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Chapter 9
**Unions, workers, and developing human capability: A social psychological
perspective**
Leda Blackwood

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Unions, workers, and developing human capability: A social psychological perspective

The concerns of human capability development have ostensibly been claimed by human resource management (HRM) discourse and practice that depoliticises (and individualises) the employment relationship, providing top-down approaches where the focus is on policies and practices that are aimed at the agentic and motivated worker, but designed in the interests of the employer (Cornelissen, 2007). The psychologically informed research that evaluates these practices for the most part also depoliticises and individualises the employment relationship. This may reflect what Zickar (2004) describes as the historical indifference of industrial and organizational psychology to unions and to the power dynamics between employers and workers. Investigation of workers' responses to HRM practice is limited to evidence of commitment and satisfaction (and their opposite) and to individual-level psychological explanations that atomise workers (Ellemers, DeGilder, & Haslam, 2004). Although the existence of competing sets of values and interests that are shared by groups of workers is acknowledged, the emphasis is on intra-organizational solutions that can manage any ensuing tensions. The political achievement of linking the development of capable workers to productivity, and not to social justice outcomes, has consequences both for practice and for research. What is conspicuously absent is the notion of workers' organizing to transform the organization; and the role of outside actors (e.g., unions) in the development of this collective capability.

In this chapter, I take a social psychological perspective and argue that the dynamic interactions between individuals, organizations, and the institutions that structure the employment relationship give rise to our aspirational goals and so to the requisite capabilities. My principal interest is in how we might open up a space for thinking about the role of unions in the development of human capability in the workplace and in society more broadly. There are three parts to this chapter. The first provides the broad context of union agendas and debates around skills development and the organization of workplaces and its contribution to productivity and union renewal. The second is more theoretical, exploring the psychological motivations and processes through which workers come to understand and seek to transform their experience of work. I return to unions and report on work by the Industrial Relations Centre (Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand) that tracks the development of provisions within collective bargaining. These capture the normative changes in what is expected within the employment relationship. And conclude with some thoughts about the challenge the human capability framework presents for unions and workers.

UNION CONTEXT AND DEBATES

In response to global capitalism, countries such as Australia, New Zealand (NZ) and the United Kingdom have been pursuing high-road approaches to economic growth that fit with notions of human capability development, a term that encompasses attributes of the individual and the organization that can produce capable workers (see 'Australia 2020',

Australian Government 2008; 'Workforce 2010', Department of Labour, New Zealand 2001; Realising Britain's Potential, HM Government 2008). In adherence to third-way precepts workers and employers are positioned as sharing the same interests, capability development leads to increased productivity leads to higher wages and organizational sustainability. As a bonus, it is often presented as productive of important psychological benefits where workers derive pride and respect from the meaningfulness of their work and from their social relations in the workplace. Under Labour governments in these countries, union movement leaders have championed the above arguments, often more so than employers (Heery, 2002; Kelly, 2004), and have been instrumental in the development of initiatives such as industry partnerships, quality circles, employee voice mechanisms, and workplace learning representatives.

Unions' mobilization of a discourse that links capability development initiatives with an end goal of industry development and economic growth in part reflects one view that to secure their survival under modern capitalism unions must demonstrate their legitimacy on the basis of (a) workers' contribution to productivity; and (b) the contribution of unions to the management of employment-related conflict (Kochan & Osterman, 1994, Baccaro, et al. 2003). This finds expression for instance, in the NZ Council of Trade Union's 'Organising Plus' strategy for rebuilding the NZ union movement and in particular, the industry partnerships approach. Although the objectives of building unity across the labour movement and increasing union density and member activism are articulated within the strategy, these are presented as a means towards largely extrinsic ends. The goal of a stronger, more dynamic union movement is to achieve a highly

skilled, highly productive, high wage economy where unions are granted the right to exist as ‘natural social partners’.

The accommodation of unions to the edicts of global capitalism do not of course go unchallenged. For instance, interviews with NZ’s union leadership in 2006 and 2007 showed some reservations about the Council of Trade Union's strategy—particularly around the underlying premise in respect of tying union legitimacy to productivity, and more specifically the industry partnerships approach, where this was seen by some as “getting into bed with the bosses” (Blackwood, 2008). This fits with broader concerns within the industrial relations (IR) literature that the acceptance of a neo-liberal agenda provides the institutional conditions that are contributory of union disaffection (McCallum, 2002; Peetz, 2002; Levesque et. al., 2005). Internationally, there is mounting criticism within labour movements (Baccaro et. al., 2003; Frege & Kelly, 2003, 2004; Hyman, 1999; Milkman & Voss, 2004) of third-way social partnership arrangements and the articulation of new (or renewed) forms of union organizing that include union democratization processes that recognize and build from a diversity of interests; building community alliances (associational campaigning); and mobilizing around shared community values. A number of NZ union leaders showed a keen awareness of the need to democratize their unions, providing more opportunities for member input into and engagement with the work of the union and refocusing organisers on providing leadership and ‘lifting the sights of members’ in terms of what unions are about. For some, this was couched as concern that the acceptance of unions’ role as bargaining agents and not political organizations had endorsed a neo-liberal view of the world where “union

members start(ed) to think of themselves as consumers of union services, not as members of the union movement” (Blackwood, 2008). In this vein, some spoke of their current efforts to change their approach to organising and the structures supporting this through increased investment in education and training for delegates and the creation of bottom-up decision-making processes. In recent years some unions too, have had considerable success mobilizing both workers and the public around social justice concerns for vulnerable workers (e.g., UNITE, SFWU) as well as around the kinds of higher order values that organizations typically include in their mission statements and corporate people promises (e.g., we are committed to quality service; Finsec, PSA).

A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Within the competing discourses that frame the above debates there is a capable worker who has both agency and motivation directed towards the achievement of collective (or group) goals, whether this is the achievement of greater productivity or of challenging social and economic arrangements. The sense of what’s required is also the same: (a) the development of leadership and a shared vision to achieve agreement over the collective goals and the behaviour required to achieve those goals; and (b) the development of social arrangements through team building and involvement in decision-making structures, often seen in instrumental terms (i.e., contribution to coordination and ‘good’ decisions), but critical to the formation of social bonds and motivation for group effort (see the NZ Department of Labour productivity agenda).

In so far as capability development has been linked to productivity and not to social justice outcomes, this can be seen as a political victory for its proponents with important consequences both for practice and for research. From a social psychological perspective, what is being mobilized (and contested) through these practices is the understanding and motivational aspects of social (or group) identity. Specifically, workers (a) sense of a shared fate; (b) shared (normative) beliefs about values, goals, and behaviours (e.g., shared vision); and (c) social and emotional aspects (e.g., belonging, respect, and pride) that contribute to coordination and motivation, to people wanting to go the extra mile. The importance of this mobilization of identity is underscored by a large body of research cited by Haslam and colleagues (2003a), where the social and emotional dimensions of organizational identity predict a range of organizational outcomes, including 'loyalty, productivity, organizational citizenship, desire to comply with organizational rules, reactions to organizational change, and willingness to communicate' (p. 361). In the collective action literature too, including research looking at unions, strength of social and emotional attachment with the social movement or union has been found to outperform personally held union-related beliefs in the prediction of behaviour (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996). Moreover, there is considerable evidence in both organizational and union-related research of individual-level interests and goals being sacrificed for the advancement of collective goals by those who strongly identify with the group (e.g., taking the blame for the group's poor performance: Taylor & Doria, 1981; or participating in prolonged strike action despite anticipated failure: Winterton & Winterton, 1989).

An understanding of the group-based psychological processes that underpin people's behaviour when group-based identities are activated has in recent years led to a re-examination of the often conflicting findings in organizational research on what contributes to the formation of organizational identity and commitment; of what can strengthen or undermine this; and of the material consequences for organizational behaviour; as well as in the social movement research on the conditions for collective action and the processes by which identities are politicised. This research is largely informed by the social identity perspective, comprising both social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), which provides an account of behaviour that stands in stark contrast to traditional views of atomistic individuals guided by personal-level values and cost-benefit calculations. Importantly, this research has shown group-based identification as a psychological reality, something which when contextually salient has very real consequences for how people experience themselves and their world, and for how people act.

The discussion below focuses on the implications of this theory and body of research for thinking about the understanding, agency and motivation functions of identity, achieved through the implementation of practices associated with the high performance workplace but equally consistent with any identity project. What I am most interested in are those features that relate to: (a) leadership and the creation of shared vision; (b) the social-psychological factors that contribute to and are emergent of work-related group identification(s); and (c) the range of strategies that organizations (within the HR/IR

organizational literature) or groups of workers (within the social movement literature) can adopt in the formation and pursuit of the things they value.

Leadership and the creation of agency through shared vision

Critical to the success of any political project is the achievement of a shared understanding of our world and the unity of purpose this provides to those who share a social identity (Reicher, Haslam, and Hopkins, 2005; Turner, 2005). This unity produces the social power through which people can create a social world that celebrates the things they value and aspire to. It is perhaps the most fundamental capability of all and is what successful leaders, whether they are in work organizations or unions, seek to harness through what has been described as the 'entrepreneurship of identity': the creation of a shared vision of "who we are" and "what we want to be" (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001, cited in Haslam et.al., 2003). But, contrary to our more individualistic theories, leadership is viewed here as a group phenomenon—as involving both leaders and followers in the negotiation of meaning and intent. While in keeping with notions of the charismatic leader, successful leaders are those who can transform followers' identities, it is argued that this remains contingent on their not violating followers' understandings of either their identity or of their social reality (Reicher, Haslam, and Hopkins, 2005).

This understanding of leadership as a more dynamic group process is underlined by research pointing to differential responses to leaders based on worker identification with

the group and the perception of a leader's prototypicality of the group (van Knippenberg et al, 2005). For instance, for those who do not strongly identify with the group, research has found that evaluation of the group leader will be more influenced by whether they have the stereotypical traits of leadership and that loyalty and cooperation will derive from individual-level concerns (e.g., fairness and the exchange value of the relationship, Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001). On the other hand, for those who are strongly identified, negative and counter-stereotypical qualities of the leader will more readily be forgiven or attributed to external factors (Bruins, Ellemers, & de Gilder, 1999) and what has been shown to be of greater importance is whether the leader is seen as a positive embodiment of the normative values and behaviours of the group (Duck & Fielding, 1999; Ellemers, de Gilder, and Haslam, 2004; Hogg, Hains, and Mason, 1998).

Moreover, the more the leader is seen as this positive embodiment of the 'ingroup', the more their exercise of power will lead to greater willingness on the part of their followers to cooperate in the future. By contrast, an 'outgroup' leader's exercise of power will be seen as more illegitimate, punitive, and unreasonable (Haslam et.al., 2001) and will result in less willingness to cooperate in the future (Ellemers, van Rijswijk, Roefs & Simons, 1997). This understanding of leadership fits with the renewal of interest in the 'transformative' and 'charismatic' leader and in an emerging interest in leader 'authenticity' (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). However, because it locates the dynamic relationship between leader and follower within the group, it turns our attention to qualities of the group (e.g., normative values) and group processes (e.g., mutual social influence).

An ethnographic study conducted by Plankey Videla (2006) in a Mexican garment factory demonstrates the group dynamics involved in how this 'entrepreneurship of identity' is negotiated and achieved. Management through a discourse of loyalty and sacrifice constructed what she terms, a 'community of fate' ideology, with workers and management united in their commitment to the firm's new 'lean production' regime. For almost five years this produced workers who were willing to 'extend their physical, intellectual and emotional labour to the firm' (p.2099) and make substantial sacrifices. However, over time, management was observed to be failing to reciprocate workers' loyalty and share in the sacrifice, they were failing to embody the normative values of the group. This was experienced as a betrayal of trust and culminated in strike action. In a context of conflict with management, the union was able to form solidarity around a new 'community of fate', one defined by the workers' struggle against their employer. As one unionist calling for strike action declared, '...we are in this dance together" ' (p.2113).

Because the 'entrepreneurship of identity' around a shared vision is a negotiated act between leaders and followers, it presupposes that there is a shared basis for understanding the world. In this respect, according to Reicher and colleagues (2005; Reicher, 2004) this process does involve looking back to structure, to a social, political, and economic reality that positions us and may constrain the choices we are able to make. But as the above example demonstrates, this is an active process of (re)defining the political context that is also very much future oriented. Both management and union leaders are engaged in a contest over what the boundaries of categories are [i.e., who is

included (and excluded) from the group], and over the content of categories (i.e., how to make sense of who 'we' are, our values and goals and what is required to realise these).

In thinking about organizations' and unions' identity projects, the modern conundrum is that within the world of work there is a multiplicity of nested work-based and social identities as well as personal identities that may be in conflict with the broader or superordinate identities that they are seeking to create. When thinking about the strategic mobilization of work-related categories, for instance, it is not simply the category but the relationships within which the category is nested that has behavioural consequences. Who we compare ourselves with in a given context has implications for how we understand ourselves, how we are positioned and the attributes we use to define ourselves (Haslam et al, 1992). Although in the context of competition with an outside organization, management and workers may indeed feel united in the pursuit of shared goals there are also times when our identity as managers versus workers, as members of a team, or of an occupational grouping for instance, may be more salient.

It is for the above reasons that social psychologists who take a social identity perspective to questions of managing intergroup differences in work organizations recommend against top-down approaches where identity is imposed on workers in favour of a bottom-up process that builds a collective identity upon the recognition of distinct lower level (sub-group) identities. The most elaborated approach is Haslam and colleagues' (Haslam, Egghins and Reynolds, 2003) ASPIRe model, which describes a process for producing organizational identity around shared superordinate values that can (a)

accommodate diversity or difference amongst sub-groups of employees and (b) ensure that any conflict that does arise is 'managed' so as to protect the organization. Haslam et al sound a word of caution, however. Whilst all groups are motivated to shape what is valued and the interests of the superordinate identity, higher status groups have a greater capacity to do so. Within these projects, those sub-groups that are more powerful (e.g., managers and high-skill workers) may not be motivated to allow for the 'creative' conflict processes proposed.

Although designed with work organizations in mind, the model also resonates for superordinate identity projects such as those framed by the NZ productivity agenda or the Council of Trade Union's 'Organizing Plus' agenda. The reality for New Zealand as for our main comparators--Australia and the UK, is that union membership is predominantly located in the public service (53%). Within the private sector, membership continues to hold in traditional union strongholds (e.g., manufacturing 20%; and transport, storage and communication, 11%), that tend to be in business decline. But not in growth areas such as retail, restaurants and hotels (5%) (Feinberg-Danieli, Lafferty, & Kiely, 2007). The vast majority of union members are part of the high-skill labour market and by virtue of their greater levels of security and their capacity to organize may feel greater value and confidence in entering into arrangements that are part of the productivity agenda. Indeed, unions such as the Public Service Association were already doing this in the 1990s. This was seen as feasible because in areas such as the public service and health: (a) there had been long-standing relationships with employers who respected the potential contribution of public sector unions and their largely high-skilled, professional members; and (b) the

union itself was strong with a membership whose professional identity contained a strong ethic of public service and commitment to contributing to decision-making around service quality. The great bulk of workers however, do not enjoy this capability to define and pursue their values and interests, neither in their work, nor in the shaping of what the union movement is about, that broader superordinate identity required for a unified movement. Thus, the imbalance in power that is present between groups of workers has implications not just within our workplaces but within civil society too.

Social-psychological factors contributing to agency and motivation for group effort

The emphasis on democratization and worker involvement in workplaces and unions is often explained in terms of the contribution workers can make to decision-making. In light of the research on leadership and the importance of leaders understanding and respecting their followers' own understandings of social reality, these processes are also thought to be crucial at a more fundamental level. By providing the conditions for achieving shared understanding, values, and goals these processes may contribute to workers' ability to organise, a key factor in agency. Moreover, by contributing to feelings of trust and respect, these processes should pay important dividends in terms of motivation and effort. Empirical support has been found for a range of organizational practices, such as participative decision-making (Yukl, 1989) and participative group goal-setting (Wegge, 2000), predicting organizational identity, commitment, and effort. There is also, however, a growing body of research (Haslam, Powell, & Turner, 2000) to

suggest that these same practices can set employees up for the feelings of disillusionment and powerlessness reported in the stress and job burnout literature. This has been found, for instance, where despite their best efforts employees can not live up to those shared values and goals because of inadequate resources or conflicting demands. Indeed, job burnout, which is defined as exhaustion, cynicism (or loss of idealism and passion for the job), and a sense of personal inefficacy (see Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998), has been most closely associated with high-skill occupations in human service organizations (Maslach, 2003), those very high performance work practice organizations that have typically been leaders in skill development including through the implementation of high involvement management practices.

Research that links the reduction of group effort associated with stress and job-burnout to people's sense of incongruency between work-related values and behaviours is part of a recent shift in focus to motivational aspects of identity (e.g., Simon, Lucken & Sturmer, 2006; Smith & Kessler, 2004; Sturmer, Simon & Loewy, 2008). A central tenet of social identity theory is that we derive self-esteem from our group memberships and so are motivated to emphasise similarities on favoured dimensions of the group as well as differences with comparable outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It is this that leads us to assimilate to group norms (we expect to be in agreement about values and behaviours) and to exert effort in the coordinated pursuit of group goals. According to Tyler and Blader's (2000) model of cooperation, because our group memberships are so important to our sense of self-esteem, it is our pride in and respect from the groups we belong to that has most impact on our psychological attachment and motivation to cooperate not

just with the leader but with the group. Thus feeling organizational level pride and respect are more than an added benefit, cooperation with the organization will be maintained to the extent that the organization contributes to self-worth. Boezman and Ellemers (2007) have found support for this and for the path proposed by Tyler and Blader (2000). Feeling respected by the organization strengthens identity because it signals to us our standing in the group, it is an indicator of our success or failure in the eyes of valued others (Leary and Baumeister, 2000; Leary, 2005). There is indirect evidence to support this explanation with research (Simon, Luken, and Sturmer, 2006) showing the effects of respectful treatment as more important for those members of an organization who had fewer rights and opportunities to participate (i.e., those with low standing in the group). Once these group members felt respected as valued members of the group, personal-level concerns ceased to matter, what became more important were organizational-level concerns.

The importance of respectful treatment has received considerable attention, evident in research and initiatives around procedural justice, high involvement management, and employee voice (both union and non-union). There has been less attention to the group-based pride (or shame and cynicism) that derives from one's group's achievements and from how it is evaluated by outside actors. Consistent with the research on leadership cited above, Meyer and Allen (1997) and Mael and Ashforth (1992) have demonstrated increased employee turnover in response to a deteriorating public image of the organization. Moreover, experimental research by Leach and colleagues (Leach, Ellemers, and Barreto, 2007) suggests that in some contexts what matters more to our

sense of group pride can be the perceived morality of our group (i.e., virtuosity, authenticity, and honesty) and not, as more functionalist accounts suggest, competence or achievement. Although this is an area requiring further research, it supports our understanding of the importance of congruency between an employer or union's articulated identity and workers' experience; and between the group identity as presented to outside audiences and the group's public reputation (Borgerson, Magnusson and Magnusson, 2006; Hatch and Schultz, 2002).

Although there has been some research on the role of emotions in social movement participation (e.g., Drury & Reicher, 2005; van Zomeren et al., 2004), there is little if any union-related research on the emotional impact of union strategies on employee's union-related and work-related identities and behaviours. Two examples of union action, taken from very different organizations, are however, illustrative. In the first, with the assistance of their union, UNITE (a NZ union representing non-standard workers in fast-foods, cinemas, and casinos), young workers in a McDonalds forced management to adopt a more consistent and transparent rostering process. According to the young workers' own accounts, as well as improving individual workers' ability to plan around their work (an instrumental outcome), the effect of having collectively acted to secure more respectful treatment from their managers was a sense of camaraderie and pride, pride in themselves and in the kind of workplace they had created. Thus, in addition to improving work conditions, action had achieved what McDonalds' 'Corporate People Promise' could not, workers who were happy to come to work and who were committed to each other (their work group) and to their work, but perhaps not to McDonalds. In

research conducted with members of UNITE in 2007, there was strong support for the critical role of these group-based evaluations. A sense of both respect from the union and pride in its achievement significantly mediated the relationship between members' participation in union action and their intentions to participate in the future (Blackwood & Louis, 2009).

The second example comes from the human services sector where the overwhelming public support for bank workers in a NZ Westpac campaign was given much of the credit for winning the dispute. Although this was explained by union leaders in terms of the political leverage achieved through brand damage (instrumental concerns) these same union leaders also spoke of the boost to members' pride and confidence in themselves as powerful agents in the workplace. This was seen as arising from members' belief that the union campaign was serving broader community values and had the support of their co-workers, customers, and the general public (Blackwood & Louis, 2009). In their subsequent Better Banks campaign, Finsec countered the divide and rule strategy of the banks, producing a common in-group identity that aligned bank employees across the sector with the broader community interest of quality service and debt reduction, against the greed and social irresponsibility of the banks. This appeared to reflect some understanding that the stress workers may experience in response to not being able to live up to the organization's values is about more than simply inadequate resources and conflicting demands. For those in front-line jobs there may be a dissonance or conflict between the community values workers were told they share with their employer and the reality of their work where the requirement to increase productivity was seen to produce

anti-social outcomes. The social-psychological consequences of campaigns such as these for how workers understand themselves and their union is deserving of further study.

Strategies in pursuit of the things workers value

The focus of practice and research around capability development is directed towards transforming individuals so they may adapt to the needs of organizations in a changing world. In this sense it looks backwards to social arrangements and structure. But, fundamental to human nature is our orientation to the future. We are able to conceptualise how we want our organizations and indeed our world to be. This suggests a very different understanding of skill development. One where through the social power that flows from social identity people can assert a contrary view. This is always the greatest challenge for low-status or low-power groups, whether it is unions in partnership with industry, or groups of workers within an organization or union.

Social psychologists examine the range of strategies we adopt to combat the negative consequences of low-power or status. The most common strategies identified (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) are (a) social mobility where the individual believes they can improve their position through personal effort; and (b) social creativity where a group seeks to enhance status through comparison on non-status relevant dimensions that favour the group (e.g., we may be lower-paid, but we have better social relations). Neither of these strategies threatens the social order, and accordingly they are actively supported by high-status

groups (e.g., merit-based promotions and strategies for reframing 'dirty-work': Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). The pursuit of a social change strategy where group members act collectively to change the group's outcomes (or status) is contingent on identifying with the low-status group and believing that (a) this low-status position is illegitimate; (b) the boundaries between the two groups are impermeable; and (c) there is an alternative to the structural relationship (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This is supported by a large body of research on collective action that shows the crucial factor is a shift in causal attributions for lack of success from internal attributions (e.g., insufficient knowledge, skills, and networks as emphasized in capability development approaches) to external attributions, such as economic factors and illegitimate practices, that implicate group membership (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996; Kelly & Kelly, 1994).

In one sense, the above beliefs are the property of individuals predisposing them to particular readings of context. They can also be conceptualised as properties of a politicized identity in that they constitute normative beliefs about how one's group relates to another group and the possibility for change, providing both understanding and agency (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). But it is in a specific context that people perceive matters in group terms and where questions about the legitimacy of an intergroup relationship and the potential for one's group to have an effect on that relationship arise. Rather than the alternative ideological versus instrumental routes to action, widely supported in the industrial relations literature, this implicates the contextual activation of a behaviourally-relevant group where people's values and goals, as well as their beliefs about what constitute appropriate courses of action, are understood at the group level (Turner et al.,

1987). In support of this, longitudinal research revealed that independently of their union-related beliefs, people engaged in union activity where their perception of an inter-group context of threat and in-group norms supporting such behaviour made it meaningful to do so. Moreover, these perceptions of the social context qualified the role played by people's union-related beliefs in ways that differed depending on whether the studies were conducted during periods of industrial stability or conflict (Blackwood, 2007b).

Implicit in current debates around union strategy and tactics, are beliefs about the stability of people's belief-systems versus their social-contextual specificity and openness to influence and change. These beliefs map onto competing theoretical approaches within social psychology, for investigating collective behaviour. On the one hand are value-expectancy theories which have tended to privilege individual-level explanations and produce static rational-actor models that favour servicing models (Klandermans, 1992). Research informed by such models is cited in the industrial relations literature as providing support for the ascendancy of selfish individualism, the demise of ideology, and an argument for servicing approaches (e.g., Klandermans 1984, 1986). On the other hand, more recent theoretical developments influenced by the social identity perspective suggest a more dynamic and genuinely social-psychological model (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Simon et al., 1998). According to this perspective, by individuating workers' interests, approaches associated with the servicing model (and the business unionism model) actively de-politicise the employment relationship and produce the demise in ideology and action. Thus, more recent research focuses on the processes through which social movement-related beliefs (whether conceptualised in terms of the

legitimacy and stability of intergroup relations or ideology and collective agency) come to be deeply held and constituent of a politicised identity. Of course, such deep convictions are not a priori of experience but are formed in the crucible of political experience where political organizations provide the leadership and opportunity structures for sense making, in conversation with those who share a common fate. Thus we come full circle in our very brief social psychological tour of the production of understanding, agency and motivation.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING OUTCOMES

Both legislation and collective bargaining outcomes are important markers of unions' institutional level success. They might also be conceived as important markers of the extant and emerging normative expectations of workers (and their employers) around the kinds of lives we expect to be able to lead (Barry, 2004). Notwithstanding ongoing contestation around the parameters, NZ employees have basic legislated provision around minimum wages, leave, occupational health and safety and so forth (Blackwood, 2007a). These legislated minimum standards signal the normalization of societal-level expectations around work, an agreement on what constitutes a decent working life to which all members of a society are entitled. It is in the contestation around both the parameters and the activation of these minimum standards and around emergent areas of public concern that we see the mobilization of social power for the transformation of not only workplaces, but of the broader society, of what is valued and of what is required to

realise those values. Areas of emergent concern can be observed in parental and domestic leave provisions, employee consultation and representation, and training and skills development. More nascent are provisions that address work-life balance (e.g. TOIL, working from home arrangements and tele-working for mainly professional workers). As the 'baby boomers' approach retirement a new category with a powerful voice has come into view, that of the older worker (Blackwood, 2007a). Around the corner, we might anticipate that another set of interests will emerge from the increasing levels of public concern around environmental sustainability.

The point of examining emergent areas of concern for our institutions, both our legislators and our unions, is that underlying these institutions are group-based interests and that it is the political contestation over interests that influences outcomes. From this perspective who has collective voice and who does not is central to how our organizations and society will continue to be transformed. Much of the focus has been on the struggle between employers and employees in terms of conflict over values and interests. But also acknowledged is that there are distinct sets of values and interests for different groups of workers and at times these may be in conflict. As one participant observed in our focus groups around the developing human capability framework, one worker's valuing of a clean office requires that a low-paid cleaner works unsocial hours. Further on the matter of work-life balance there is little evidence of voice around the feast-famine experience of employment for many non-standard workers. And this is the challenge for unions. As much as an appreciation for diversity, the notion that different groups might have different values, is required of our work organizations, it is perhaps

more urgently required of our unions. It is our unions that can provide the leadership and the opportunity structures for the emergent power of workers identifying shared values and interests and acting collectively in their pursuit.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The creation of social identities are indeed important, whether it be unions and employers united around the interests of New Zealanders; management and workers united around a work organization's interests, or unions united in the pursuit of workers' interests. Within all of these superordinate groups there are sub-groups that exist in relations of status and power to each other. When the exercise of this power is seen to be illegitimate and fails to validate all subgroup identities on dimensions that are valued by those groups the project is undermined. Thus, current theorizing and research (e.g., Haslam et al, 2003) suggests that the challenge is to produce the structures and processes that can genuinely involve all groups in the identification and valorisation of both shared and distinct sets of values and interests. This is a dynamic process, a negotiation that is neither wholly bottom-up nor top-down. Much of the research and practice in relation to diversity in organizations and the voice mechanisms that are associated with the high performance work place or democratization of unions only partially recognize this, what is frequently ignored are the consequences of power differences and the concomitant failure to facilitate low-status group's organization and articulation of values and interests. Reflecting on similar concerns, Heckshcer (1988, p.177) suggests what is needed is a new kind of unionism,

one that 'replaces organizational conformity with coordinated diversity' through an appreciation of new fault lines of union solidarity. To end, the developing human capability framework which begins from an engagement with workers about what they value in their work and the factors that impinge on achieving this, is as much a tool for unions as it is for work organizations. Because of their distinct function, the challenge for unions is how they work with different groups of workers in the both the identification of new fault lines that reflect workers experiences and the development of shared understandings and agency that can be mobilized to enhance their collective outcomes.

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