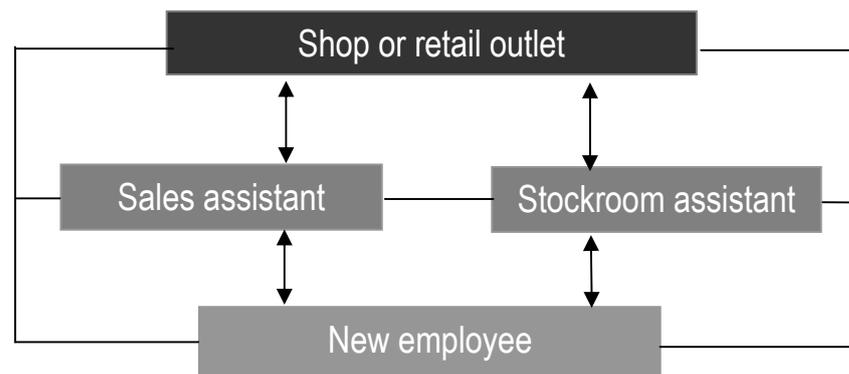


Figure 7.3 Levels of identity at BargainChain

Formal identities and group memberships that exist at BargainChain are quite limited when compared to those available at FoodCo and HotelRest. For instance, as figure 7.3 suggests, there are only three realistic levels of formal identity – as a new employee, as either a sales or stockroom assistant, as part of a shop-related identity. First of all the ‘new employee’ group is clearly reserved for new employees who typically start work by performing some of the duties of either a sales or stockroom assistant. Crucially, many of the new employees do not actually make the transition from a relatively marginal role and identity and fail to gain membership of far more salient, cohesive and meaningful groups. If new employees make it this far they are likely to be subsumed into a more purposeful group denoted by either a sales or stockroom assistant group identity. Compared to stockroom assistants, sales assistants are far more likely to feel comfortable with their occupational-related identity. In other words, observations suggest that to be a sales assistant is a clear and conscious career choice, whilst few if no

one aspires to being a stockroom assistant. What is more, at an informal level, sales assistants are treated better by the manager (and worked harder) than the stockroom assistants. At a higher and more inclusive level of abstraction is a shop identity – and probably denotes the main reference group or source of group comparison for both sales and stockroom assistants. In most instances all employees (particularly including the supervisors and manager) subscribe to an identity or group that relates to the shop or retail outlet that is the focus of this case study. (No team identity existed and no mention of teamworking philosophy was recorded during the ten weeks of fieldwork). In effect, despite a HRM policy making BargainChain staff work on their own for most of their shift, there are many events that require the physical and joined-up efforts of all members of staff. For instance, when a shoplifter is identified or the shop needs to prepare for a quality audit. Beyond the retail outlet itself it is hard to imagine any significant allegiance to a corporate identity, mainly because BargainChain employees are clearly aware of how the retail chain is viewed in the outside world (see first sub-section). Indeed, on several occasions the researcher discovered that many employees are embarrassed about the goods sold by BargainChain. As one loyal and long-serving sale assistant remarked towards the end of the research – ‘That 20 per cent discount is no use. I’m not that fussy myself, but there’s not much I’d buy from here no matter what the price is’.

As mentioned before BargainChain does not and has never recognised a trade union. Even if some front-line staff employed by other branches of BargainChain are in trade unions, there is certainly no evidence of such activity at the research site. What is more, unlike at FoodCo and HotelCorp, no staff forum exists should low-level employees wish to pursue a particular level of grievance, or make a particular contribution to the organization’s business strategy. As

things stood, no other alternative formal group identity existed for sales and stockroom assistants. As such, low-level employees at BargainChain are left with very few worthwhile ways in which to formally associate themselves. In particular, there is no real chance for sales and stockroom staff to view themselves as a member of a group designed to defend their interests. The only other alternative group identity that appears possible at BargainChain requires the use of a social mobility strategy. However, the main means to higher status – to become a supervisor – is rare and if such opportunities existed the researcher discovered a certain reticence about making the transition from sales assistant to supervisor:

I asked Jennifer and Sally if they would be interested in taking on more responsibility if it became available. Jennifer responded first of all by saying, 'No chance, I just want to come in and do my job. No pressure and all that'. Sally thought about it for a bit longer than Jennifer and then answered as follows – 'No. You get no more pay and more pressure. What's the point?' (Fieldnotes, 7/3/02).

In reality, the only social mobility strategy available to sales assistants and stockroom assistants is to leave the organization altogether and secure more favourable conditions of employment elsewhere. Even entry to certain friendship group is likely to be a difficult task unless a special effort is made to infiltrate such informal activity.

A range of friendship groups exist on the shopfloor at BargainChain and by-and-large they relate to a range of sub-identities based on shared experiences of work or activities that go beyond the workplace. In brief, small friendship groups and alliances exist between long-serving sales assistants, between the supervisor (previously a sales assistant with BargainChain) and some sales assistants, and, between students employed at similar times.

However, such is the nature of the work and the organization; few new sales assistants attach themselves to established friendship groups. In the main employees who started and left BargainChain within a few days or weeks appear to keep themselves to themselves. It seems that the main appeal of friendship groups at BargainChain is the support the groups can give as a means to survive the daily work routine. However, friendship groups seem ineffective at redressing the problems of having a rather aggressive manager.

7.4.4 Social relations on the shopfloor at BargainChain

Relations between the manager of BargainChain and the shopfloor (including the supervisor) are precarious to say the least. In other words, the manager is very much an isolated figure who generally speaking manages people in an offhand and arbitrary way. Her style almost certainly played a part in the high levels of staff turnover at BargainChain. Having said that, long-term observations and informal discussions with shopfloor staff suggest the manager is on better terms with a small number of sales assistants. The small number of sales assistants are characterised by being long serving employees of BargainChain. The following diary excerpt demonstrates how many shopfloor workers view the manager at BargainChain:

In a week when the store delivery date had changed from Thursday to Wednesday, it turns out that the shop manager had also changed her normal day off during the week from Wednesday to Thursday. I attained this information whilst talking to Anne [supervisor]. However, one extra thing to come from this conversation is how Anne seems to know exactly what is going on in this store, as she remarked, 'I come back after a week off to find out the delivery date has changed. Suddenly, Cathy [the shop manager] changes her days off to avoid all of that. I'll tell you, she's a crafty cow and a lazy one at that' (Fieldnotes – 19/2/02).

As such, relations between the manager and all other staff are unstable, yet few if any sales or stockroom assistants challenge her management style (more in sub-section on misbehaviour). Part of what seemed to prevent a challenge to the manager's style of managing people is the role of the supervisor in shopfloor affairs.

At BargainChain the majority of orders from management are communicated to the lowest level of staff by the supervisor. The supervisor's style of leadership is in direct contrast to that of the manager, as the supervisor has a very good rapport with all shopfloor staff. The following diary entries demonstrate how the supervisor smoothes relations between management and the shopfloor:

Anne had heard through grapevine that Peter [stockroom assistant] had been badmouthing the shop manager to one of the manager's closest allies. In the friendliest of ways, she took Peter to one side and gave him some advice on how the world of work really works, that is, there is a time, place and way to grumble about management (Fieldnotes – 28/01/02).

Anne went round to everyone one-by-one, or in small gatherings, and briefed us on an upcoming security audit. Sparing us the greater detail, she told us how to behave when the auditor was on the premises. What we should do, just for once, is to stop what we are doing every 15 minutes and perform 'spot checks' for shoplifters. We should also, if asked by the auditor, confirm that we performed this task all the time. Everyone complied with Anne's requests and we passed the audit. However, I couldn't help feeling that Cathy would not have been able to brief us so effectively or achieved similar levels of compliance (Fieldnotes – 30/01/02).

Supervisor-shopfloor relations almost certainly played a part in preventing open conflict between sales and stockroom assistants, and, the manager. In many ways the status quo

went unchallenged because of how the supervisor seemed to make sales and stockroom assistants feel more important and trusted.

Before moving on to specific shopfloor relationships it is worth mentioning how the researcher became aware of widespread mistrust on the shopfloor at BargainChain. The air of mistrust relates to a history of unresolved theft of staff property and how as a result of theft-related activities long-serving staff do not readily take to new employees. Other examples of mistrust include management making little attempt to introduce new staff to established staff. Without the means of early introductions many new staff remained strangers to established staff. Moreover, the researcher noticed how longer-serving front-line staff seem averse to disciplining peers who did not work very hard:

I've yet to see an employee discipline another employee for a lack of effort, and I've lost count of the number of times I've seen an individual working hard right next to people standing around talking for some time. It seems that those who want to work just get on with it and those who don't just do enough to get by. I spoke to Sally [long-serving sales assistant] about this and she talked about how she had given up trying to get new employees to work in a certain manner. Having said that, she also implied that 'keeping busy' is her way of attaining a certain level of job satisfaction and that being seen as a 'grafter' made her first choice for the overtime she desperately seems to need (Fieldnotes – 21/02/02).

Relations between sales assistants and stockroom assistants were also threatened by a certain degree of conflict. The conflict came from stockroom assistants being treated as if they were subordinate to sales assistants. This is despite the fact that both are paid the same and share many duties. For stockroom assistants – who are all male – there was also a sense that sales assistants – all female – were afforded favourable training opportunities available at

BargainChain. The following quote demonstrates how one particular stockroom assistant felt about being passed over for checkout training:

Steven [stockroom assistant] seemed genuinely pleased to meet Peter and me – mainly because we are the only male company he is likely to have whilst working here. After our introductions I quizzed him about working for BargainChain. He started with his biggest gripe – how in four months of employment he's yet to be fully trained to work on the checkout. What made it worse is that several females with less service had been trained in the meantime. He went on to say how he felt that men get a bad deal at BargainChain and how men have to do all the lifting and carrying while the females get to do more glamorous and rewarding tasks. He summarised his displeasure by suggesting that, 'the girls don't lift a finger around here when a lad's around' (Fieldnotes, 15/01/02).

Despite such grievances the tension between the groups never appeared to go beyond a certain level of inter-group teasing. The reason the conflict did not escalate further was by no means clear, but it is likely that discrimination on the grounds of gender is an accepted part of retail work. What is just as important though is that fighting against gender-based discrimination is likely to require a great deal of time and effort.

Finally, relations between friendship groups seemed to be quite good and without open conflict. Occasionally there was a real sense that friendship groups based on long serving sales assistants and friendship groups based on a student background did not get on very well, yet the tensions did not seem to escalate into anything more than name-calling or sarcastic comments. In general, despite quite obvious differences, friendship groups were quite tolerant of other friendship groups.

7.4.5 Controlling front-line staff

Several means by which sales and stockroom staff are controlled at BargainChain have been discussed so far and include the creation of low expectations when new employees are selected, an authoritarian manager, strict timekeeping, an empathetic supervisor, staff discounts, keeping employees busy at all costs, strict rules, checking of employees' bags, various audits at short-notice. Instead, the intention of this particular section is to comment on other forms of management control not noted already. Moreover, it will focus on providing details of the nature of the control, that is, haphazard, strict and intrusive, yet at times self-defeating in the sense that haphazardness, strictness and intrusiveness does not always bring the best out of workers in terms of productivity and compliance with management expectations.

Further instances of management control include the shop manager having the last say on matters and many sales and stockroom assistants being quite fearful of speaking out against injustices. An example of this kind of control is demonstrated in the following diary extract:

There was no pleasing the shop manager today. Nearly everyone was criticised or pulled up for some sort of minor misdemeanour. To cap it all, the manager refused to let anyone leave the shop at the regular finishing time unless everything was in put order. No one complained at the time, as we could still have been there an hour later if someone did. As a result we all clocked off 10 minutes late and didn't get a penny of overtime either. Everyone is on minimum wage so in reality BargainChain could be held to account for such actions, but I can't see it happening as most people here are terrified of the manager (Fieldnotes, 25/2/02).

From time-to-time central management use employee involvement initiatives to elicit some sort of control over its employees. One such incident involves a monthly report sent to each branch of BargainChain so that the manager can make low level staff aware of what is happening in the wider company and what is expected of them at the local level. Details are as follows:

The 'monthly report' arrived today and for once represented information that was readily digestible. From the report it could be seen that this particular store is not performing at all well compared to other stores. The report stipulated that the store should be turning over around £1,000 per day in revenue – later I found out that we often struggle to make £750 per day. Of further note were details of what new stock we could expect this month and what items we should try and sell over and above others (a 'top ten'). Curiously, the instructions required each person to sign the report once we had read it (Fieldnotes – 30/1/02).

If anything, the means and will to control sales and stockroom assistants through official systems of control was minimal. However, an absolute fear of the manager and knowledge that certain staff act as informants to the manager make up for the deficit. Evidence of informal forms of control became more evident as the researcher became familiar with the day-to-day norms at BargainChain:

I found out today that Ellie [long serving sales assistant] is related to the area manager (sisters). Ellie has been giving me lots of information about BargainChain and often reminisces of times when she felt it was a 'good' company to work for. The main nugget of information I got from her today suggests Sally is the 'eyes and ears' of the shop manager. In other words, I was told in no uncertain terms that I should not say anything to Sally that I do not want the store manager to hear.

She went on to give an example of how Sally regularly informs the shop manager of goings on, on the shopfloor – that is, Karen [new sales assistant] had been grumbling about her work the other day to Sally and the next day the shop manager began to question Karen on whether she was thinking of leaving (Fieldnotes – 8/2/02).

Control at BargainChain comes from a number of sources and only an experienced member of staff is likely to be aware of most of them. However, while management control in its typical form of being covert, dictatorial and informal, was effective in one particular way, when such power was not being exercised many sales and stockroom assistants consistently displayed little commitment to their work. Indeed, only the supervisor seemed to have the ability to elicit a more consistent degree of commitment from the front-line staff. However, even the supervisor could not overcome problems with mundane and routine work patterns.

7.4.6 Misbehaviour at BargainChain

It would be of no surprise to suggest that the majority of misbehaviour at BargainChain involved survival strategies. Indeed, survival strategies appeared to be order of the day, most days, for the full range of sales and stockroom assistants. For instance, the two following diary extracts outline typical examples of how long-serving sales assistants and short-serving stockroom assistants tend to survive the tyranny of the shopfloor:

Compared to quite recently Jennifer seems to have made very few 'promotion-orientated' announcements over the tannoy system today. I asked her at the end of the shift why this was the case. Her response suggested that there are days when she, 'couldn't be bothered' and that she has 'sold enough [BargainChain store cards]' this month in a few weeks and that she's now going to 'take it easy for a while' (Fieldnotes, 4/2/02).

Peter [recently left school and part-time stockroom assistant] told me about finding an ideal spot in the household department where he can sit down, look in a mirror and see if Cathy or Anne are coming (Fieldnotes, 21/2/02).

Occasionally minor acts of defiance and resistance were evident, but by-and-large acts of this kind appeared to be rare at BargainChain. When defiance or resistance did occur it tended to be undertaken by a new employee, acting alone, and in a way that suggests they had no serious intention of staying in the job for long:

An hour after lunchtime a sales assistant that I had not seen before arrived for work. Her name is Sarah and has apparently been working here since just before Christmas. I got talking to her later on and it transpired that she did not officially start work at 2 p.m. like several others and in actual fact had been nearly an hour late. During the conversation I got no impression in the slightest that she cared about being late. In actual fact, she seemed to be quite proud that no one had challenged her behaviour (Fieldnotes, 10/01/02).

Compared to resistance, acts of misbehaviour that involve informal custom and practice are common at BargainChain. Some of the time this involved certain sales assistants being secretly allowed to work in a more favourable way so as to suit the sales assistant and manager. However, the majority of the time informal custom and practice related to all staff and how, in particular, unauthorised absence is a significant, yet unchallenged feature of work at BargainChain:

I made it one of my main aims today to get closer to finding out why no one seems to care about high levels of unauthorised absence. Approaching Cathy seemed out of the question as I've yet to have anything close to a decent conversation with her since I started here. Instead I asked Anne

about the matter. Despite being slightly dismayed that she had little if no control over unauthorised absence, she went on to say how most unauthorised absence is tolerated and that Cathy seems quite happy some days knowing that the wage bill will be reduced as a result (Fieldnotes, 8/2/02).

Despite the fact that BargainChain employed several young women and some young men there did not appear to be any sexual misbehaviour enacted during the research period. What is more, despite earlier citing an example of a stockroom assistant claiming that men are treated unfairly compared to women, covert discrimination was either committed by higher ranking staff and therefore outwith the parameters of this study, or, so implicit and spread over time that it was impossible to detect when and how it actually happened. Having said that, external strategies to deal with conflict were common. The only form of such conflict involved new employees leaving their jobs sometimes during the actual shift:

Joanne [university student and part-time sales assistant] went for lunch and never came back. Anne commented on her absence by saying, 'It happens all the time, people just go home or for lunch and don't come back. If I won something on the lottery, just a few hundred to tide me over, I wouldn't be around either'. Anne seemed concerned about Joanne's safety as Joanne had said she was asthmatic, but the shop manager did not seem to care about losing a member of staff, or her welfare (Fieldnotes, 15/1/02).

A further example of externalising resistance comes by way of a particular situation where a sales assistant seemed unhappy at what she was expected to do, one particular day:

I found out that Dawn [part-time and relatively new sales assistant] had quit the day she was asked to clean the floors. I got this information from Sally who seems to know an awful lot about what goes on around here. The other day I'd spoken to Sally when she'd been given a mop and told to

clean up. At the time Dawn proclaimed that sales assistants should not have to mop and clean, not all day anyway. I also heard that she has another sales assistant job lined up (Fieldnotes, 25/1/02).

As the data and information from the research suggests, the misbehaviour recorded at BargainChain seems quite consistent with the descriptions and nature of shopfloor groups and the nature of the relations between shopfloor groups. That is to say, employees who view BargainChain as a company they would like to remain an employee of tend to misbehave in a more creative, co-operative and non-confrontational way, compared to those who do not. What is more, the absence of any significant collective force on the shopfloor meant that those unhappy with their employer are forced to take grievances elsewhere. In most cases, however, new employees seem to stay only as long as they can tolerate the relatively poor conditions of employment at BargainChain.

7.4.7 Summary of BargainChain

BargainChain may not be typical of the retail industry as a whole, as it is clear that BargainChain competes in a particular market – low-cost and discounted. However, BargainChain is likely to be representative of its particular market – highly competitive – in that costs of all kinds are minimised, particularly in terms of the cost of hiring and managing labour. It is unknown whether BargainChain's approach to managing people could be generalised to all stores or what role the poor treatment of its staff played a part it is demise.

However, the nature of the business certainly appeared to have a significant bearing on the nature of the work and the shopfloor relations at BargainChain. For instance, work is organized in a highly prescribed way and presented to employees on a take it or leave it basis. Indeed, this particular outlet appeared to be more like a small business typically defined by

little formal hierarchy and an autocratic owner-manager. Having said that, what BargainChain management could not have a great deal of influence over are the people who are willing and available to work for them. Most only wanted to be employed by BargainChain for a short period of time, but as has been seen already, a small number of BargainChain employees (at all levels) are clearly loyal to the company despite the chain store having a poor image in the outside world. Yet, the loyalty to BargainChain is just as likely to have come from employees who see opportunities with other companies as inferior. This relates to a range of informal privileges carved out by long-serving sales assistants and how such privileges form the basis of making comparisons with other employers.

It would appear that the main consequences of operating in difficult product market conditions, a poor approach to managing the business and its people, denying staff the potential to take part in the organization's decision-making processes, and a workforce varying in loyalty to the organization, is a recipe for informal and quite chaotic behaviour. The only real surprise was that the findings did not present an even more chaotic situation.

7.5 SubCallco

7.5.1 SubCallco the company

Formed as recently as 1992, SubCallco is a rapidly expanding business (as of June 2002) that undertakes work for as many as 30 so-called blue chip companies. SubCallco claims to provide 'innovative business solutions' and is 'one of the UK's leading contact centre companies'. Its core business in terms of the majority of its lowest level employees involves sales-orientated inbound and/or outbound communications on behalf of large organizations.

SubCallco's 'competitive edge', however, involves the rapid and 'flexible' deployment of its main resources (technology and people) as a means to deliver 'effective cost management'. In other words, SubCallco represents a very modern company in that it faces quite intense competition from similar companies on how quickly and how cheaply it can deliver a certain level of service for big businesses.

SubCallco employs around 2,000 people across six call centres. Several of call centres are in rural and remote areas of Scotland. Part of the start up costs for SubCallco came from governmental funds set aside to raise employment levels in areas of high unemployment and social deprivation. The call centre at the heart of this study is based in the Central region of Scotland and opened early in the year 2001. It is the largest of the six call centres under the umbrella of SubCallco. Currently, around 400 employees work on three major campaigns, with several smaller campaigns employing a further 50 or so workers. Labour turnover is approximately 50 per cent per annum with around 20 employees newly inducted each month. Call operators earned £5.30 per hour (compared to NMW of £4.20 per hour, as of the summer of 2002) making it the best-paid job of the four case studies. SubCallco recruits on a constant basis and research observations previously suggested that it also recruits as a means to secure a reserve body of labour, which can be mobilised when necessary. Obviously, the process also serves as a means to replace those who regularly leave the organization.

As remarked on in Chapter Six, employment as a call operator is based entirely on a successful completion of SubCallco's selection procedure. A lack of call centre work experience and academic achievement are not seen by SubCallco as problematic. Once employed a new employee of SubCallco can expect to go through a compulsory one-week

training course on 'communications' and receive further training for their allotted campaign. (A campaign is noted most of all by its length and use of resources. A campaign could run for a few weeks or be almost open-ended. Campaigns at SubCallco employ from a few to more than a hundred operators. A campaign typically involves SubCallco taking on the work of a large organization that wishes to sub-contract a portion of its customer service facilities). Training includes an overview of SubCallco's approach to customer relations and how to deal with customers from both an inbound and outbound perspective. Campaign training is designed around the needs of the business customer. As such, whilst the bulk of the campaign training is delivered by SubCallco training staff, the business customer is often represented at these events in some capacity. Training for a campaign can be for as little as a few days to several weeks. Training depends on the intensity and the detail of what is expected of the call operator. The training carried out at SubCallco is in one sense quite thorough and involves imparting explicit information and directions to employees. On the other hand, the training does not really prepare new employees for the nature of call centre work – repetitive and intense taking and making of telephone calls of a sales-orientated variety.

It would be reasonable to agree with SubCallco in that its central Scotland business centre could be described as being state-of-the-art. In more detail, the building is quite impressive in itself, yet it is the facilities it provides for employees that stands out the most – certainly when compared to the facilities available to workers at the previous case organizations. For example, there is a shop on site, free hot vended drinks are available at all times, there is a spacious canteen with microwave facilities, and water fountains can be found throughout the calling hall. There are also shower facilities for employees to use before a 'night out', ample parking, and a relaxation area (known officially at SubCallco as the 'breakout room' or

unofficially as the 'chill-out zone') takes centre stage in the calling hall. However, the extent to which employees can actually relax in a room that is situated in the centre of the shopfloor is questionable, as the main feature of the breakout room is its clear glass walls.

Other distinguishing features include extremely large photographs of smiling and attentive call operators on the shopfloor walls. Next to the large pictures are bold company statements about commitment to clients and employees. It was difficult to determine their exact use but their applications seemed more than decorative. Indeed, the researcher tried unsuccessfully to find out more about their symbolic value. Even if the value of the photographs could have been identified, the call operators seemed to work on without openly acknowledging an interest in them.

The open plan design of the calling hall means that line managers and team leaders have their workstations adjacent to their allotted campaigns. Call operators answer telephones at what are called 'pods'. Pods are groups of circular-styled desk systems that have room for around 20 operatives. More permanent campaigns are likely to have a widely viewable electronic system that charts, for example, 'calls waiting', and 'calls answered'. Less permanent campaigns like the campaign that forms this case study, use a paper-based system detailing the number of daily sales expected and the number achieved so far that day. SubCallco also has an official dress code. However, on Fridays and at weekends, employees are allowed to 'dress down'.

Despite above minimum wages for low status work, a generous commitment to training and state-of-the-art facilities, as of June 2002, staff at one of SubCallco's call centres was the

scene of a union recognition campaign. Coincidence or not, SubCallco recently set up a staff forum at all of its call centres and created a national forum for all the regional forums to feed into. At the call centre in question, the staff forum is set up according to the main campaigns. As a result, the campaign that forms the basis of this case study did not have direct access to the staff forum.

The campaign that forms the basis of this case study involves selling bank accounts using mainly cold calling telephone methods. The campaign is run on behalf of a well-known high street bank (HS Bank). To sell bank accounts requires four days of intense training. The campaign 'team' is made up of one-third new recruits and the rest are call operators already employed by SubCallco (a total of around 25). However, only a handful of the team had a 'permanent' contract. Permanent contracts at SubCallco were awarded on a relatively arbitrary basis after a minimum of three months of unbroken service. Call operators are expected to work a range of shifts that begin between lunch time and mid-afternoon, and, run until 9 p.m. The campaign requires staff to work from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday. No one works on Sunday as call centres are prohibited from making unsolicited outbound calls on this day.

7.5.2 The labour process of SubCallco's HS Bank campaign

Working as a call operator is likely to vary as much between call centres as it is within a call centre. In other words, the purpose of this sub-section is to describe the workings of one particular campaign, at one particular call centre. The intention is not to compare such activities with any other call operator employment.

In essence, the main objective of the call operator, the vast majority of the time, is to sell bank accounts using cold calling techniques. The actual campaign only lasted for five weeks (the research period lasted seven weeks) and represented a bank experimenting with outsourcing as alternative means to conducting a particular part its in-house business (it is unknown to the researcher whether this particular campaign led to work of such kind being outsourced on a much more substantial basis). Call operators are expected to work in a highly prescribed manner, use a generic form of communication technology, and most of all, expected to work under a certain amount of pressure. The following details the nature of the labour process at SubCallco:

1. You must first log on to the computer using a username and password. The time you log on is recorded. Most put on their headsets at this point.
2. By clicking on the [HighStreetBank or HS Bank] icon a blank current account application form appears – there are four screens to the application form and are accessible via the ‘tab’ key.
3. The program asks you if your wish to use it in the ‘in-bound’ or ‘out-bound’ calling mode.
4. When selecting in-bound the system automatically begins to dial a number from [HS Bank’s] database of 98,000 potential customers.
5. On connection basic details of the customer emerge on the screen, that is, first and last name and address.

6. There is no sound from the headset until a human voice or an answering machine greets you – the system must be clever enough to recognise engaged or disconnected tones as I never heard one.

7. If you are through to a human you begin the script you have prepared [see figure 7.4 – p. 264]. To make a complete sale the operator has to convince the customer to present them with sufficient detail so as to fill in an electronic version of a typical bank account application form. A partial sale involves making sure the customer is really interested in the bank account and attaining details up to completing the form. In this situation the customer may want to withhold occupational details, income, and current banking details. The account is not open at this point. What happens is a complete or partially complete application form (with other account details) is sent to the customer to be checked, completed, signed and returned.

8. At the end of the call or when an answering machine is reached you simply click on the 'hang up' icon.

9. At this point the call operator must select an 'outcome' of the call by choosing one of a range of outcomes from a drop-down menu, for example, complete sale, partial sale, 'call back' at an arranged time, decline, incorrect data, answering machine.

10. When the outcome of the call is saved the process starts again, but only when the save button is selected. The time between hanging up and redialling allows the operator to make any additional notes about a particular telephone number. It may take as long as 30 seconds before the next telephone rings, but most of time there is usually about 10-20 seconds between one telephone call ending and another one starting.

Further notes

1. The vast majority of connected telephone calls are answering machines and call operators are told 'never leave a message'. On average, a call operator makes around 40-50 calls per hour, but may only speak for a fraction of that time.

2. At anytime between telephone calls the call operator can select 'aftercall' when making unusually long notes (rare, if ever), 'tea break' – obvious, and 'comfort break' means a visit to the toilet or to get a quick drink of water. The system has the potential to record all time not spent on calls, but the nature of the campaign rarely requires staff to self-monitor their activity using this particular method.

3. Occasionally the dialling system may select a 'call back' number. In this case the number is not automatically dialled. Instead the operator has the time to check any notes about this particular customer before clicking the 'dial' button. By selecting 'contact history' previous notes about the customer can be consulted.

4. Telephone calls that lead to answering machines are re-selected for dialling every four hours.

5. The operator's performance, or 'conversion rate', is generated from a ratio involving the number of sales versus the number of times the call operator speaks to a potential customer [in this case 7 per cent is seen as an average score].

(Fieldnotes, 5/6/02).

During the training session prior to starting the campaign call operators were encouraged to have a sales script prepared before the campaign actually began. In this particular case, call operators were given an almost completed script that they were expected to use at the start of

the sales campaign. Minor modification could be made during a practice run, yet once the campaign began, barring certain technical details relating to call centre codes of conduct, call operators were still given the chance to use any suitable script. Most, however, stuck closely to a version of the original script. The researcher stayed close to the original and his script is reproduced in figure 7.4 (p. 264).

Throughout the campaign the call operator had to attend and be involved in a number of team building, team meeting, and team briefing sessions. This was for a number of reasons and included the fact the SBA Plus campaign was a trial attempt to sell bank accounts, and that team leaders and representatives of HS Bank seemed keen to get call operators to talk about their experiences of selling. The intention was to develop a 'super script'. This was despite the use of call monitoring and a strategy of 'coaching' call operators who struggled to reach pre-defined sales targets (see later sub-sections for more details). Moreover, sessions of this kind were used to impart more product information on, and inform of changing bonus schemes, to the call operators. Team briefings also regularly occurred because of technical difficulties with the dialler system. A number of further briefings occurred because no calls were made when England played in the 2002 World Cup in Japan. Whatever the purpose of the team sessions, call operators saw them as welcome relief from using the cold calling dialler system.

7.5.3 Call operators and group memberships

The people who work as call operators at SubCallco can generally be divided in to three categories – those who are young (typically just out of school or college) and see their time at SubCallco as temporary and part of a journey to greater things. Those who are early-to-late-middle-age and are either returning to work after bringing up children or struggling to find work

after being made redundant from a higher skilled job. And, those who may not see their future working as a call operator, are still quite young and typically single, yet in a relatively short space of time have built up multiple experiences of call centre work with a range of employers. However, what nearly all the all operators have in common is a sense that SubCallco is not an organization to be planning a long-term future with.

Like at BargainChain, call operatives have few formal identities to associate themselves with. As figure 7.5 (p. 266) demonstrates, around a third of the call operators on the HS Bank campaign belong to the new employee category. New employees at SubCallco are treated quite well and given a reasonable amount of time and scope to adjust to how things are done at this particular organization. Immediately up from the new employee group is the call operator group. Whilst management at SubCallco may readily identify most of their employees as call operators, it does not necessarily mean that call operators view themselves, all the time they work, as call operatives. Call operator work at SubCallco, after all, is low-grade work, characterised by little autonomy, and low pay – hardly the conditions for immediate association. At a higher level of abstraction, as figure 7.5 makes evident, is a team identity based around an affiliation with HS Bank rather than SubCallco. This identity incorporates two team leaders. Management at SubCallco goes to great lengths to nurture team working attitudes amongst call operators. For instance, the team was initially granted a whole afternoon to get to know each other. ‘Team bonding’ involved a range of games and quizzes for prizes, role-play activities and other ‘fun things’. Following on from team bonding was campaign training, which was conducted along similar lines. Once the campaign actually started there were a range of lengthy team briefing sessions to build an affinity with the team. A sense of togetherness was also pursued through a range of team incentives and activities

such as raffles, sweepstakes and decorating the area with promotional material (mainly balloons emblazoned with the HS Bank logo). However, the size and the stability of the team, the relatively short period of time spent together, the differing group demography, and the individualistic nature of the work (see previous sub-section) did little to bond the individuals together. It seemed that the only time the group appeared to work in unison was when making complaints to the team leaders or avoiding work. A higher level of abstraction did not seem feasible as no real effort was made by management to create loyalty between employer and employee.

<p>INTRODUCTION</p> <p>Good morning/afternoon/evening can I speak to...</p> <p>My name is James from [HS Bank]</p> <p>I'm calling you today about a unique banking service only open to a limited/restricted/privileged number of customers.</p> <p>Have you a few moments to talk to me?</p> <p>RECORDED STATEMENT</p> <p>First of all I have to inform you that this call may be recorded for quality and training purposes.</p> <p>COMPANY INFORMATION</p> <p>As I said before, the service I am calling you about is called [Super Bank Account Plus or SBA Plus]. Have you heard of it before?</p> <p>[SBA Plus] is part of the [HS Bank] group and has been in operation for ten years.</p> <p>Distinct features of [SBA Plus] include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- a dedicated personal banking manager- a fully integrated Internet, telephone and branch facility system- the option of a £500 free overdraft- and on opening an account you will benefit from £40 credit as a welcoming gesture <p>NEEDS ANALYSIS</p> <p>However, before I go any further may I ask you some questions about your current banking services?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- does your bank offer a named personal banking manager?- does your current provider offer the full spectrum of banking methods?- does your current provider offer a service where you always speak to a person, rather than starting with an automated answering service? <p>If yes to all say – that sounds like a good bank that you have got, but is there anything that it does not provide you would be interested in?</p> <p>CLOSING SALE</p> <p>It seems that [SBA Plus] can offer you a service that closely matched your current banking needs. Would you like me to take your details so that I can make an application as easy as possible?</p> <p>First though, can I ask two brief qualifying questions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- are you over 18 years of age?- do you on your own or combined with your partner earn in excess of £20,000 per year? <p>APPLICATION FORM</p> <p>SIGN OFF</p> <p>Please read the application form and other details on arrival and return it in the pre-paid envelope. We will, of course, follow standard practice and run a quick credit check on you before opening the account.</p> <p>Thank you for your time. You have been speaking to James at [Super Bank Plus].</p>
--

Figure 7.4 A call operator's script

As with the cases of FoodCo and HotelRest, SubCallco employees had access and ultimately membership to one further formal group. This was a group designed with the interests of employees in mind. The trade union activity noted at another SubCallco call centre did not appear to have an influence on this particular setting. However, association with the staff forum was not actively encouraged by team leaders or higher levels of management. In reality, new employees were only told about the staff forum during induction. What is more, the staff forum only got minimal coverage on the vast range of notice boards at SubCallco. Indeed, even when the staff forum was mentioned on the notice boards it involved a request for call operators to apply to be a member of it. To take up a place on the forum employees had to be employed for a minimum of three months. A lack of interest in the staff forum is likely to be related to high labour turnover, a lack of publicity, and how the management portrays the staff forum to the workforce. For instance, the researcher noted the following about how the staff forum is likely to be viewed by many of SubCallco's call operatives:

I've been here for nearly two months now and the first official communication from the staff forum (apart from some brief minutes from a session a while before I started) I have come across is based on a 'win a bunny competition' (raising funds for an extra-work social event) with a £0.25 raffle ticket. The A3 poster shows the said 'bunny' in nine 'humorous' poses in different places throughout the calling hall. Having said that, the competition goes well with the many similar competitions I've seen over the past few weeks and includes the most recent – a 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' event arranged by the team leaders from the [PhoneCo] campaign (Fieldnotes, 26/6/02).

Based mainly on evidence of its activities in two months of fieldwork it seems the staff forum is likely to be viewed by many employees as a social committee and less of a forum for employees to influence the business's decision-making processes.

Groups that call operators could join include that of a 'team administrator', a team leader, or to find another organization to work for. The HS Bank campaign had two part-time administrators, although part-time involved completing full-time hours as a call operator. In essence, the administrator assists the team leaders with administrative work such as tallying the number of sales and monitoring the statistical performance of the call operatives. However, the posting attracts no extra pay or bonuses. It is an attractive position in two particular ways. First, it represents respite from making telephone calls. Second, it offers status in that it informally represents a mid-way point between a call operator and a team leader. However, administration positions are not frequently advertised as such positions are rarely vacated. If anything team leader jobs come up far more frequently, but even then, due to internal as well as external advertising, competition to fill these posts is often fierce. In theory, both positions are achievable, but it may be many months or perhaps years before a call operator is either ready or gets a change to be upwardly mobile. It would seem reasonable, therefore, to attribute a lack of formal mobility as one of the main reasons why SubCallco suffers from staff turnover rates in excess of 50 per cent.

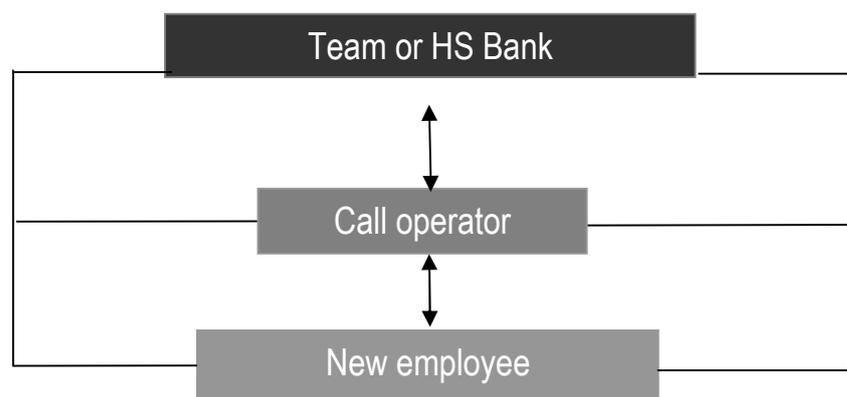


Figure 7.5 Levels of call operator identity

Like with all the three other case studies, the shopfloor at SubCallco is characterised by a range of sub-groups. In this situation friendship groups offer call operators a further sense of identity, and, an alternative set of norms and values to govern their behaviour. However, what is different about this case study was how soon the researcher noticed what he called 'cliques':

Despite all the team building stuff going on I couldn't help but turn my eyes to the many cliques around me. Evidence of the cliques comes from observing a range of activities we had to do. The cliques, in effect, became salient when the whole team is given a task to do. The trainers and team leaders try and break cliques up, but their tactics rarely do more than split a few friends up for an hour or so (Fieldnotes, 21/5/02).

The cliques themselves are really just friendship groups, yet some stood out more than others. The friendship groups typically had two to five members. The most salient friendship groups were characterised by young females who smoked. Less cohesive friendship groups seemed to feature older and male workers. That is to say, friendship groups between men and between call operators at the upper end of the age spectrum appeared to be less than static coalitions. A diary entry made during an end of campaign event seemed to confirm these sentiments:

After the meal had ended and the team leaders and [HS Bank] representatives had their final say on how the campaign went, the dynamics of the group seemed to change almost instantaneously. The cliques emerged for one last time, that is, the females began to make plans for going clubbing and the rest spent the next hour or two making small conversation with people they had little in common with (Fieldnotes, 29/6/02).

It appeared that friendship groups offered a credible alternative to certain formal group identities. As such, divisive, yet often lax forms of management control and little job satisfaction, created the conditions for friendship groups to flourish. No teamwork activity or promise of promotion seemed to have an effect on the importance of what friendship groups had to offer call operatives. However, those who did not belong to highly salient friendship groups went on to deal with difficult situations mainly on an individualistic basis.

7.5.4 Social relations on the shopfloor at SubCallco

The social relations of most note at SubCallco involved the relationships between team leaders and call operators. As mentioned before, the call operator group was managed by two team leaders who worked at the same time as each other during campaign training. However, once the campaign got started the two team leaders worked on an overlapping shift pattern whereby one worked the 'early' shift and one worked the 'back' shift (afternoon and evening). The shifts overlapped by one hour and team leaders rotated each week between morning and back shifts. Relations between each respective team leader and the call operator group varied somewhat. In brief, one team leader (Joanne) had good relations with call operators and the other team leader (Catherine) had poor relations with her lower counterparts. Early fieldnotes taken by the researcher suggests varying leadership styles may explain the nature of the relations between each respective team leader and the call operatives:

It's becoming quite obvious that the team leaders have different styles of dealing with call operators. Joanne on the one hand appears to be quite down to earth and able to engage readily with her subordinates, yet on the other hand, Catherine seems to take her authoritative role quite seriously and expects her commands to be the final word on most matters (Fieldnotes, 27/5/02).

Further observations confirmed Catherine's limited approach to dealing with call operators:

Catherine's main strategy to deal with call operators who are not working as they should do is to stand in close proximity to the call operator, put her hands on her hips, and give them a stern look. I saw this happen twice tonight alone; once with Susan and once with Mandy. It seemed to have the desired effect once the call operators became aware of her presence, but when she turned her back things pretty much returned to how they were before (Fieldnotes, 6/6/02).

The second team leader's style of managing people is similar in many ways to the supervisor at BargainChain:

The first team briefing lasted for about 30 minutes. What I took most of all from this team session was how the team definitely seems to respond better and more constructively when Joanne is doing the talking. The team seems far less afraid to report problems they are having, that is, the call operators are quite frank with Joanne and more willing to argue and stand their ground on certain issues they feel strongly about. Even Garry (the quietest in the group) had something to say tonight. (Fieldnotes, 13/6/02).

The two different styles of managing call operators continued for the full length of the campaign, although the more empathetic of the team leaders occasionally had to resort to the literal use of authority. As a result, relations between each team leader and friendship groups followed each respective leadership style. Joanne, for example, found it relatively easy to pacify the more salient of the friendship groups. Catherine seemed unhappy that call operators did not accept her higher status and as a result took measures to redress the imbalance:

Laura [relatively new operator and key figure in one particularly tardy friendship group] was one of the last call operators to have a one-to-one meeting about the reduction in numbers for the [HS Bank] campaign. Immediately afterwards she described to me (and others) how Catherine spent a few minutes going through all the details of why less call operators are needed and that this would lead to as many as ten people either being paid off or moved to another campaign. She went on to say how it was only in the last few words when Catherine indicated to Laura that she would be staying on the [HS Bank] campaign. Laura felt that keeping her in suspense was deliberate (certainly compared to my own and other experiences I'd learned about) and at that point remarked – 'She's a witch that Catherine. She seemed to enjoy making me sit there worrying about whether I'd be paid off or not. The way she told me you'd have thought I was out of the door and then she's full of false smiles and tells me everything's going to be okay'. It seems Catherine has taken this opportunity to get back at some of the operators who do not respond to her commands (Fieldnotes, 15/6/02).

Relations between friendship groups, like at other case organizations, are quite peaceful and observations indicated little if any conflict between them. If anything, female friendship groups seemed to get on extraordinarily well. On one rare occasion, however, two female friendship groups clashed after one accused the other of not working hard enough. Social relations between the less cohesive male friendship groups and the more tightly knit female groups were also good; neither did evidence appear of one group trying to subvert another on the grounds of gender. Having said that, periodically, a certain amount of flirting was observed between some of the friendship groups.

7.5.5 Controlling call operators

Control at SubCallco seemed to focus on making sure call operators fulfilled short-term management objectives. This led to work being restricted to a narrow range of tasks, with the tasks to be done in a pre-prescribed way, and, in a certain time and in a certain manner. Control did not appear to be of the kind associated with inculcating a deep sense of loyalty and obligation to the organization. Examples of control mechanisms mentioned so far include teamworking initiatives, monitoring calls made by call operatives for 'quality and training purposes', the rigid nature of the technology and working practices, and towards the end of the campaign, the threat of dismissal. In other words, SubCallco's main control strategy appears to be about securing employee compliance rather than creating willing workers.

Further evidence of this belief is confirmed by a number of research observations. Indeed, the potential for management to control call operators took on a range of guises. For instance, SubCallco, like with HotelCorp and HotelRest, invested substantial resources into a range of HRM and employee involvement initiatives. These initiatives took the form of monopolising the attention of call operators and included notice boards characterised by an wealth of business and campaign information, a range of glossy monthly magazines, and, an abundance of time and resources spent on team building and training. However, harsher and more direct forms of control were also apparent at SubCallco and included an electronic monitoring system to oversee employee movement within the building, mystery shoppers were added to the campaign database, and, call operator performance was measured to a fraction of a second as a means to determine the suitability for future employment with SubCallco.

Moreover, control mechanisms did not stop at the use of technology to determine whether a call operator is working hard enough. Further control mechanisms involved team leaders introducing an incentive scheme as a means to persuade call operators to sell more. For instance, team leaders started a continually changing incentive scheme by offering 25 pence for a complete application form and a further 75 pence if the form was completed and returned by the customer. Later on the bonus for a complete application form was raised to £1, but no further bonus came with the customer's signature. The incentive scheme did not stop there and if anything changed so often and sometimes so cynically that sales went down when targets were raised. Team leaders experimented with incentives by offering national lottery tickets for meeting team targets and further lottery tickets for individuals who met personal targets. At one point a wipe-clean scoreboard was set up in the middle of the pods so every time a sale was made the successful call operator added one more to the tally. Team leaders also encouraged everyone else to cheer on successful call operators.

As the campaign progressed there was also the use of 'coaching' to 'guide' call operators on whether they have performing well enough. This took the form of offering guidance on how to improve performance, style and rapport with customers. However, many call operators remained cynical of coaching as both team leaders openly inferred that to be coached is really one level or two levels down from a verbal disciplinary warning:

Joanne mentioned in the team meeting that those who are struggling to meet targets would be 'coached'. However, the way in which she talked of coaching appeared to mean more than a literal interpretation of what coaching typically infers – i.e. receiving instructions on some sort of voluntary basis. Instead, it appears call operator coaching is more about punishment than inspiration. As

Joanne said with the strugglers in mind, 'Look guys, if you don't meet your targets I'll be coming to coach you. So, if you don't want this get your targets' (Fieldnotes, 18/6/02).

The extent to which call operators responded to coaching appeared to be part of the criteria for removing call operators from the campaign:

As Joanne openly declared today – the three paid off call operators have been assessed and deemed unsuitable for the job. Apparently, the unlucky three had been, 'pre-warned and coached'. She went on to further justify her actions by adding, 'Look guys, the main issue is I did not go over to them after three weeks and say to them you're crap and you're leaving, they were given plenty of time to do better' (Fieldnotes, 19/6/02).

Coaching at SubCallco seemed to be used in a euphemistic manner – using the word 'coach' to really mean 'do as you are told'. In a broader sense, however, control mechanisms that include coaching were not used in a particularly coherent and consistent manner. As such, there was some margin between the amount of control possible and the amount of control used by management. In brief, SubCallco could be described as being a place where management control was used in a fairly relaxed manner, where there is little trust between employer and employee, and, where few of the call operatives seemed genuinely interested in their work.

7.5.6 Call operator misbehaviour

Determining what was and what probably was not misbehaviour in this particular case study proved to be a more difficult task than in the other three instances. The difference is what may

turn out to be 'normal' behaviour at this call centre may be viewed as misbehaviour in another low status work setting. For instance, both team leaders regularly ended the evening shift by commanding the call operators, in a humorous fashion, to 'fuck off home'. Moreover, highly explicit sexually charged humour, and scathing humour of a magnitude likely to provoke cases of harassment in some workplaces, was both openly encouraged and used by team leaders during team meetings. Furthermore, the team meetings regularly included the presence of managers and HS Bank representatives. However, this is not to say call operators objected to banter and humour of this kind. In fact many of the call operators positively revelled and flourished in such an environment. Having said that, older call operators were not as enthralled by the banter and humour. In brief, SubCallco may not declare in its external communications that this is the norm (other than to talk of a 'fun' working environment), but the presence of senior personnel and important clientele suggest it probably is the norm and not misbehaviour. A particular diary entry by the researcher – reflective rather than based on immediate observations – details the possible significance of SubCallco management using fun activities to parallel informal group rituals previous generations of managers may have steered clear of:

Management at SubCallco seems interested in all the things I would associate with being worker generated and meant to make working life more tolerable, i.e. sweepstakes, lottery syndicates, and other fund raising games. Management is also seriously interested in making use of humour and the joking aspects of informal groups. It's as if management is deliberately copying informal group rituals and harnessing the energy of these rituals to discipline call operators and ultimately get them to work harder and challenge authority less. I've noted other examples too and it includes management mocking themselves in the company magazine, notice boards with pictures of people having fun, encouraging operators to arrange social events such as mass 'piss-ups'. They also

intervene with traditional informal group activities such as sharing out food or sweets. It is as if they want to be involved and directing everything. It's by no means a perfect science, but it makes me wonder how this organization would function without management getting so involved and close to informal group rituals (Fieldnotes, 8/6/02).

Ultimately a line has to be drawn between behaviour and misbehaviour and in this case it is to be drawn between behaviour manipulated directly by management and behaviour personified in the main or in whole by call operator ingenuity. What is more, such is the difficulty of distinguishing between the behaviour and misbehaviour that it seems rather absurd to reproduce and discuss acts that may not actually be misbehaviour. For instance, team leaders seemed to openly condone a range of selling techniques that pushed a range of codes of conduct beyond their limits.

Despite all of this, acts that could be viewed as alternative resistance strategies were common at SubCallco. However, acts of resistance were carried out by individuals. Some acts of resistance involved individuals who had the tacit support of their peers. What is more, acts of resistance appeared to be further defined by the three categories and friendship groups outlined earlier. For instance, the following diary entry demonstrates how individuals of a similar demographic appeared to misbehave as a collective:

The first briefing of my shift began as soon as Joanne came in the breakout room and sat down. She took one look at the rather glum operatives and said, 'Starting with Tony, I want a Mexican wave. Only those who are old can stay seated'. About half conformed and the rest either half-heartedly joined in or failed to comply at all. The division seemed to be between the very young

who complied and the less young who increasingly refused to join in. A failure to join in with the request had nothing to do with physical ability (Fieldnotes, 29/5/02).

Acts of resistance and defiance also occurred according to friendship groups, particularly those that involved young females:

When the team leader went for her break at around 6 p.m. Judith [a new operative no older than 21 years of age] got a radio out and tuned into the local radio station. It was louder than at the weekend, yet no one was consulted as to whether anyone minded or not. Soon, many of the other younger operatives who had been working in some shape or form stopped and started talking amongst themselves. Some even started to dance to the music or played 'tennis' with balloons (Fieldnotes, 5/5/02).

Acts of resistance, however, tended to involve individual acts of avoiding work. For example, in the following diary extract the best performing call operator on the campaign by far suddenly decided he would do less work on one particular shift:

Tony [call operative in his early 30s] was, by normal standards anyway, in an abnormally low mood. I spotted him doing far less work than usual and asked him why he was taking it easy. He replied by saying how he, 'can't be arsed tonight'. I asked more questions to find out more about his change of attitude and he went on to say how he had been chosen to stay on the campaign for another two weeks when nearly all of us would be doing other things including training for several weeks on the new [Online and Telephone Insurance] campaign. He had expected his good work to be rewarded with a change of scenery and not stuck doing the same work (Fieldnotes, 27/6/02).

There is no question that many acts of call operator non-compliance are probably best categorized as survival strategies. A typical range of survival strategies are included in the following commentary:

As I sat making calls tonight I could observe the whole team. Few operators were working at any one time. Most operators in fact were playing with balloons and chatting, yet this went completely unchallenged by the team leaders. I could also see that several operators had magazines and newspapers at their desks. They obviously did not try and hide their extra-activities despite a team leader being so close (Fieldnotes, 29/5/02).

In one sense not working and doing other things that are not formally sanctioned by management could be viewed as being an act of defiance. However, taking a moment of respite, whether it involves the individual or many others, is not really an act of defiance as the intention is to carry on working as usual at some point in the near future. In other words, being able to perform a task either intermittently with work, or concurrent to it, could be reasonably interpreted as being more about accepting how things are then trying to change the situation for good.

Cultural subversion did not appear to be the objective of any of the groups associated with call operators. There were, however, many examples of sexual misbehaviour. In many ways the researcher expected to witness sexual misbehaviour before starting the data collection as during the selection procedure he viewed the calling hall and noted how the call operators seemed to be relatively evenly divided between men and women under 25 years of age. The following extract confirmed his expectations:

Susan said to me, in quite a candid fashion, 'Nearly everyone here is under 25 and you can see everyone is flirty. It's part and parcel of the majority of the jobs [call centre] I've done. You get your own way if you know how to look and act [with reference to Simon – a team administrator]. Just look at Simon, he gets on well with the team leaders and the other lasses too. He's doing that so he gets an easy life, and he might get a shag out of it too' (Fieldnotes, 8/2/02).

However, whilst the team administrator had the right to move around the pods as he saw fit and in the process liberally flirted with female call operatives, call operatives were not afforded the same mobility. As a consequence of having far less chance to move around the calling hall, call operators flirted by using their mobile phones as the main means to develop relationships with the opposite sex. What is more, flirting between operatives often went beyond the HS Bank campaign into others in the calling hall. An example of how call operators use mobile phones and texting to flirt includes the following example of misbehaviour:

Incidences of call operators flirting within and outwith the campaign seems to have taken off quite recently. Sitting next to Barry for a change has allowed me to observe his mobile phone-based manoeuvres. A good part of the shift seemed to be dedicated to Barry flirting with a female in this campaign as well as another on the other side of the calling hall. Added to texting females is the need to text a friend (somewhere else on the other side) sat adjacent to one of the females in question, for further feedback on the situation (Fieldnotes, 18/6/02).

Finally, the researcher did not witness acts of misbehaviour that could be viewed as external ways of dealing with conflict. This was a bit of a conundrum at first as SubCallco in wider terms is characterised by very high levels of staff turnover. Explanations for a lack of external expressions of conflict point towards the relatively short research period and only five weeks

of intense work. What is more, during that time several call operators did leave, but that was due to redundancies. On top of that, team leaders spent time making sure those who were left behind felt good about their contribution to the campaign. Further reasons for low turnover could relate to the nature of the campaign and how call operators are likely to have felt part of an important project.

7.5.7 Summary of SubCallco

The most noticeable feature of SubCallco is probably the nature of the business market in which it operates. That is, making profit from reducing the costs of large businesses. However, whilst it is unknown whether the organizations that compete with SubCallco manage their workforce like SubCallco, it would appear that a particular feature of SubCallco's approach to managing its workforce is about trying to build loyalty between campaign sponsor and employee, rather than between employer and employee. As such, call operators did not appear to be won over by being encouraged to be loyal to a third party, especially when the third party did not seek loyalty from them. What is more, a further contradiction emerged in that call operators are trained to work as a team, yet get very little opportunity to work as a team should do. As things appeared, SubCallco call operators got virtually no opportunity to work together, to work in an autonomous fashion, or have any real say in campaign decision-making. The result of all of this seemed to point towards low levels of mutual loyalty and the disappointment of teamworking appeared to translate into low motivation, low job satisfaction and individualism.

What conflicting messages and loyalties turned into, certainly in terms of misbehaviour, is a range of activities noted for being socially fragmented, apathetical, and most of all about

getting by. It may be the case that under the surface of all the misbehaviour is a feeling of deep resentment and wanting to really get back at the team leaders and higher level management, but the conditions for expressing such sentiments seemed to be missing somewhat. Ultimately, in one sense, SubCallco seemed to have a very modern side to it and there is no doubt that many of the call operators were excited by some of the things SubCallco represented or initially had to offer. However, in a much more real sense, the excitement appeared to be short-lived and the misbehaviour common to less modern workplaces such as FoodCo, HotelRest and BargainChain soon began to dominate proceedings.

7.6 Summary

In this chapter data gathered from many months of fieldwork has been presented along the lines of key themes to emerge from the literature review and the chapters on theory development and research design. More specifically, the chapter has outlined the main features of four organizations and four particular working environments, four labour processes, group memberships available to each type of worker, social relations between management and shopfloor groups and between other shopfloor groups, methods used by management to control low-level group behaviour, and, the typical misbehaviour of four types of low status worker.

It is clear that the means by which the data has been collected and then structured has allowed many new and interesting details about misbehaviour to emerge. However, the many new and interesting details of misbehaviour require further analysis. We now turn to further analysing the findings by way of a radical social psychological approach.

CHAPTER 8: ADVANCING EXPLANATIONS FOR MISBEHAVIOUR

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this final chapter is to interpret the findings reported in Chapter Seven and to analyse and interpret how these findings confirm, enhance and add to the existing research on workplace misbehaviour. The chapter progresses through the research findings from all four case organizations and demonstrates how the results can be interpreted in such a way so as to add to previous ways in which the misbehaviour of low status workers has been explained. Before going any further, however, the following paragraph sets out for one last time the main aims of this thesis.

The main aims of this thesis are in one sense quite simple and straightforward yet, as it was argued in Chapters Two and Three, ask questions that have not been satisfactorily addressed within the realms of industrial sociology (and orthodox organizational psychology). The first aim is to consider why workers misbehave in a particular way. That is to say, it is presupposed that even workers who misbehave in a highly impulsive and erratic manner have an end in mind, even if the resulting action was not thoroughly thought through at the time, or if the end in mind is actually achievable. The second aim is to consider what determines the nature of the act of misbehaviour from one particular perspective – whether it is committed on an individualistic or collective basis. In this case, it is presupposed that collective forms of misbehaviour, in most instances anyway, are likely to result in more satisfactory outcomes for the workers.

As a means to analyse and interpret the findings from the four case organizations, the chapter begins with a discussion of potential problems with the main research methods. A second part

of this process involves an evaluation of the nature of the research – a micro-level study conducted in a particular time and era – and whether the findings are as relevant today (and perhaps in the near future) as they were when the data was collected. A third part of this process involves assessing the degree of commonality between case organizations so as to indicate whether or not the findings, as a whole, are sound enough to be further explored using the process theory discussed in Chapter Four. What is more, the purpose of the whole evaluation exercise allows us to determine the value, use and relevance of the overall findings as well as indicating how they can be interpreted.

The chapter progresses on from deliberating empirical constraints and potential limitations to discuss in detail how and the extent to which a process theory combining orthodox labour process analysis (LPA) and a social identity approach (SIA) (Haslam, 2001) can help further explain acts of misbehaviour. There follows a chapter summary and a further assessment of the process theory used in this thesis.

8.2 Assessing methods, wider environmental context and verifying inter-case validity

8.2.1 Research limitations

In one sense the limitations of the research have already been discussed or may even be self-evident in some way to the reader. Indeed, in Chapter Six the researcher commented on difficulties associated with conducting covert research by describing the length of research (in hours and days) at each organization, the process of gaining access to organizations, gaining access to shopfloor groups, taking fieldnotes, and, the decision to end each episode of fieldwork for all of the four case organizations. Despite noting several problems and

weaknesses with the research method, technique and approach, it is hoped that the researcher produced a convincing case for the merits of covert participant observation as a means to research hidden and secretive organizational phenomena. However, this is not to say that a well designed, well-defended and executed means of gathering data comes without a range of more practical limitations.

As such, the purpose of this section serves a similar, yet different purpose to that of discussing the merits of the actual approach to data collection. In brief, the aim is to comment on a range of research limitations that are common to most social research. The limitations discussed centre on assessing the fit between the methods used and the type of data sought by the researcher.

Earlier we noted a clear tension between researching workplace misbehavior and the theories available and best suited to explain controversial hidden and secretive phenomena. This tension concerns the reality of researching the controversial nature of workplace misbehaviour ascribed by a range of researchers (for example, Anteby, 2003; Bain and Taylor, 2000; Graham, 1995; Roy, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1958) and the variables associated with a social identity approach (SIA) (Haslam, 2001), such as measuring social identity salience and the shifting of group allegiances (also known as self-categorization or social mobility). The research methods also create lesser problems in terms of gathering data on organizational characteristics associated with LPA. In particular, the tension concerns the sensitivity of employers and workers to outsiders 'knowing their business' and the quest for data (related to the social identities of low-level workers) that could be best attained through more open

methods. It seems this is a tension that cannot be readily resolved and was addressed in the current research by a range of covert methods.

The tension between protecting the interests of participants and the development of theory could translate into the following and thus provide a means to assess the contribution of the thesis. As indicated previously, in terms of the variables most closely associated with LPA (management control), the researcher did not anticipate having too many problems identifying sources of management control, mainly because previous covert research using participatory methods that take into consideration management control, is on the whole quite sound (for example, Analoui and Kakabadse (1989), Graham (1995); Ditton (1977a)). Indeed, the researcher offered four thorough descriptive accounts of management control at each of the four case organizations as well as offering a more implicit account of management control by way of observing how management control and prerogatives restrict worker behaviour. The research findings indicate that workers clearly accepted some forms of control, begrudgingly accepted or were ambivalent to others, and in some cases rejected certain forms when feasible to do so. It should be noted that their own beliefs, abilities and expectations also control workers. Such an approach was also consistent with the epistemological and ontological approaches discussed in Chapter Five. In short, whilst covert participant observation and other methods used in this thesis are not the only effective way to collect data on management control, the methods used are quite consistent with previous research and proved to provide rich and consistent data on these organizational themes.

In contrast, the application of covert methods to a SIA is very rare with only one such study known to the researcher. Here the study focuses on how a SIA can explain why many

homeless people eventually come to accept their lot (Farrington and Robinson, 1999). Indeed, one of the main centrepieces of a SIA – social identity salience and self-categorization – has hitherto been mainly measured by quantitative techniques, questionnaires and Likert scales to elicit behavioural attitudes (Likert, 1932). For instance, Brown et al's (1986) 'ten-item measure', Mael and Ashforth's (1992) 'six-item measure', or, Ellemers et al's (1999) 'three-component measure'. Clearly, covert methods do not allow attitudes and group allegiances to be measured in any precise way and in itself represents a potential weakness in the methods used in this thesis. In this research, however, social identity salience and matters related to self-categorization are not actually measured directly and are instead interpreted from close, long-term, and consistent observations backed up by guided and unobtrusive discussions with research participants. The researcher does not claim that this approach is an equivalent of quantitative methods, but it is claimed that the methods used are sound in the light of tensions noted in previous paragraphs. Indeed, one particular advantage that covert methods have over overt methods is that sub-groups (and sub-identities) can be identified that research participants (both employer and workers) may deny exist.

8.2.2 Assessing findings in a wider environmental context

Despite the fact that this research is based on four case organizations and clearly representative in some way of the variety of low status work available in Scotland and probably the UK as a whole, it is still necessary to consider the wider environmental conditions of what are essentially micro-level studies. The reason why is it necessary to follow such procedures relates to the fact that this research was conducted at a particular time in history with the activities of each organization influenced by wider social, economic and political forces of the time.

The period in which the data collection took place (March 2001 to June 2002) and time in which this thesis was completed (late 2006) may have been divided by a period of more than four years, yet there have been some extraordinary continuities during this period in social, political and economic terms. For instance, the very nature of the jobs under investigation is consistent with an economy characterised by persistently high levels of low-skilled employment (Brinkley, 2006). What is more, a growing consumer society will no doubt lead to a continuing demand for people to prepare the conditions for convenience food, serve food in restaurants, sell cheap goods, and, sell various goods and services over the telephone. In effect, there is no reason to believe there has or will be less of a demand for jobs that include that of a hygienist, waiter or waitress, sales or stockroom assistant, or call operator. However, more recently it would be appropriate to acknowledge that low cost freight transport and more liberal trade across the European Union (EU) may increase the chances of food being prepared overseas, the Internet may lead to further closures of traditional retail outlets, some call centre work may be 'off-shored' to parts of Asia, and since the most recent expansion of the EU, an influx of labour more willing to work for lower wages than their indigenous counterparts, may make such jobs even less attractive to those who currently perform them. What is more, there is compelling evidence to believe low-level service work has neither increased in status, nor has the demand for it lessened since 2001. Signs suggest such trends in low status work will remain consistent for the near future, at the very least.

In political terms too, there is much evidence of continuity in both government economic and employment relations policy. For instance, despite being in power for more than nine years there is little evidence that the third consecutive Labour government is in the process of abandoning the monetarist economic policies inherited from the four consecutive Conservative

governments who were in office between 1979 and 1997. Similarly, despite the introduction of the Employment Relations Act 1999, the Employment Act 2002, the Employment Relations Act 2004, the Working Time Directive, and the National Minimum Wage framework, trade unions remain very weak in the private sector (Kersley et al, 2006). This may have led to stability in terms of trade union memberships (Grainger, 2006), but it seems unlikely that low-level private sector work will become more unionised in the near future. If anything, trade unions may become even weaker in the private sector and immigrant labour may do little to raise the status of low-level work.

Finally, few people under 30 years of age will have experienced the last economic recession of the early 1990s. In effect, almost a generation has passed since the UK last saw high levels of unemployment (this statement does not dispute the fact that the UK may have a great deal of 'hidden' unemployment). What this means is that low-level and low status work was in relative abundance at the time of the research data being collected and continues to be in relative abundance in the year 2006, even if the relative abundance is created artificially by high and rapid levels of turnover in low status jobs. If anything, for example, hotel and catering employment has grown in the period between data gathering and the publishing of this research, from 6.2 million to 6.4 million (ONS, 2006). More specifically, unemployment figures released in May 2006 are almost identical to those of May 2001 (BBC, 2006). However, continuing and increasing demands from employers does not necessarily mean that low-level workers are in a position to command better terms and conditions (as the research findings from the current research implicitly suggest); it probably just means that low-level workers are in more of a position to move from one low-level job to another should a reason to move arise. In brief, whilst this sub-section has focused on very general variables, there is good reason to

believe that with a few minor exceptions, what is true of low status work in early 2001 is also true at the end of 2006. What is more, there is good reason to believe the social, political and economic conditions that have helped create and sustain high levels of low status jobs will continue at least into the near future.

8.2.3 Assessing findings through inter-case study comparison

As has already been noted in this thesis, it is difficult to make generalisations about case study findings as case organizations always have their unique details (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). However, in this situation, the process of validating research findings by way of searching for general features within actual findings is not about establishing sociological or social psychological facts commonly associated with positivism. Indeed, this would go against the earlier discussion about epistemological and ontological considerations and how the realist view of reality suggests organizational phenomena such as misbehaviour are entities that exist for, and are reproduced for, those who commit them. Rather, this sub-section is about comparing and contrasting in turn each of the factors that formed the basis of the results chapter so that we can be confident about applying the theories and means of analysis discussed and proposed in Chapter Four. In effect, the main benefit of having four similar cases and four similar sets of results is that each case study helps to validate the other and ensures sufficient attention has been given to collecting broadly similar data of an appropriate breadth and depth. In other words, if we find, for example, that one of the case organizations demonstrates a certain peculiarity, can we still treat, within certain boundaries, four sets of findings as one? What is more, the process of noting generalities and particularities allows others to determine the value and wider applicability of analytical findings. We begin the

process by comparing and contrasting the research findings from Chapter Seven and end with an assessment of this analytical process.

Company characteristics

In terms of company characteristics alone it would appear that there are a range of differences across the case organizations. First of all, each organization started trading and employing people in different eras. For instance, HotelCorp was established in the late 1910s, FoodCo in the early 1960s, BargainChain in the early 1980s and SubCallco in the early 1990s. Whilst there is no doubt each organization has changed somewhat since initial conception, there are historical factors (such as unionisation at FoodCo) that are likely to play some part in the how organizations currently operate. On the matter of staff representation, it is worth noting how BargainChain is the only case where employees are denied a voice on company matters. In the three other instances employees are not denied a degree of influence over company strategy, but the findings cast doubt on their immediate significance to low-level employees. A final difference between the organizations studied concerns what the organizations actually produce. For example, FoodCo, HotelCorp and SubCallco each produce goods or services for up-market product markets or blue-chip companies, yet BargainChain operated in the competitive discount retail market. Having said that, in terms of rewarding staff, whomever the organization serves and whatever each organization produces, seemed to have little bearing on the levels of remuneration offered to low status workers.

Similarities between the four cases include, for instance, each micro case organization having similar numbers of workers (between 17 and 30 – note: the researcher observed around half of HotelRest's 60 employees). Each organization was also keen to nurture an appreciation of

quality initiatives (admittedly BargainChain appeared quite lax about this issue). Levels of pay for all low-level employees were well below the national average (ranging from £4.10 per hour to £5.30), and none of the organizations commanded a strong position in its respective product markets (SubCallco seemed to be the strongest of the four whilst FoodCo supplied one large organization).

Labour processes

In terms of the labour process at each of the case organizations, there are a number of differences between the work of hygienists, waiters and waitresses, sales and stockroom assistants, and, call operators. For instance, hygienists at FoodCo are allowed a great deal of autonomy and responsibility, whereas at the three other organizations low-level staff are given strict instructions about how they should work and are monitored on a regular basis to see if they are conforming to orders. The work of hygienists also sets them apart from the other types of workers in a number of ways. Among these differences is that hygiene work is mainly physical labour, whilst at the three other case organizations it is a mixture of emotional and physical labour. Indeed, at SubCallco the work is based almost entirely on emotional conformance. Further differences include the fact that peer-based training is used at FoodCo. At HotelRest and BargainChain low-level workers are given minimal training, whilst at SubCallco call operators are given a great deal of product training, yet must fend for themselves (or in friendship groups) in terms of dealing with the real nature of their work. It would also be reasonable to suggest that hygienists were allowed to work at a relatively leisurely rate and had ample rest periods. But in all other cases low-level workers had to work under far more oppressive conditions (particular in the case of waiting staff at HotelRest and sales assistants at BargainChain).

In terms of work similarities it would be reasonable to suggest that low-level workers across each of the four case organizations must, in some way, abide by quite strict rules and highly prescribed work routines. Moreover, work changes little from day-to-day and involves little in terms of technical skill. Ultimately, in terms of technical skill alone, workers at each of the four case organizations are easy to replace. Furthermore, workers across the four case organizations are supervised quite closely even if the official line indicates a strong commitment to teamwork philosophy. Finally, all workers have to wear a particular uniform or style of dress to denote the kind of work they do. It was even observed that where no tangible uniform policy existed (as at BargainChain) workers still dressed in a way broadly reflective of their wider occupational group.

Group memberships

There were a number of differences noted in the group memberships and potential group memberships at each of the case organizations. A key point to note first of all, however, is that there are variations across and within the cases in terms of workers being dedicated to their jobs in some way. For instance, out of all of the case organizations it would appear that hygienists tended to take their work and association with the organization quite seriously (to such an extent at times that they felt different to other functions of the organization). In contrast, except in a few notable exceptions (a small number of waiters and waitresses at HotelRest and sales assistants at BargainChain) few of the other low-level workers that make up this research acted in a manner that would suggest they cared about being loyal to their job or employer. More specific examples revealed differences in the degree of identity in inclusive terms (see figures 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.5). For instance, at HotelRest there is a distinct possibility that waiters and waitresses may view themselves as being a member of a corporate

group characterised by an internationally renowned brand name. However, at BargainChain and SubCallco realistic levels of association were restricted to just three social identities that went no further than the team or outlet level. In terms of sub-identities, for three of the case organizations this predominantly took the form of small friendship groups based around surviving work routines. In contrast, at FoodCo sub-identities appeared to be much more salient, involved larger numbers and often involved clear acts of collective misbehaviour. Finally, at SubCallco, call operators could not even take a team identity for granted as the call operators are periodically forced to change teams in order to meet the direction of the business.

Similarities in terms of available social identities also appeared to occur across case organizations. For instance, the range and availability of alternative formal group identification was broadly similar. Indeed, at a hypothetical and much more restricted level, all organizations offered reasonably achievable transfer or promotional opportunities. Having said that, in nearly all cases, the chances of moving to a group with higher status or perceived higher status was by no means an easy option and the chance to seek higher status at another organization seemed a far more reasonable prospect. That is to say, transferring to another job within the organization had little appeal, as it would mean performing a different set of duties under the same general conditions of employment. Further, internal promotional opportunities require a period of commitment and co-operation that most workers would probably soon tire of. Crucially, it should also be noted that most cases of work dissatisfaction are more likely to be resolved, certainly in the short-term, by the worker moving to another low-level and low status group, at another organization. Indeed, it appeared that it was only the hygienists at FoodCo

who seemed willing to fight for a greater recognition by management and resist attempts to downgrade their status.

Social relations

Differences in social relations at the four case organizations include how hierarchical relations at FoodCo were on the whole quite co-operative and as good as could be reasonably expected of low status work. However, at HotelRest and BargainChain the style of management created a great deal of resentment amongst waiters and waitresses, and, sales and stockroom assistants. At a lower level of management, most notably at HotelRest and BargainChain, supervisor relations with low-level staff were seen to be good and based on a great deal of co-operation and mutual respect. Except, that is, with a particular kind of supervisor at HotelCorp. Similarly differing styles of management also occurred at SubCallco. In terms of sub-groups it seems that in the case of three of the workplaces that friendship groups are ambivalent towards competing with other friendship groups. Having said that, at FoodCo, a distinct and ongoing conflict characterised the relations between male and female hygienists.

There were some similarities identifiable across the four case organizations in terms of shopfloor social relations. The main similarities between the case organizations suggest that even where social relations appeared to be quite co-operative, like at FoodCo, management would not hesitate to adopt an authoritarian stance should their ultimate authority and status be threatened from below. In such situations the typically quite blurred power differentials quickly become clearer. The result of a changed attitude meant that relations between hygienists and management, in effect, temporarily became unstable. The key point worth

noting is that in all cases hierarchical social relations have the potential to be unstable, yet deference to authority and a work ethic probably plays as much a role in nurturing behaviour that tends not to challenge the status quo.

Management control

As Thompson (1989) previously noted, there is little value in reading off what forms of control are used by a management regime. Rather, it is better to note how control actually happens (Bolton, 2005). What could be added to this is whether or not workers are actually responsive to management control, or, even aware something or someone is trying to manipulate them into behaving in a certain way. Therefore it would be rather meaningless to note a range of control mechanisms if they in fact had little affect on how workers behave. However, some differences are worth noting in how management regimes at each of the four organizations tried to control workers. Compared to the other case organizations, there appeared to be evidence to suggest that FoodCo hygienists are controlled in the main by being allowed to work in quite an autonomous fashion. Further, hygienists were trained by peers and therefore more likely to respond to the requests of peers in terms of getting the job done, in a certain way, in a certain time. The same, however, could not be said for low-level workers at the other three case organizations where relatively overt and strict forms of control, related to quality initiatives, appeared to prevail. Indeed, this is despite the corporate line taken on HRM and employee involvement initiatives, particularly at HotelRest and SubCallco.

Similar to comparisons between hierarchical social relations, the main issue of note is that authoritarian forms of control exist at each of the four organizations and come into effect when work systems fail to control workers in a sufficient way. The main difference it would seem is

that supervisory authority appears to be used as the last resort at FoodCo, yet represents a far more immediate policy at HotelRest, BargainChain and SubCallco. The findings show that the most common feature of management control, found in all of the case studies, suggests control is far from absolute and, as expected, only seemed to shape the misbehaviour characteristic of each organization.

Misbehaviour

While at a superficial level misbehaviour appears to vary little from case to case, on closer examination it would seem that one or two of the cases appear to deviate from what is common to all. For instance, FoodCo is the only case organization characterised by overt collective action. It is also the only workplace where cultural subversion (and responses to cultural subversion) appeared to be a common organizational characteristic. Here, misbehaviour appeared to involve mutual agreements such as those that govern the sanctioning of longer rest breaks that contravene formal policy and practice. The only other distinct act of misbehaviour was noted at SubCallco and involved misbehaviour of a sexual variety.

In terms of similarities across the four case organizations it would be reasonable to suggest each case is noted by individual acts of resistance or defiance, survival strategies conducted either on an individualistic basis or by small friendship groups, and many individual acts of misbehaviour involving external strategies of resistance. It could be said that a range of misbehaviour related to informal custom and practice also occurred to some degree at HotelRest, BargainChain and SubCallco.

Summary

There seems little point in listing all the ways in which the four sets of findings differ, as many are either self-evident in the discussion above, or even notable from the findings themselves in Chapter Seven. What does seem to stand out and needs to be further investigated is how FoodCo as a case organization differs in many ways from the other three case organizations. At FoodCo many of its employees are members of a union, hygienists generally have a greater affinity with their job and the organization (mainly on the grounds of protecting favourable working conditions). Hygienists are allowed to work in relatively autonomous fashion, hygienists appear more likely to respond to peer pressure, work is based almost entirely on physical labour, hygienists are formally trained by their peers, hygienists are granted many informal concessions (and create more space for respite when they can), collective misbehaviour is common, employment relations are generally quite good, and, cultural subversion exists whereas misbehaviour of this kind is not a significant features of the other case organizations. Indeed, SubCallco represents the second most noteworthy case because call operators are regularly forced to change their main reference group; sexual misbehaviour is common; and the work of a call operator is almost entirely based on emotional labour. However, other differences noted seem to pale into significance when compared to the features of FoodCo and to a lesser extent with SubCallco.

That said, there are many remarkable commonalties across the four case organizations and when taken into consideration suggest FoodCo is perhaps not that different from the other three case organizations. Similarities across the four case organizations include workers being subjected to strict quality initiatives, low pay, poor treatment, few promotional opportunities and harsh forms of supervisory authority. On this basis it would seem reasonable to suggest

that, for example, what differentiates FoodCo from the rest of the other cases is in actual fact a range of idiosyncratic organizational characteristics, yet in a broader sense the differences are less important. As such, FoodCo shares a wide-range of organizational characteristics, important to the current research, with the three other case organizations. In other words, the most important feature of the wider study – pressures to keep low status workers as low status workers – is apparent in all of the case organizations. Therefore this suggests that the findings are indeed quite suitable for both general and specific forms of analysis.

8.3 Further explanations for the five dimensions of misbehaviour

In this section LPA and a SIA are applied to the findings. The process of analysing the findings starts with brief details of what is typical and not so typical of the misbehaviour noted in the findings. Secondly, the analysis then switches to considering the role of management control mechanisms in shaping misbehaviour. Third and finally, features of a SIA (Haslam, 2001) are used to further explain what may remain unclear about misbehaviour after applying LPA. The aim of the analysis is to offer fresh explanations for misbehaviour.

8.3.1 Alternative resistance strategies

Misbehaviour of a kind associated with work-related resistance or defiance occurred on a relatively frequent basis across all of the four case organizations. For instance, humour used to undermine chargehand authority at FoodCo, refusing to follow Service Standards at HotelCorp, refusing to sell more storecards at BargainChain, and, not working when management fails to reward good work at SubCallco. In the main, acts of resistance appeared to be acted out on an individualistic basis. However, occasionally and under certain

circumstances, there were a smaller number of collective acts of misbehaviour, even if at times such acts took the form of pseudo collectivism (Hodson, 1995) – individuals offering tacit support to resistance or taking organized turns to express discontent, rather than in larger numbers at the same time. Further, collective acts of resistance were committed by various sub-groups from all the case organizations. However, collective acts were typically undertaken without the view of a manager or supervisor. In contrast, individual acts seemed to represent the concerns of a wider occupational group, yet typically occurred in the presence of a figure of authority. It seems that the main reason to resist primarily concerned management being able to easily dictate and control the daily work routine without being accountable in any particular way to their low-level counterparts. Misbehaviour in this sense is about communicating to management a sense of grievance or objection.

The findings confirmed Thompson's observation (Thompson, 1989) in that they suggest factors used to control the labour process at each of the four organizations contributed to the need for workers to resist. Indeed, evident across all four of the case organizations were a range of measures to guarantee that labour played a particular and restricted role in the activities of ensuring factories are kept sufficiently sterile for processing food, waiting appropriately on paying restaurant guests, serving retail customers in an acceptable manner, and persuading selected members of the public to switch bank accounts. The process of control typically involved a broad range of initiatives, yet the most telling factor of all appeared to concern the hard reality that management at each of the organizations were so dominant that they seemed to expect few problems getting low-level workers to comply with their demands. Even where a degree of autonomy or freedom was granted, the autonomy was primarily restricted to task allocation and minor concessions on the pace of work. In effect, the

rigidity of the work schedule and the means by which it was enforced not only created grievances; but also restricted the opportunity for workers to display or act upon those grievances. What is more, the strict labour process and management's efforts to marginalise staff involvement in decision-making processes meant that workers were forced to act upon grievances using their own resources. As a result of the restrictive conditions, workers often took their frustrations out on supervisors or managers when an opportunity presented itself, as official grievance procedures were typically viewed as not worth pursuing. Workers who resisted in a collective fashion (mainly at FoodCo), however, seemed to benefit from being able to turn the forum of teamworking, and the fruits of previous resistance into a momentum for more substantial acts of resistance (Vallas, 2003). However, in the other case organizations, workers were denied quality time with fellow workers, tended to be less committed to their colleagues, job and organization, and therefore more likely to resist on an individual basis.

It is doubtful if proponents of a SIA would have considered in any great detail the restricting nature of management control and the main tenets of LPA as being a factor in what is typically referred to in social identity theory as 'social competition'. Having said that, it is doubtful whether such an advocate would take a dim view of LPA if it could be demonstrated how management control plays a significant part in the social identity salience, social change or social mobility belief systems, and self-categorization processes of workers. Added to this would be how management control has a significant role to play in the chances of certain types of collectivism developing. In terms of applying a SIA we first have to ask one important question – at the time of the grievance, would it be reasonable to suggest that the main reference group (or ingroup) of the workers is suitable for fighting the grievance? Clearly, in all

four case organizations, the main reference group (either team or shop identity) is not formally sanctioned or designed to deal with grievances. The next question is – what other groups are available to deal with this matter? In all of the cases, for reasons outlined previously, the trade union and staff forum at FoodCo, and the staff forums at HotelCorp and SubCallco, seemed to be widely viewed by respective low-level workers as unsuitable for dealing with re-occurring shopfloor level problems. Indeed, BargainChain’s aggrieved sales and stockroom assistants were not even allowed the luxury of assessing whether a representative body could help them out or not. The third question to be asked would be – what other groups are available to help out in this situation? At three of the case organizations – HotelRest, BargainChain and SubCallco – the groups most likely to be useful in such a crisis would be friendship groups. However, as noted in the last chapter, friendship groups may be a certain source of collective support and comfort for a small number of self-selected friends, yet on the whole appear ill-equipped to fight back against the demands and prerogatives of management. That said, at FoodCo, friendship groups are less of a feature of the shopfloor and instead there are highly salient and quite resilient collectives made up of hygienists and chargehands, capable in certain circumstances of taking on management. Therefore it would seem that acts of resistance are as much to do with workers assessing the viability of all available groups as means to help them resolve grievances, as it is about management frustrating the rights and will of its employees to associate themselves with groups that have their interests at heart. It just so happens at three of the case organizations covered in this thesis there are no suitable groups for workers to associate themselves with and the only other option is an individualistic course of action. However, where workers are rewarded for working in a collective fashion and see clear benefits of working as a collective, as is the case of FoodCo, workers seem more likely to judge collective resistance to be the best way of dealing with day-to-day grievances.

8.3.2 Survival strategies

Survival strategies probably represented by far the most common form of misbehaviour at three of the case organizations, that is, at Hotelrest, BargainChain and SubCallco. Survival strategies were apparent at FoodCo, but in the main seemed to represent the secret activities of a relatively marginal sub-group. Examples of surviving work across the four case organizations include hiding away from the view of chargehands and management at FoodCo, a range of horseplay committed by young waiters at HotelRest, hiding from the supervisor and shop manager at BargainChain; and chatting whenever possible or reading magazines and newspapers between telephone calls at SubCallco. In the main, however, acts of this kind appeared to be perpetrated by individuals and in some cases represented the work of friendship groups. What is more, survival strategies were in one sense undertaken in such a way that management or supervision rarely knew they were occurring, or in another way, acted out in tandem with official duties so that management or supervision would not dwell on them too much and would probably turn a blind eye to such activity as they did not get in the way of official duties. Misbehaviour in this sense is about acknowledging a frustration with how work has to be conducted, or how the worker is managed, yet for whatever reason the worker believes his or her predicament cannot be socially changed. In contrast to resistance, surviving represents a strategy adopted when workers believe they cannot or do not want to change how they are expected to work.

It would seem that the findings concur with Noon and Blyton's (2002) definition of survival strategies. Here workers from all case organizations found ways to get through the day and find ways to deal with boredom, tedium, monotony and powerlessness so typical of the jobs at the heart of the current research. As such, in order to survive work that entails, for example,

cleaning a factory all night, being subjected to the demands of hotel guests, serving customers and moving boxes and fittings all day, and making repetitive calls to a disinterested social demographic; requires people to become both resourceful and creative so as to allow a degree of control to be recovered (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999). In the case mentioned above, the degree of control recovered through survival strategies has resulted in the opportunity for momentary acts of entertainment, a chance to chat with other employees, a chance to think about non-work matters, and, pursue interests that make the working day go quicker. A further important dimension of the observable aspect of survival strategies is that workers seem to know that the status quo of their organization is unfair, admit that they are ill-equipped to change how things are, yet use an array of strategies to deal with the situation as best as they can. However, the findings dispute the idea put forward by Edwards and Scullion (1982) that acts of this kind involve workers making a weak or no connection between their actions and their objective conditions. In other words, workers at each of the four organizations seem fully aware that the reason, for example, to throw fruit around the shopfloor and find safe hiding places from management and supervision, is because specific management objectives and management control affords few opportunities for low-level workers to break away from intense, repetitive and pre-prescribed tasks that bring little job satisfaction. Moreover, as noted previously, because work is organized on individualistic lines at three of the case organizations, it seems evident that workers go about surviving work in a mostly individualistic manner or in small, close knit friendship groups. Yet in parallel to furtive activity, by design or by accident, management at each of the four organizations have also left gaps for workers to escape into, but perhaps not enough space to allow a broader and more open counter culture to emerge. But, whilst there is little doubt that the findings suggest in one sense that survival strategies hardly equate with rebellious activities, LPA does not tell us

more precisely why workers attempt to survive work when there is a chance to pursue other strategies.

In Chapter Four it was suggested that if resistance is equal to social competition then survival strategies are equivalent to social creativity (see figure 4.4). If this is the case then survival strategies are about low status groups accepting that the boundaries of the high status group – defined in this case by management or supervision – are impermeable, and that relations between the two are ‘secure’. By being socially creative it involves a course of action that includes one of the following three psychological processes – changing the dimension by which the low status group compares itself to management; changing how the low status group attributes meaning to its relationship with management; or changing the comparative frame by which the low status group compares itself to management. The result is that an act of surviving work may have a social dimension in that social activity appears to occur (and that the status quo remains unaffected in social terms), but crucially, the most important dimension of a survival strategy is its partial or near complete invisibility to onlookers. That is, the low status group views management in a different way. For example, successfully playing up in full view of management or finding crafty ways to temporarily avoid work for a short period of time, allows the low status worker to feel that they have achieved a symbolic victory over their rivals. What this means is that for a time low status workers attain a psychological boost by ‘getting one over’ on management. What this also suggests is that survival strategies are not necessarily inferior to resistance strategies. Instead, if we take psychological processes into consideration then we can see how survival strategies serve a very important purpose to people who continually face a situation characterised by a fixed and harsh reality. In effect, as mentioned earlier in this sub-section, if survival strategies appear to be about dealing with

broader aspects of the status quo, such as accepting that work needs to be done in a certain way to suit a particular product market, then resistance strategies appear to be more about pushing the boundaries of the status quo back in small incremental steps. As such, survival strategies seem to be triggered by workers understanding their place in the organization, how the organization feeds into product markets and how the best way to deal with this harsh reality is to survive first and then may be resist later when it is more safe to do so. In other words, it suggests that the typical emphasis in orthodox LPA, on worker resistance, underplays the importance of how low-level workers may get more from learning to survive work before contemplating any other strategy. Finally, on this basis it is reasonable to assume that workers survive work broadly in the same way that they would resist. For example, where available groups are judged by individuals to be unsuitable for the purpose of surviving, then individuals will find individualistic ways in which to survive and cope with their work (also see sub-section on external strategies to deal with conflict).

8.3.3 Informal custom and practice

Acts that could be said to come under the category of informal custom and practice seemed to be quite common across most of the four case organizations. Indeed, whilst it was difficult to differentiate what was and what was not informal custom and practice at SubCallco, such misbehaviour seemed to be highly developed and a tangible feature of workplace relations at FoodCo. For instance, hygienists at FoodCo were granted extra long breaks that required work to be squeezed into a shorter period of time officially deemed necessary and, permission by the manager to pilfer a certain amount of the organization's raw materials or finished produce. Examples of informal custom and practice at the other case organizations include pardoning lateness and absence, secret working arrangements and, collusion between supervisors and waiting staff over both secret and overt auditing of quality initiatives. However,

the main distinguishing feature of informal custom and practice is that it always involved collective activity. What is more, such acts involved collective activity that joined together the forces of management or supervision, and, both formal and informal sub-groups. An example of this difference would be the BargainChain supervisor collaborating with sales and stockroom assistants groups, and, supervisors at HotelRest collaborating with a sub-group over favourable working conditions at HotelRest. Yet, even if the acts were mostly visible in social terms, the pledge to collude was not written down and as a consequence some shopfloor workers might have been ignorant of such activity. It would seem therefore that misbehaviour of this kind is about conflict resolution at a micro-level; cementing what has come from resistance or ensuring that survival strategies attain some form of wider recognition. More specifically, it is about finding common ground between two rival groups that represents, at the very least, some sort of temporary accord that allows both parties to work together in relative harmony and reach their respective objectives.

It was clearly stated in Chapter Four that LPA is about critiquing activities that seek to bring order to other activities. As such, over the many years of industrialisation management regimes have experimented with many different forms of control (Edwards, 1979). For instance, management control can vary somewhat and may involve factory despotism (Marx, 1976), responsible autonomy (Friedman, 1977) or even unobtrusive monitoring (Sewell, 1998). One particular form of control, however, could explain why workers appear content to join forces with management over certain matters. It is probably more accurate to refer to this form of control as a kind of management-led philosophy. A philosophy, as Burawoy (1979) demonstrates, that requires workers to be persuaded in to co-operating in their own exploitation. That is, management offers incentives to low-level workers and also allows them

certain rights to constrain management initiatives. The result is a kind of game between management and subordinates where, on the one hand, low-level workers gain a certain amount of satisfaction from co-determining some of the rules that they work by, and on the other, management have a means to obscure and secure surplus value from their efforts. Returning momentarily to the informal custom and practice detailed in the findings, it can be seen how informal agreements that cover specific issues such as break times, pilfering and working agreements, almost certainly are the result of conflicts that Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) refer to as the appropriation of time, product and work (also see figure 2.4). It seems that management has retaken control of contentious and micro-level parts of the labour process by offering covert incentives that co-opt the consent of low-level workers. Over time the success of a one-off gesture has led to a more permanent arrangement and a degree of lasting co-operation between the two parties. However, if this is the case, then why do low-level workers eventually enter into such agreements when they have, for example, the option of finding other ways to deal with low status? LPA is admittedly helpful in explaining how and why workers can be secretly coerced into taking part in their own exploitation, yet it is less convincing in terms of which processes lead to a reduction of conflicting interests.

If we accept the view offered by LPA, we can also refine these broadly accepted understandings of informal custom and practice by considering a SIA. For instance, a SIA would suggest that the reason why the low-level group enters into informal agreements with management is based on the reality of low-level workers having the ability to define themselves in many different ways. As noted in particular in figure 7.1, hygienists have the potential to define themselves in terms of a functional group that also includes the manager who the informal and tacit agreement is with. Likewise, waiters and waitresses can also

redefine themselves as being part of a functional group (the restaurant) and sales assistants as part of a shop-related group. In each situation different group norms and values come into effect. For example, when workers self-categorize and become members of a salient subgroup then they will behave in a way that is consistent with the norms and values of that subgroup. However, as revealed in Chapter Seven, workers are much more likely to view themselves in terms of a more inclusive identity in certain situations. If we take FoodCo as being the best example of informal custom and practice then it is important to note how hygienists' functional identity regularly becomes salient in an organizational context. In this kind of situation hygienists, chargehands and the manager all share one set of beliefs. In sum, a SIA offers particularised explanations as to why low status workers come to agree on certain matters; it also demonstrates how a formal group can come to have hidden customs and practices. A second way of understanding why low-level workers opt to co-operate with high status workers is based on the idea that high status groups quell or pre-empt conflict with low status groups by offering them tokenistic gestures. Clearly, the manager at FoodCo offered low status workers longer breaks and more rewards. What is more, management at HotelCorp and BargainChain were able to co-opt their low-level counterparts by unofficially letting them have a certain amount of time off as well as not punishing their misdemeanours. In brief, many shopfloor conflicts brought about by, for example, boredom and fatigue, are neutralised by management by way of tokenistic gestures. Where tokenistic gestures have been accepted by low-level workers and are sustainable from a management point of view, the result tends to be agreements that are likely to become part of every day micro organizational activity, and, play a part in maintaining the greater status quo. Further, by moving between contrasting social identities, low-level workers are in effect constantly going through a process of being part of, against, and ambivalent to, the status quo. This explanation adds to and departs from LPA in

revealing how workers can move between states of consent and resistance to, and disconnection from, the labour process.

8.3.4 Cultural subversion and sexual misbehaviour

Misbehaviour of a character that could be said to involve a degree of cultural subversion appeared to only occur at one of the case organizations. Likewise, despite a slight detection of sexual misbehaviour amongst waiters and waitresses at HotelRest, it was far more a feature of the working environment at SubCallco. Examples here include female hygienists trying to subvert male oppressors who have collaborated in such a way so as to prevent females from acquiring and undertaking favourable roles and jobs, and, call operators using time carved out of their working schedule to flirt with members of the opposite sex. In the former of the two, we saw acts that involved conflict between two collectivised sub-groups, and in the latter, we saw essentially individualistic motives in the context of a friendship group spanning two campaigns. Like informal custom and practice, both acts were visible in certain social terms, yet it is possible that other hygienists and call operators not referred to in the findings may have been unaware of such activities. In this sense cultural subversion is about one gender-based group challenging a self-defined sense of superiority of another gender-based group. It also represents a conflict that may have been caused by the partial preservation of bygone organizational traditions, which are in turn reflective of broader societal norms, of a previous age. In the other case, sexual misbehaviour seems to be about a non work-related matter being pursued on work time, but openly observable because the employer in question encourages its lowest level employees to express their sexual identity.

For some contributors to LPA cultural subversion and sexual misbehaviour represent a set of conflicts that move beyond the control and resistance model (Thompson and Newsome, 2004). However, some radical theorists believe there are hidden structures in organizations that allow certain social groups (typically male) to resist or disproportionately influence the advances of other social groups (typically women, ethnic minorities, homosexuals, lesbians and disabled groups) (Cockburn, 1991). Sexual misbehaviour of the type described in the findings does not seem to warrant any significant attention in the field of LPA. This is because many believe sexual misbehaviour in the workplace belongs to a private realm (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999). (It probably would belong to a different realm if employers could expel any notion of sexuality from their organization – realistically, this is highly improbable). Further, limited explanations suggest sexual misbehaviour relates to survival strategies in that it is just one activity a worker can indulge in to help pass time spent at work. However, the research findings suggest there are variously communicated management structures at both FoodCo and SubCallco that explain the prevalence of both forms of misbehaviour. For instance, until recently, management at FoodCo employed just men in the hygiene role and the legacy of preferring men over women has led to the current situation where men occupy all positions of formal power. However, at the time of the research it would appear that male domination is being challenged by a relatively steady influx of female workers who seem less keen to share the beliefs of their masculine colleagues. Similarly, as noted during fieldwork at SubCallco, management at SubCallco foster a sexually charged working environment by replicating sub-group rituals as a means to motivate call operators to do what is essentially low grade and poorly rewarded work. What is more, SubCallco appears to deliberately target young people to work in their call centres and do little to deny the fact that they encourage young people to flirt insofar as they also get their work done. As such, sexuality is embedded in the nature of the

micro-level labour process and represents a further means for employers to exploit employees. Therefore it would appear that management prerogatives and willingness to experiment with ways in which to get the most from the workforce has led, perhaps unwittingly, to the creation of a context where tensions between men and women, more commonly pursued through other institutions such as religious movements, political parties, the media and marriage, can be expressed.

It seems that LPA has allowed us to gain some degree of insight into cultural subversion and sexual misbehaviour. These insights suggest cultural subversion is representative of hidden control structures devised at a time when it may have been legitimate or more socially acceptable to discriminate against, for example, females. It is believed that sexual misbehaviour is based on control structures and that the research findings suggest sexual misbehaviour of the kind reported in the findings represents workers taking extra liberties on work time. When applying a SIA, however, it appears we can add to LPA insights. A SIA explains acts in terms of specific social identities rather than assuming it is a conflict between two warring factors of the same oppressed class. In more detail, the conflict at FoodCo clearly involves similar status workers, yet they are divided in a psychological sense by low and high status stereotypes (even if the basis of high status is clearly founded on insecure or illegitimate grounds) rather than on a similar status basis as would be the case with LPA. In brief, what happens in social identity terms is the masculine group becomes salient when the female group threatens its superiority and goes on to challenge what it believes to be a low status group by embarking on conflict, open hostility and antagonism (see figure 4.5). (At any other time the masculine group is likely to supremacise or ideologise about how superior it is to the female group). In response, the female group becomes salient and adopts a similar

position. Fortunately, as noted in the findings, the masculine group accepts to an extent they are an illegitimate interest group and like in the previous sub-section go through a negotiation process with the female group. Here the masculine group offers a token gesture to the female group as a means to prevent a conflict that they would almost certainly lose, from escalating. However, as later findings suggest, despite concessions and allowing certain females to move into their group, the male group remained reticent about relinquishing its perceived sense of status and forced out of the organization one of the more vulnerable female hygienists. Furthermore, it is also important to note that this act of cultural subversion, like the further act of demanding different break times, took on a collective form because those most affected by the repression judged the female group (and not, for example, the trade union) to be the most suitable vehicle for pursuing a particular type of grievance.

By applying a SIA to acts of sexual misbehaviour it would be reasonable to concur with LPA in that the conditions for embarking on acts involving flirting are similar to those associated with embarking on a survival strategy. However, a SIA can add to the process of analysis by suggesting the following. First, by desiring someone of the opposite sex and making that a momentary priority it seems likely that the call operator in question temporarily dissociated himself from all but one of the social groups he belonged to. That is to say, during a short period of time carved out from the working schedule a friendship group identity became salient in that the beliefs of that friendship group appear to involve grooming eligible members of the opposite sex. Only when the call operator realised that the friendship group served no immediate purpose, for example, when realising some work needed to be done to prevent being reprimanded by a team leader or peer, did the call operator re-instate his affinity with the team identity.

8.3.5 External strategies to deal with conflict

From the four case organizations in question, external strategies to deal with conflict equated entirely with low status workers leaving their employment without giving proper notice. Whilst it could not always be substantiated that leaving work without notice involved what has been termed as externalising resistance (Thompson, 2003), there is good reason to believe unresolvable conflict between worker and employer clearly played a significant part in the high levels of turnover common to HotelCorp and BargainChain. It is unknown whether it played a part in the only such incident noted at SubCallco. Examples include regular turnover at HotelRest and a sales assistant leaving employment at BargainChain after being made to perform duties she believed to fall outwith her previous experiences of such work. Such actions were, as expected, highly individualised and seemed to be indicative of social categories rather than social groups. In other words, for example, whilst young waiters and waitresses were not broadly collectivised, turnover amongst this category suggested they had more in common than was widely acknowledged and acted upon. The consequence being workers from this group left in high numbers because management tended to treat low-level workers as some sort of homogeneous threat to its objectives. This is despite the fact the waiting group is a highly fragmented social entity with ambivalent views towards management. Having said all of that, most departures were on the whole quite low key affairs, although a few incidences attracted a fair degree of attention from the shopfloor. Therefore it seems that misbehaviour of this kind is an acrimonious outcome of unresolvable conflict between worker and employer.

For many advocates of LPA, external strategies to deal with conflict can be explained in a general fashion by taking Edwards's (1986) view of the labour process. That is, structured

antagonism will inevitably force out of employment those unwilling to adapt or subject themselves to an organization constantly adapting to market forces. More specific explanations suggest such misbehaviour is an expression of an employee's discontent or conflict with an employer (Edwards and Scullion, 1982; Palmer, 1996; Mulholland, 2004), increased levels of surveillance (Thompson, 2003), or a latent will to take action against employers (Kelly, 1998). Evidence for all of these claims was clearly supported in the research findings. For instance, FoodCo is required by its one and only business customer to continually change its quality and hygiene initiatives, HotelCorp created Service Standards to meet the fastidious expectations of its customers, BargainChain catered for consumers unwilling to pay premium prices by minimising all of its business costs, and, a great deal of SubCallco's competitive edge comes from allowing its business customers to command its call operators in an almost arbitrary fashion. Collectively, however, all such business philosophies have several things in common – they are applied inconsistently, and, all are enacted with very little input from and regard for low-level workers; never mind how low-level workers are expected to cope with such changes and demands. Indeed, findings from several of the case organizations suggest that the closest low-level workers get to having some sort of say in how they are expected to work came via uninspiring one-way employee involvement initiatives such as simple briefings or business plans communicated through education orientated sessions. Having said that, whilst LPA seems to offer a very reasonable explanation for low-level workers taking action of such kind, or for holding a certain grudge against an employer, it does little to explain the decision making processes that leads up to an acrimonious departure.

In general it is fair to say that an advocate of a SIA would agree with an advocate of LPA in that there are likely to be powerful forces at work that makes it difficult for certain employees

with certain beliefs and attributes to survive in certain organizational contexts. However, a SIA departs from LPA in that it poses questions about how changing organizational objectives and initiatives have an effect on the status of its employees. In such circumstances it would be reasonable to assume that organizational change, no matter how trivial, temporary or arbitrary, may in fact lead to low-level workers having an enhanced role to play and thus in the main lead to increased levels of job satisfaction and a sense of importance. That said, at HotelRest, BargainChain and SubCallco quite the opposite seemed to be the case. In effect, management at each of these three case organizations made regular decisions of an autocratic and arbitrary nature that clearly affected the morale of waiters and waitresses, sales and stockroom assistants, and, call operators. Added to this equation would be the fact that many of these workers were far from settled in their jobs in the first place. What is more, with management absolving themselves of any obligation to provide satisfying work, or providing ready access to a mode of impartial or third-party representation, low-level workers at each of the three organizations are compelled, as indicated in previous sub-sections to finding their own ways of dealing with poor treatment and low treatment. Clearly, strategies to resist or survive poor treatment from management, or to seek reconciliation through informal agreements, were deemed unsuitable by those who chose an external-orientated social mobility strategy. Therefore it can be assumed that those who externalised their resistance did so because the social groups they belonged to, or internal social groups they could move to (such as a lateral or promotional move), were judged by the departing as inadequate means to deal with frustrations and declining morale. What is more, common to all the findings concerning external strategies, were individuals who had little association or affinity with the very groups found to be most resilient to autocratic and arbitrary management. For instance, Dawn at BargainChain remained outside of a long-established friendship group

distinguishable by a history of resilience to changing management prerogatives. As a consequence, the pull of opportunity outwith the organization tipped the balance from resistance, survival and co-operation strategies towards a fresh start elsewhere. In these situations external strategies to deal with conflict are based on powerful organizational forces, yet occur just as much due to a lack of internal mobility options and insufficient association with adequate social groups that could help the individual resist or learn to deal with management demands. The attraction of a fresh start with another employer also plays a significant part in this equation. In short, these situations compel workers to turn away from the groups available and seek security and status outwith the organization.

8.4 The objective and subjective dimensions of misbehaviour

It would be reasonable to make two basic conclusions about the analysis so far. First of all the analysis demonstrates how the objective conditions of low-status work – management control and the need to tightly control front-line labour processes – plays an important part in workplace misbehaviour. Management exercises control by using a whole manner of techniques, and their detailed description can give insights into what it is like to be a low-level worker at any of the four case organizations. Just a sample of what management control refers to in the context of low-level work includes minimal training, strict rules, highly prescribed work routines, close supervision, dictation, restricted role, domination, compliance, controlled autonomy, rigidity of work, harsh conditions, marginalisation of staff representation, low job satisfaction, co-operation in own exploitation, preferring men over women, replicating sub-group rituals, and, low grade and poorly rewarded work. The words to describe the conditions of low-level work may have come from the researcher himself, but there is no

denying that working at the lowest level and on the front-line at each of the four organizations is characterised by powerlessness. However, despite the nature of low-level work and despite denying workers a realistic chance to air their grievances through a staff-orientated forum, workers found a myriad of ways in which to deal with everything that management subjected them to.

A second conclusion is that in face of extreme difficulty workers responded to poor treatment in a manner many would describe as creative resourcefulness, rather than using the term 'misbehaviour'. Words to describe how low status workers responded to management control include sarcastic humour, cutting corners, pilfering, unsolicited breaks, hiding, leaving job without notice, defiance, fooling around, disappearing, refusing to follow orders, unauthorised absence, withholding effort, boycotting rituals, playing music and dancing, reading newspapers and magazines, and flirting with colleagues. In effect, the findings demonstrate how narrow and parochial the concept of 'organizational behaviour' can be when it misses out on all of this other behaviour.

The analysis demonstrates that low-level workers, especially when denied adequate third-party representation, seem prone to acting upon micro-level work-related and work-based problems on a kind of self-help basis. For instance, low-level workers at FoodCo coped with difficult circumstance by relying on a range of self-organized collectives; workers at the other three case organizations relied on a range of self-selected friendship groups to make work more bearable. In effect, the five dimensions of misbehaviour represent five distinct strategies that low-level workers use to deal with poor treatment from management or other work-based oppressors. The strategies involve resisting the demands of management, surviving the demands of management, making deals with management, and leaving employment due to

irreconcilable differences with management. Further strategies include subverting non-management oppressors and pursuing personal interests on work time.

What brings all the above together is a combination of management oppression and the ability of workers to respond to oppression or pursue their own interests despite being oppressed. LPA allows us to see in the findings how management control low-level workers for its own ends. However, it is probable that we would have arrived at these assumptions by reviewing radical literature and without resorting to collecting empirical research data. As such, a LPA-based approach does not really tell us anything new about workplace misbehaviour with LPA being used more as a means to an end than an end in itself. However, without basing the analysis on LPA it is unlikely that a SIA would have been as revealing.

Before the findings can be summarised we must remind ourselves of some of the main principles of a SIA. In its broadest sense a SIA takes into account both social and psychological aspects of organizational life. In one way it attempts to deal with power and other social structures (in this thesis dealt with by using LPA), yet in another way, it deals with the subjective experience of power and social structures. In a more specific mode a SIA recognises that people (not just workers) have an individual identity, but more importantly they also have a multiplicity of identities determined by memberships to a range of meaningful psychological groups of various abstractions. In this study the multiplicity of identity has been extended beyond various levels of organizational identity and various other groups associated with an organizational identity, to include a range of sub-group identities. A part of a SIA (self-categorization theory) strives to explain under what circumstances individuals associate or disassociate themselves from psychological groups, for example, under what conditions would a worker disassociate themselves from a formal organizational identity and associate

themselves with a sub-group identity and vice versa? A further important aspect of a SIA is to note and understand how social interaction is bound up with an individual's social identity. In this case a change of association from a formal group to that of a sub-group is likely to change the conditions for social interaction. A SIA, however, is based on one particular hypothetical assumption about people in general – social groups make comparisons with other social groups in order to attain positive identification. As such, association and disassociation of an individual's social identities may not be enough to maintain a rather subjective view of the self. That is to say, if the groups in which the individual is a member do not allow positive assumptions to be made about the self, and all strategies have been considered or pursued that could change the situation (social change beliefs), then the individual may consider seeking membership of a different group as a means to achieve positive identification (social mobility beliefs). Social change and social mobility strategies involve stereotyping as the main means of judging the chances of achieving positive status. Therefore identification based on judgement alone is not a guaranteed means to gaining higher status as it may also lead to undesirable or less than satisfactory outcomes. As such, the strength of LPA appears to be in demonstrating the role management play in the self-categorization processes of low status workers.

In essence, then, a SIA allows us to see in the findings that workplace misbehaviour is very much a tale of how management plays a pivotal role in creating and maintaining the conditions for low status social identities and in turn prompts workers to take action and address issues related to low status. That is to say, when employers seek to restrict the activities of their employees they are also restricting the many groups that employees can be or are members of. In a sense management control is about encouraging their employees to associate themselves with a range of restrictive social groups that are designed to serve management's

ends. Management control is also about making sure that the very social groups that could feasibly bring some sort of equilibrium to the situation are covertly handcuffed and not allowed a level of endorsement or the freedom and publicity they need to be effective. In some cases this could involve management misbehaving and breaking laws concerning freedom of association and equal opportunity. Yet this is by no means always necessary as management have at its disposal a range of perfectly legal means to stall or restrict the activities of any opposing groups. Employers or senior level management may also use their privileged status and by comparison abundant resources to create social groups more appealing than the social groups that serve the interests of employees or can be created locally by employees. This approach is more commonly viewed as creating a management class or creating the conditions for highly rewarding team activity.

In the context of the four case organizations these ideas translate into a range of outcomes. For instance, workers are allocated a range of social identities by management (see figures 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.5) that workers may grow to associate themselves with in some way providing the worker can relate to such identities in a positive way. However, these social identities are restrictive as they compel their members to behave in a way that can lead to a sense of low esteem and frustration. Moreover, such social groups also appear to have contradictory aims with management engineering their every direction, that is, management reserve the right to change the aim and status of the social groups they create on a whim and in extreme cases may break up more troublesome groups up altogether. Secondly, management also make a range of alternative group memberships (except in the case of BargainChain) available to workers, such as encouraging membership and participation of a staff forum, or in the case of FoodCo, association and membership of a trade union. However, the hard reality of life on the shopfloor and management attitudes to the very institutions that they claim to encourage is

often the very spark for low-level workers to create or escape into a range of social groups and identities that offer workers a way out or respite from low esteem or frustration. A further result of being put into a range of unsatisfactory social groups and offered membership of or affiliation with a range of other ineffective or neutered social groups, is that management may go on to claim (rhetorically) that they have provided the conditions for their employees to thrive in. Yet, workers quickly see past the limitations of these social groups and go on to create a range of more meaningful and useful social groups. The social groups created by workers, based on the findings and analysis so far, suggest in highly restrictive circumstances friendship groups are the kind of social group most likely to flourish. However, where more freedom is allowed and where management encourages a certain degree of collectivism amongst its workforce we are more likely to see more salient sub-groups with greater memberships, emerge. Further, unlike friendship groups that seem to act exclusively as a means to survive work and are dependent on friends staying in their jobs; sub-groups appear to be a more permanent arrangement, likely to survive a certain degree of labour turnover, more open to newcomers, more likely to gain some sort of recognition from management, and resemble and adopt similar functions to that of a friendly association or a trade union. As such, the findings suggest sub-groups provide a means to survive work, but their most noteworthy characteristic is in how they can also be mobilised as a means to challenge the prerogatives of management.

The consequence and contribution of a SIA to misbehaviour is that it forces us to look at dimensions of workers previously overlooked in both LPA and organizational psychology. As such, a SIA provides the tools to explore a previously hidden dimension of workplace misbehaviour – sandwiched somewhere in between the social and the psychology of work. Moreover, it allows observations of social interactions and discussions with workers to provide

far more than previously thought possible. What is more, it helps us appreciate the subjective experience of work without engaging in complicated and often fruitless ontological and epistemological debates. However, the tale of unsatisfactory social identities begins at the point where management creates social groups that fail to offer the positive identification that many workers feel they deserve. Having said that, when workers categorize themselves as members of friendship groups and sub-groups we do not necessarily see misbehaviour. This is because the findings suggest friendship groups and sub-groups should not be viewed as being entirely deviant, as they are also characterised by a work ethic. However, when friendship groups and sub-groups become salient we sometimes see misbehaviour as workers associate themselves with the groups that serve both similar and different interests to those nurtured by management. As a consequence management are likely to be tolerant of certain sub-groups and friendship groups as these groups do not overly threaten their main objectives.

8.5 Summary

In reaching the final section of this research exercise it is necessary to consider one further aspect of the broader research objectives. This involves a brief assessment of the process theory used in the thesis.

8.5.1 Orthodox labour process analysis, a social identity approach and misbehaviour

In Chapter Two it was suggested that the psychological approach, supported in particular by Vardi and Wiener (1996) and Vardi and Weitz (2004), could only offer limited explanations of low-level worker misbehaviour. It was suggested that whilst their ideas were particularly useful

in emphasising how a mismatch between individual psychology and a broad set of formal organizational and societal variables increased the chances of workplace misbehaviour, such an approach neglected many features of the employment relationship noted by advocates of orthodox LPA. As a consequence, orthodox LPA was chosen as the basis for further exploring workplace misbehaviour because it provides an important account of how work is organized and controlled (Brown, 1992). A further major benefit of LPA comes from its Marxist origins in that it offers a critique of the status quo in social affairs (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). A SIA was added to the theoretical equation as a means to overcome a particular weakness of LPA. Orthodox LPA struggles to offer a theory of the subject (Willmott, 1993). More specifically, as Haslam (2001) suggests, the major strengths of a SIA lies in offering a critical mediation between contexts and behaviour, and its emphasis on how social identities and group memberships govern behaviour in particular contexts. From the findings presented in chapter seven and the analysis earlier in this chapter it can be seen how the decision to exclude a traditional organizational psychological approach was justified within the parameters of the research objectives.

Indeed, a SIA added to our explanations of the five dimensions of misbehaviour distilled from the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. The findings suggest acts of an individualistic nature are based on low-level workers judging the many groups they belong to, to be inadequate for the problems they face. As a consequence, in most situations and because management at the four case organizations did not suffer resistance lightly, most acts of resistance were individualistic and often out of the view of management. In the case of survival strategies, a SIA allowed us to comprehend how many low-level workers cope with how they are managed by viewing management in a different light. More interestingly though,

it was suggested that the social dimension of survival strategies represented only the tip of the iceberg in terms of what survival strategies allow low-level workers to do. With informal custom and practice it was suggested that a SIA could help us appreciate how low-level workers can define themselves in many ways. The value of this conjecture is that it demonstrates how low-level workers can change from being co-operative with management in one instance, and in another instance, adopt an uncooperative stance. With the fourth dimension of misbehaviour we saw how a SIA can bring a fresh outlook on informal dimensions of work and organizations. Indeed, both cultural subversion and sexual misbehaviour were further explained by emphasising the complex identities of low-level workers and how these identities are the basis for both conflict and co-operation not specifically related to work-related matters. Finally, a SIA emphasises how many low-level workers leave their employment, often without notice, because individual workers judge the groups they belong to or are associated with, and the groups they could hypothetically move to within the organization, as either too weak as a means to defend their status against advances by management, or too difficult to move to in an often crisis situation. The result is a more satisfactory way of explaining misbehaviour, but also the potential to appreciate the social psychological of all organizational behaviour. An expansion of all the main points and a more global view of the contribution of this thesis will now be considered in the final concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Main achievements and future research

The aim of this thesis was to offer fresh explanations for the misbehaviour of low-level workers. The process began by refining what is meant by the term misbehaviour. There followed a contemplation of the most appropriate foundation to base our ideas of misbehaviour on, the development of a process theory to mediate between objective conditions and the misbehaviour itself, an empirical research exercise designed around the process theory and the problems of researching controversial organizational phenomena, a reflective account of the research process, extensive data presented and discussed to illustrate the main themes of this thesis, and an analytical review of the findings in relation to the process theory and the research questions. By taking such an approach we were allowed important new insights into the workplace misbehaviour of low-level workers from a reasonably representative sample of case organizations. The findings suggest that, while the misbehaviour of low-level workers is caused by the widespread poor treatment of low-level workers, the form the misbehaviour takes depends very much on the social groups that low-level workers belong to, are associated with, or have the potential to join. On the whole, except for the groups encouraged by management, management made it very difficult for any alternative or sub group to prosper. Even then, management reserved the right to restrict the identity of the groups it created as well as having the right to break up such a group if deemed necessary. As a result, individuals and small friendship groups committed a great deal of the misbehaviour noted across all four case organizations. Interestingly though, where management actually encouraged its low-level employees to work together and where a trade union is recognised, misbehaviour tended to be more significant in terms of challenging the prerogatives of management as well as being more likely to take a collective form. Collective

forms of misbehaviour also seemed to result in more co-operation between management and workforce based on substantive changes to working conditions. Having said that, even collective forms of misbehaviour did no more than cause minor disruption to the status quo, as collective action was often stopped in its tracks by tokenistic offerings from management. What is more, whilst the majority of the low level workers observed in the current research developed a range of strategies to deal with low-status and low morale, such strategies appeared to be short-term and very limited in their ability to offer solutions to much bigger problems. As such, the findings also suggest that much of the misbehaviour noted in the current research is likely to prevail in similar work environments unless management radically re-think how they treat their front-line employees or the workers themselves connect with institutions that have a far greater capacity to improve their status and morale. At present neither option seems likely.

The current research offers a number of distinct contributions to our understanding of organizational misbehaviour. Firstly, in the process of offering fresh explanations for misbehaviour, an attempt has been made to close the gaps both between contrasting views of workplace misbehaviour and between contrasting epistemological and ontological perspectives. That is to say, orthodox labour process analysis over-emphasises the objective conditions of labour and the homogeneity of labour, whilst the traditional psychological approach over-emphasises individuality and the ability of individuals to act outwith the constraints of their objective conditions. The present research transcends this polarity and demonstrates how improved explanations for workplace misbehaviour are only likely to come about if we give equal weight to the contextual and subjective dimensions of work. The second contribution relates to how a closer link has been made between two hitherto separate

perspectives. In effect, by refining and distilling the many names and terminology given to workplace misbehaviour over the previous century (see figures 2.1 and 2.2) by a vast range of theorists and empiricists, and reducing workplace misbehaviour to distinct strategies, the current work has paved the way for a link to be made between orthodox labour process analysis and a social identity approach. While, such a link needs further development, it provides the type of 'critical psychology' called for by Thompson (1989) as the means to enhance orthodox labour process analysis. The third contribution of the thesis is in emphasising the value of researching the many formal and informal social identities of workers and, in effect, continuing the trend of warning academics not to over-emphasise either the normative or the positive sides of organizations (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Vardi and Weitz, 2004). Here the findings from this thesis support the view that the social identities of workers must be seen as an essential ingredient of organisational analysis.

More specifically, the combined theoretical approach taken in this study has revealed the value of integrating the particular workplace context with a process approach to understanding the range of misbehaviours that are possible. In particular, the existing emphasis on merely charting types of misbehaviour was refined through a process model which does two things. First of all, we are able to follow the development of misbehaviour as the means whereby workers protect their identities from management attempts to control their values and behaviour. Second, the study enabled us to understand more about the way that certain types of misbehaviour are chosen to protect the worker's or work group's self-definitions. While this thesis is unable to provide an over-arching theory to explain all kinds of misbehaviour (for instance, serious and highly individualised acts such as physical abuse or sexual

harassment), it does offer an analytical framework for future researchers to begin explaining how particular behaviours to defend identity emerge in specific circumstances.

Indeed, there are numerous opportunities for using this conceptual framework and methodological approach, not only to replicate the study in similar work settings, but also to examine misbehaviour in a wider range of settings, sectors and levels of organization. The current study, for example, was unable to comment on the emergence and choices that occur in managerial misbehaviour, but the framework proffered here does enable the relevant processes to be pursued. By the same token, while the case studies here were of necessity confined to a fairly limited time period, the adopted framework is also likely to be useful in longitudinal studies concerned with how patterns of misbehaviour evolve in long-term relationships between workers and management. For instance, it is possible, as here, that misbehaviour in some settings is characterised by a limited recycling of chosen acts. Equally, in other settings, more varied and evolving patterns of tactics may present themselves. Thus, future research would not only benefit from exploring, as here, the particular antecedents of single acts of misbehaviour, but also the way that the shape of social identity tactics evolve over time in response to management-worker relations and how these relations are shaped in turn by wider social, political and industrial trends. As such, our process model represents a first step in elaborating our understanding of the creative side of misbehaviour and how 'making out', for example, is as much to do with protecting preferred identities in relation to others, as it is about maximising reward for effort.

Finally, some comments on the use of covert methods following the experience of this study is called for. While the research methods adopted during this research are by no means new or

novel, little applied social psychological research is characterised by a covert approach. Nevertheless, the covert methods used here have enabled the salience of social identity to misbehaviour to be explored in a way that is not easily achievable by other means. This is not to say covert participation observation as a way of gathering data on the social identity of workers is not without its problems. While covert methods may allow researchers to probe the secret rituals and mistrust of outsiders, their use also may be accused by managements of reinforcing the pervasive features of misbehaviour and neglecting the rights of the subjects of the study. Accordingly, future researchers would do well to confront these challenges and seek a way to convince those who have vested interests in workplace misbehaviour that there is a lot to be learned from understanding this form of secret and sometimes illicit organizational activity. Indeed, if researchers are more open about their research intentions and findings, then it may be possible to pursue those aspects of the relationship between worker identity and misbehaviour not easily detectable by the covert approach with a greater openness.

In conclusion, the fusing of labour process analysis with a social identity approach to analyse the data collected not only supports their use within a single framework in the present study, but has also provided a valuable new direction for the refinement of our understanding of the sources and purposes of misbehaviour in the current workplace.

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