"DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER!" - THE END OF 'CORPORATE CULTURALISM'?

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ABSTRACT

Hugh Willmott's classic 1993 *JMS* article, 'Strength is Ignorance; Freedom is Slavery', has greatly influenced how we understand culture management. It draws parallel's with George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* to reveal the totalitarian aspirations of 'corporate culturalism'. While resistance is sometimes said to be missing in Willmott's account, I argue that it is implicitly pervasive, prefiguring subsequent investigations of 'micro-emancipation' in management studies. The recent waning of scholarly interest in this type of resistance, however, also points to the contemporary relevance of Willmott's analysis. Emergent forms of corporate regulation utilize 'biopower' rather than just cultural conformity, rendering micro-emancipation inadequate, but inspiring other types of dissent.

INTRODUCTION

O'Brien held up his left hand, its back towards Winston, with the thumb hidden and the four fingers extended.
"How many fingers am I holding up, Winston?"
"Four."
"And if The Party says that it is not four but five -- then how many?"
"Four."

For many readers, the most poignant moment in George Orwell's classic political novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, comes towards the end as a cage of ravenous rats get ready to gnaw into the face of Winston Smith, the tragic protagonist of the story. Here we witness the full horror of unadulterated power. In Room 101, the once defiant Winston is physically and spiritually broken, culminating in his pathetic but understandable pledge of allegiance to Big Brother - the mythical dictator of Oceania. As the rats are about to devour Winston's face, he even informs on Julia, his much-adored lover. A terrifying scene no doubt that demonstrates the magical power of pain. Despite this, however, it is not the most essential sequence in the book. As Orwell (2011) himself admitted, torturing a helpless prisoner is 'easy' and fairly boring as a literary device for giving us a real flavor of authoritarian rule. For that we must return to the start of the story, to the moment when Winston's secret hatred of Big Brother finally bubbles to the surface. In a private corner of his grey and austere apartment, a rare blind-spot unseen by the otherwise omniscient telescreens, Winston

scribbles a few words in his contraband diary. He then stares at them in stunned silence, as if they were written by someone else, someone who Winston might have betrayed to the 'Thought Police' if it had not been him: "*DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER!*"

This act of transgression is of much importance for the initial setting and thematic momentum of the story. First, to us the reader, writing a few words in a little diary seems like a fairly tame affair. But as we soon discover, in Winston's world, ruled by the 'Thought Police', things are very different. These words are a seditious act of 'Thought Crime', punishable by vaporization. This is a totally administered society in which an unquestioning devotion to Big Brother and The Party is demanded. Second, this seemingly minor display of disobedience starts the fateful ball rolling, pushing our protagonist into a suffocating universe, allowing us to see what it means to live under the awful conditions of ultra-conformity. The defiant character is thus vital for revealing the true terror of absolute power, even as Winston is finally broken by The Party and reduced to a sheep-like devotee of Big Brother, just like everybody else. 2+2 might even equal 5. Orwell's dystopia should certainly be read as a object lesson in how absolutist rule functions to generate frightening levels of indoctrination (like Zamyatin's *We* and Huxley's *Brave New World*), but it is only *via* the intractable rebel that the sickness of life under totalitarianism is lay bare. In this sense, then, that a character like Winston Smith could ever come forth in the darkness of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* ultimately marks the novel as one of the great fables on modern liberty.

Willmott's excellent application of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has gained something of a reputation for omitting this aspect of the story. While Orwell's novel is perfect for illustrating the dubious brainwashing techniques associated with culture management popularized in the 1980s and 1990s, the all-important theme of rebellion is absent in Willmott's argument. It tends to overestimate the efficacy of what he calls 'corporate culturalism' and discounts the workforce's ability to resist or frustrate managerial control, however insidious those controls might be (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). While the concept of resistance would afterwards become central to Critical Management Studies (Fleming and Spicer, 2007), it is conspicuously missing in Willmott's otherwise convincing investigation.

This problematization of Willmott's article is to some extent accurate. However, upon closer reading, I notice a profound tension in the paper, whereby transgressive organizational-Winston's seem to be always lurking in the background, always threatening to burst onto centre stage. Like the unspoken suggestion of anti-conformity in Orwell's tale, a trace of sedition informs Willmott's study too. Put simply, *resistance is everywhere in this text:* for sure, it is 'suppressed', 'eliminated' and 'excluded', but the reader can always count on it being there, as a kind of political guarantee.

I propose this tension is important for two reasons when assessing Willmott's classic article. First, since the paper posits the idea that some will resist no matter what, it contributed (with others) to a major rethinking of employee opposition in management studies. Not even the most authoritarian power can extinguish our critical awareness, however innocuous that awareness might look (e.g., writing in a secret diary). But many scholars in the early 1990s were still wedded to the assumption that employee rebellion was only genuine if openly expressed, organized and class-inspired (e.g., a union going on strike). Resistance clearly had to be rethought and Willmott's article was ironically formative. In organizational contexts where behavioral compliance is not enough, and our existential attachments are also

desired, minor gestures of defiance take on renewed significance. Critical Management Studies consequently capitalized onto the notion of 'micro-emancipation' (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992a), turning it into a vibrant research agenda. But today this agenda seems to have run aground, which raises a second point of interest, the contemporary relevance of Willmott's article. If these once celebrated acts of micro-emancipation (e.g., sex games, joking, bitching, farting, etc.) now look rather feeble (for reasons we shall soon discuss), it is probably because corporate hegemony has significantly reorganized itself. Many large enterprises no longer depend upon our subjective conformity, emotional dedication or belief in the legitimacy of capitalism. Power is now more insidious, as are the ways it is subverted.

To develop these observations, the paper is structured as follows. First I contextualize the rise of corporate culturalism before turning to Willmott's influential critique of its totalitarian tendencies. Second, an alternative reading is made that reveals the tacit centrality of resistance in the text. The significance of this resistance is unpacked, especially as it relates to a prolific body of research focusing on micro-emancipation. Third, it will be suggested that this research agenda has recently run aground in light of shifting managerial power relations. This points to the contemporary relevance of Willmott's study too. Recent shifts in corporate practice involving 'biopower' are analyzed and compared to the tenets of corporate culturalism as discussed by Willmott. I conclude by celebrating Willmott's groundbreaking investigation and reflect on how Critical Management Studies might continue to raise awareness about the enduring political and moral problems of work today.

WHEN WORK WENT CULTURAL

The rise of corporate culturalism is frequently said to represent an important break from earlier modes of regulation in Western capitalism. Popularized by Peters and Waterman's (1982) *In Search of Excellence* and Deal and Kennedy's (1982) *Corporate Cultures*, many firms in the US began to think about the normative and emotional qualities of their workforce. A good deal of inspiration was derived from Japanese models of management, which effectively blended capitalistic rationality with pre-modern patrimony. Because the 'Japanese miracle' in the 1970s and early 1980s resulted in economic growth far outstripping the lumbering economies of the West, North American and European firms endeavored to follow the 'strong culture' approach as well to enhance organizational performance.

Contextualizing the Rise of Corporate Culturalism

It is important for our rereading of Willmott's article to place it in both a historical and scholarly context. That twenty years ago both academic and practitioner literature was obsessed with culture is no exaggeration. While popular management writers were praising the benefits of transforming the company into a 'family' or 'clan', academics were also exploring the nature of business cultures. Some were prescriptive in their studies (such as Schein's [1985] influential schema) while others aimed to be more analytical and even anthropological in their investigations of how values affect work (e.g., Smircich, 1983).

As Parker (2000) rightly observes, it is difficult to say whether there was anything overwhelmingly new in corporate culturalism as opposed to earlier attempts

to normatively align the psychology of the workforce with the principles of economic rationality. We can see similar efforts to emotionalize the work ethic long before Peters and Waterman arrived on the scene (e.g., the human and neo-human relations movement). According to Barley and Kunda (1992), the rise of corporate culturalism in the US was the latest surge in 'normative controls' that follow broader macro-economic cycles of expansion and contraction. Ramsay (1977) noted similar cycles of control and commitment in the UK, showing that corporations become interested in 'soft modes' of management on a periodical basis. And the historical analysis of Bendix (1956) reveals that managerialism has always had an ideological imperative, developing systems of legitimacy that might convince workers to accept their subordinate status.

But for the critics of corporate culturalism, including Willmott, there is something significantly different happening here. As opposed to the human and neo-human relations movement that aimed to have employees discover fulfillment through task management, corporate culturalism is more holistic. It seeks to foster an all-encompassing enviroment in which our very personhood becomes a loyal reflection of the company. There is something monolithic, totalizing and singular about this method of management, transforming the firm into something other commentators might term a 'greedy institution' (Coser, 1974) or 'total institution' (Goffman, 1961). As Willmott similarly argues, "what is new about corporate culturalism is the *systematizing and legitimizing* of a mode of control that purposefully seeks to shape and regulate the practical consciousness … of employees" (p. 523, emphasis original).

Critical Management Studies

This criticism was fairly typical of the way corporate culturalism was received in academic circles by the early 1990s, especially in the growing field of Critical Management Studies (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992b). But corporate culturalism had caught the eye of sociologists earlier. In Edward's (1979) detailed historical study of 'regimes of control' in corporate America, the management of culture was seen as yet another attempt to obfuscate the clash of interests between labour and capital. What Edwards terms the 'IBM-Family' approach to business management seeks to wrest loyalty away from unions and reconstitute labour in the image of managerialism itself. Building on Edwards (1979), Barley and Kunda [1992] argue that when this type of control is functioning, workers see little difference between their own wellbeing and that of the enterprise.

It is no coincidence that corporate culturalism came to prominence at the same time a vast recomposition of class relations was taking place under the neo-liberal agenda. Willmott mentions this in passing (p. 519) but it deserves more attention if we are to grasp the political significance of this management tool in the early days. As unions were dismantled and Fordist governance structures rolled back (see Harvey, 2007), corporate culturalism precipitated both an ultra-rationalized 'economization' of the employee (we no longer talk about groups, teams or departments, but responsible 'individuals') and the simultaneous reconstitution of workers as a reflection of shared norms (we are all in this together); a rather paradoxical premise from the beginning.

This contradiction between the forces of individualization and the injunction to be part of the 'clan' or 'family' preoccupied the initial criticisms of corporate culturalism. As far as social engineering goes, it is logically irrational. These studies were highly influenced by the emergence of Critical Management Studies (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992b; Grey and Willmott, 2005), a group of scholars who parted ways

with the then dominant Labour Process Theory crowd (inspired by Braverman's [1974] classic study). Evoking Foucault's concern with subjection and self-discipline (often via Laclau and Mouffe [1985]), the tenor of many investigations took a decidedly anti-Marxist flavour. Class, private property and the economy were out, as identity, subjectivity and discourse gained traction (Knights and Willmott, 1989). And by the mid-1990s, this particular way of framing corporate culturalism was in full swing, overshadowing the conventional Marxist critique that culture merely mystifies exploitation. For Casey (1995), positing a curious Durkheimian/Foucauldain explanatory admixture, corporate culturalism is problematic because of the myopic 'designer selves' it engendered, insidiously inserting the control function in workers' very sense of identity. Focusing more on its self-disciplining effects, Barker (1993) underlines the dark-side of high-commitment teams that are frequently galvanized around strong cultural narratives (see also Deetz, 1992). Ray (1986) even predicted that corporate culturalism might allow firms to finally conquer 'the last frontier of control' - the unconscious political sentiments of workers.

The Specificity of Willmott's Critique

At first glance, it is surprising that Willmott chose Orwell's classic tale of totalitarianism to shed light on the more controversial aspects of corporate culturalism. For all intents and purposes, and like *Animal Farm*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is usually read as a warning about the evils of totalitarian communism. More than anything else, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is about the maintenance of power through pure naked force and violence (or its paranoid anticipation). Can we really draw analogies from this story to garner insights about emergent management fads in liberal democratic societies?

Although the comparison is strained for this reason, Willmott does successfully demonstrate that if we distil this management ideology down to its basic principles, we do find some frightening authoritarian tendencies. Willmott declares right from the beginning that little empirical data will be used in his argument. Instead, the article aims to explore the theoretical (and consequently) moral foundations of corporate culturalism. Two lines of critique are developed. First, and using Orwell's now commonplace terminology, corporate culturalism relies on an untenable 'Doublethink' since it paradoxically promises 'practical autonomy' (to think or do as we wish) while demanding this be achieved within a monolithic value-framework. This is an impossible incongruity. As Willmott put its, "the benefits of participating in a strong corporate culture (and thereby further strengthening its totalizing effects) are sold by stressing the benefits for the individual employee who, it is claimed, not only enjoys greater practical autonomy but is transformed into a winner" (p. 526). The real message underlying 'strong cultures' might read, 'you can do what you like, just as long as you do what we tell you').

The second criticism concerns the conviction that strict adherence to *one* set of values might be healthy or acceptable, especially in societies defined by pluralism and free thought. Is there not something tyrannical and rather creepy in this method of management? Willmott does not use a Marxian or even Foucauldian framework to develop this line of critique. Instead, the grand theoretician of cold bureaucratic rationality is favored for the job, Max Weber. The feature of corporate culturalism Willmott finds most disconcerting is its overreliance on instrumental rationality to preclude all other value-standpoints. Indeed, the proponents of corporate culturalism

are disingenuousness on this point. They ask us to believe that this warmer method of management mitigates the negative side-effects of instrumental rationality. This is why Peters and Waterman (1982) assert that all of those irrational, uncontrollable and unmanageable aspects of the workforce can now be fostered. Strong corporate cultures create flexible synergies between the emotional needs of employees and the economic aspirations of the firm, effectively rendering obsolete the old divide between the employee and management.

Willmott's counter-argument is unforgiving. Corporate culturalism forcibly binds the sentimental domain of the workforce to a singular set of values in order to *deepen* instrumental rationality. It renders behavior even more predictable, calculable and certain from a one-dimensional economic (or instrumental) viewpoint. This observation confirms the findings of previous studies about the way emotion and rationality can be perversely wedded under authoritarian regimes (e.g., Marcuse, 1964), as well as prefiguring future studies noting the operationalization of love, shame and commitment within highly administrative settings (e.g., Ilouz, 2007).

This takes us to the real nub of the problem. What truly justifies the evocation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for Willmott is the way corporate culturalism openly prohibits alternative value-standpoints. For Weber (adhering to a neo-Kantian understanding of moral maturity in an enlightened age), the real engine of democracy is *substantive rationality* or the open evaluation of diverse qualitative ends (i.e., are the broad goals our so-called 'rational' societies strive towards rational in themselves?). Substantive rationality requires both an enviroment that encourages dialogue about diverse value perspectives and the agentic capacity of individuals to reflect and decide. Of course, corporate culturalism is not keen on any of this. Only one set of values is permitted, and if you don't like them, to quote Peters and Waterman (1982, p. 72), "you get out". For Willmott, this must place corporate culturalism in the worst tradition of anti-democratic thought, reminiscent of fascism and Stalinism since it aspires to:

> … extend the terrain of instrumental rational action by developing monocultures in which conditions for the development of value-rational action, where individuals struggle to assess the meaning and worth of a range of competing value standpoints, is systematically eroded (p. 518).

Corporate culturalism is sold in the garb of freedom, as a method of management that does away with more repressive Fordist controls. But Willmott demonstrates the opposite. It actually increases the level of workplace monitoring. At least in the bureaucratic office of yesteryear we could think what we liked. Now even our thoughts are policed, but perversely in the name of self-expression and autonomy. For Willmott, the autocratic consequences are clear. If you want to subscribe to values dissimilar to the dominant discourse then you are in big trouble, and this prospect encourages a secret life of guilt and fear. As our dependence on these monolithic norms intensify, we become afraid of real freedom, real choice and ultimately our own existential responsibilities. And in the unlikely event that anyone does openly challenge the company, then to paraphrase Willmott, they soon discover the iron-fist beneath the velvet glove.

THE MISSING RESISTANT SUBJECT?

Willmott's critical analysis of corporate culturalism is sophisticated, trenchant and conclusive. But it does now have the reputation for being rather one-sided, omitting dissent and resistance from the picture. Willmott is certainly upfront about the purely theoretical nature of his task, investigating corporate culturalism on its own conceptual terms to reveal its totalitarian aspirations. Some have suggested, however, that this raises crucial problems. While it is important to take any new managerial idea seriously (as the subtitle on p. 516 proclaims), we would never want to take it *too seriously*. The article tells the story of successful cultural indoctrination, outsmarted rebels and the total conquest of economic rationality. This may be the scenario power would like us to envisage, but such fads are never entirely accepted by the workforce (Anthony, 1994).

And what about Willmott's fixation with *values* as opposed to organizational practices, actions and bodies? According to Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) this problem is endemic to Critical Management Studies more generally. Investigations like Willmott's are so preoccupied with 'values' and 'identity' that they unduly psychologize the labour process. All of a sudden the real problem is no longer benefit plans, work-life balance, economic exploitation and unfair work conditions. It is more a question of moral and existential freedom. As Ackroyd and Thompson (1999, P. 159) put it, after reading Willmott we find ourselves mistakenly dealing with "subjects of modernity fighting on a universal terrain derived from the indeterminacy and finitude of human existence". In other words, the historical nature of capitalist work relations disappears from view. Class, capital and neo-liberalism are briefly mentioned to contextualize corporate culturalism, but they swiftly recede as meaningful points of discussion. And for less sympathetic readers, this overemphasis on existential individuality (at the expense of corporate structure) partially reinforces the apolitical tendencies in culture management itself.

Workplace Resistance - the Returned of the Repressed

It is perhaps for the above reason that Willmott's piece also has a reputation for overlooking the many ways employees might oppose, frustrate or reverse this management practice. While the topic of resistance is now commonplace in Critical Management Studies, earlier research was notorious for its omission. In this sense, Willmott's study is similar to other stories of 'total control', including the investigations of Barker (1993), Kunda (1992) and Casey (1995). They too fail to note its inherently contested nature, especially in relation to the stormy decomposition of the Fordist labour process under neo-liberalism. Abrahamson (1996) demonstrates this clearly when he demonstrates how this and other 'soft management' strategies are correlated with historical periods of industrial unrest. To speak about corporate culturalism without foregrounding its tumultuous context would be like analyzing the rise of Thatcherism without mentioning the miner's strikes.

Having said this, if resistance is everywhere erased in Willmott's article, then its *constant* and *obsessive* evocation is equally striking. Upon a close rereading, it seems that every time the totalitarian facets of corporate culturalism are mentioned, *the resistant subject* also appears, like an inexplicable ghost, literally on every page of the article. For example, survey these random excerpts:

… constrain opportunities to **wrestle** with **competing** values … (p. 515).

… as it excludes, silences or punishes those who **question** its creed (p. 519).

… to **challenge** the values enshrined in this respect is a crime against the culture (p. 526).

… such **disloyal** communication is at best strictly coded if it is not entirely tabooed (p. 528).

… inclined to interpret any **resistance** to their prescriptions as an indication of individual pathology … (p. 531).

… those who **kick against** the monoculture are 'moved sideways' or they are expelled (p. 534).

… Those whose devotion to corporate values is **found wanting** … are excommunicated (p. 535).

And so on. A generative reading of the article detects an unstable tension at its centre concerning the nature of cultural control. Organizational subversives are anticipated literally *everywhere* in Willmott's argument, constantly appearing at the most inopportune moment to declare the emperor is wearing no clothes. This refusal to 'buy in' is a peripheral yet persistent textual presence, placing non-cooperation, strangely enough, at the heart of the paper. Perhaps the unstated message of the article is that one simply cannot understand corporate culturalism without expecting resistance, like the disloyal Winston who cannot help but commit 'Thought Crime'. Winston's irrepressible evocation of critical reason (2+2=4, no matter what anyone says) haunts the pages of Willmott's text too.

This is important to note for two reasons. First, the moral perils of cultural indoctrination only makes sense when theorized *vis-à-vis* its greatest fear - the defiant subject. Any explication of the negative side of corporate culturalism must therefore foreshadow precisely those qualities that resist brainwashing. Without positing this resistant subject, there would be no moral problem at all, only a mechanical one. For Willmott, the enormity of authoritarian corporate cultures is conveyed precisely when preempted by Winstonian intransigence, whether mental (e.g., cynical and independent reflection) or practical (e.g., openly laughing at it). Like Orwell's novel, the article is implicitly obsessed with these potential moments of subversion. Analogous to the deafening silence of refusal in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which is so necessary for the plotline, so too does the resistant employee quietly animate Willmott's study.

And second, if we look more directly at this subversive readiness, we discover that it seems to *come from nowhere* but the defiant employee himself or herself. This is a fascinating turn, one that runs like a red thread throughout the text. Like Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, we never really find out where this critical awareness regarding corporate culturalism derives from. It is not class based, as Ackroyd and Crowdy (1990) have it. Nor does Willmott have any truck with a humanist ontology that might inscribe a democratic essence at the centre of our nature. Nevertheless, the

rebel still summons their critical judgment, mysteriously appearing out of the blue, discerning the truth about this variant of power.

What made Winston pen those subversive words in his diary? We never find out. It is tempting to say any sane person finding themselves in Orwell's nightmarish world would automatically recoil, since 2+2 cannot = 5. But whence does this kernel of moral sagacity originate? And how or why might it prompt us to speak out? Again, we never find out. And this is why contestation is so central in Willmott's article since its promise is so resolutely guaranteed, without agitation, plotting or class politicking. It is an auto-politics born *ex nihilo*, echoing Weber's neo-Kantian faith in our intrinsic knack for critical self-reflection. Perhaps Willmott's essential thesis is not that corporate culturalism will always successfully colonize workers, but that a counter-subject must always be presupposed because 2+2 must always equal 4 … no matter what.

Enter the Corporate Cynic

That inevitable moment of practical criticism arrives in the figure of the corporate cynic. They see through the hypocritical 'Doublethink' of the values, perhaps making fun of the urbane CEO or parodying the Team Development manager. They know the truth behind the veneer of 'commitment' and 'participation'. At first, Willmott seems unsure what to do with the cynic, perhaps because the article itself represents an extended exercise in what the philosopher, Peter Sloterdijk (1987) calls *cynical reason*. On the one hand Willmott introduces the cynic as a 'symptom of resistance' because they refuse to believe that 2+2=5. On the other hand, however, cynicism's practical effects are suspected for unwittingly playing into the hands of the corporation.

Scholarly research noted early on that corporate culturalism might be met with cynical disbelief among the workforce (see Ackroyd and Crowley, 1990; Collinson, 1988). Not so, however, for those charged with building 'strong cultures' in organizations. The enthusiastic Team Development Manager views cynicism as evidence of someone who does not belong in the company. Organizational 'clans' demand not only behavioral compliance - going through the motions and appearing *as if* one loved the firm – but also genuine subjective attachment. And the sincerity and rectitude of one's attitude will be appraised like any other performance indicator. How a manager could ever discern whether the visible dedication displayed by employees was 'authentic' or not was never really sorted out in managerial practice (Fleming and Spicer, 2003).

In the end, Willmott decides to treat cynicism as a kind of alluring *false criticality*. Cynically lambasting the culture might provide some breathing space, an internal sense of freedom, but its concrete outcomes are deeply conservative. Willmott cites Kunda's ethnographic study of a high-commitment firm (later published as *Engineering Culture* [1992]) to backup his case. When we are being cynical it is strangely easier to obey the normative commands of the culture. The feeling of superiority derived from being 'in the know' blinds us to the real obedience of our behavior. The corporate cynic tells herself, 'I'll play along with this, but I don't really believe in it'. But they also follow the inverted formula: 'Precisely *because* I don't believe in this, I can go along with it'.

After a culture of cynicism matures, Willmott continues, a new and even more insidious ideology emerges to entrap workers. If we are free to be cynically aloof, to think what we like, then does this not also demonstrate the corporation's honest

commitment to openness and liberty? This is a difficult ideology to escape because it uses its own criticism to justify its continued dominance. While cynicism might look like the 'intelligence of the oppressed' (Sloterdijk, 1987) or a 'weapon of the weak' (Scott, 1985), under these conditions, it ensnares employees more profoundly than full-blooded identification. Willmott sums up:

Criticism 1.   What is obscured, if not lost, from such consciousness is a capacity to reflect critically upon the sense and impact of 'being in control', and, in particular, the extent to which dramaturgical action systematically excludes the players from involvement in the (re)design of the institutions from which these roles are derived (p. 538).

And building on Kunda's (1992) study of *Tech.* more directly,

Criticism 2.   The most insidious effect of *Tech.* culture, Kunda reports, was its promotion of almost universal, undiscriminating cynicism. Employees were inclined to question the authenticity of all beliefs and emotions, and were thereby disarmed of a critical standpoint from which to evaluate the relative merits of competing value-standpoints. As a consequence they lacked any basis for refusing to play out any scripts they are handed (p. 538).

Willmott distrusts cynicism because it looks like a perversion of critical reason. The cynic knows full well that 2+2=4, but acts as if 2+2=5. Well, this is one way we might read the corporate cynic. But they might also have some more redeeming features. For example, *Criticism 1.* treats cynicism as a smug and private moment of knowingness that short-circuits our ability to speak out (what Collinson (1994) calls 'resistance through distance'). However, cynicism can also be outrageously open, a daring parody flying in the face of power (we must remember that Diogenes the Cynic gained his outlandish reputation for 'truth telling' in the agora or public square [Foucault, 2001]). Likewise, cynicism can have some curious transformative effects. For example, its logic can sometimes allow us to criticize authority in a manner that power finds difficult to reject without cancelling its own ideological assertions (see Bailey, 1993; Ong, 1987). *Criticism 2.* seems reasonable, especially when explaining how liberal pluralism can enforce its hegemony via diversity and difference. But is not the argument tautological? How can our refusal of all beliefs erode our ability to refuse?

The Rise and Fall of 'Micro-Emancipation' at Work

The ambiguous status of the corporate cynic stems from a broader research tradition that discovered how some types of employee opposition might ironically strengthen social subordination (e.g., Willis, 1977; Burawoy, 1979; Collinson, 1988; Casey, 1995; Fleming and Spicer, 2003). Cynicism could operate as a kind of subjective safety valve, allowing workers to let-off steam in a highly normative context without really changing anything. Having said that, we must not forget the deep ambivalence concerning the cynical employee in Willmott's text. They seem to represent something both hopeful (reminding us that oppressive controls can never

completely extinguish our criticality) and deeply disappointing. Are they truly rebellious or just a more perfected instance of corporate conformity?

While this dilemma preoccupied some (especially in the Labour Process Theory tradition), the conceptual terrain was shifting. The appearance of the cynical worker corresponded with a scholarly movement that introduced *subjectivity* and *discourse* into the mix of workplace politics. The rise of Critical Management Studies in the early 1990s was refreshing because the conventional Marxian 'base/superstructure' analytic was no longer mandatory when assessing the worth of everyday resistance (e.g., cynicism). For these scholars, whether or not an instance of refusal overturned the entire capitalist world ceased to be the sole criterion for gauging its authenticity. Less grandiose gestures might offer equally valid spaces of freedom, what Alvesson and Willmott (1992a) call micro-emancipation, conveyed in anti-authoritarian undercurrents of humour, time wasting, foot-dragging and alternative gender roles.

As for organizations with 'strong cultures', a new critical research question subsequently emerges. If power can incorporate us at the level of identity and discourse, then perhaps resistance too might be seated here, engaging with authority on an alternative register more attuned to subjective colonization. Moreover, the critical awareness signaled by the corporate cynic alerted scholars that even under the most claustrophobic conditions we can still say 2+2=4. This is significant when studying organizations governed by US-style human resource management that desires nothing short than our entire personhood (Casey, 1995). In this context, less flamboyant political gestures might too be considered resistance. By the late 1990s even the stalwarts of historical materialism (who had once ridiculed anything hinting of non-class politics) were open to the subversive facets of everyday life.

This became a vibrant and prolific research agenda. Critical Management Studies scholars were no longer tied to the rigidities of Marxism, and instead relished in the 'changing spaces' (Knights, 1992) opened by new zones of inquiry. The once neglected fabric of everyday, discursive life was reassigned urgent political significance. Not only was cynicism – of which Willmott's text was a formative precursor – analyzed afresh (Fleming and Spicer, 2003). A whole raft of other activities also came under the critical spotlight. Subterranean narratives of disidentification were found to be decisive for undermining organizational paternalism (Kondo, 1990). Secretarial bitching proved to be a formidable challenge to bureaucratic rationality (Sotirin and Gottfried, 1999). Disengagement and irony likewise (Prasad and Prasad, 2000). Wearing a necktie incorrectly (Gabriel, 1999) and quietly farting in front of the boss (Mumby, 2005) even emitted subversive potential.

In hindsight, the pitfalls of this research agenda are now apparent. Critical analysis shifted from a paradigm that saw resistance *nowhere* (especially in high-commitment firms) to an equally untenable one that noticed it *everywhere*, an exaggeration that soon distorted our understanding of the modern firm. While in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston's seemingly minor act of disobedience spoke volumes because of its totalitarian setting, the same cannot be read into comparable acts in the context of corporate culturalism. Farting or bitching is merely a smelly annoyance (to fellow workers and management alike) and leaves extant power structures intact.

This might be why this once vibrant research agenda now seems to have run aground. It reified subjectivity and identity to such an extent that broader flows of power went unobserved. This is all too obvious today in the context of 'capitalist realism' (Fisher, 2010) where the cold logic of economic rationality presides largely undisguised, without fear of being upstaged by an alternative. As the polar icecaps

melt in front of our very eyes due to the unwillingness of large enterprises to deviate from 'business as usual', the spirit of micro-emancipation now looks quaint if not amusingly feeble. As does the idea that any sensible person might be tempted to 'love' their workplace. This begs the question as to whether Willmott's study of corporate culturalism is still meaningful today.

AFTER CORPORATE CULTURALISM

Upon rereading Willmott's paper, the robustness and enduring relevance of its conclusions regarding the dark side of corporate culturalism are immediately evident. It demonstrates how this managerial ideology is based upon some fairly totalitarian and anti-democratic tendencies. And even a cursory glance at current 'corporate life' (Hancock and Spicer, 2009) shows that it is still prevalent in many workplaces today.

But I would suggest, also, that the legitimation processes of large enterprises have undergone significant changes. Many workers are no longer bombarded with the cult-like socialization tactics identified by Willmott. Nor are they emphatically implored to think of the firm as their 'family'. Perhaps this is indicative of the massive evacuation of legitimacy concerning work more generally (not even lucratively paid investment bankers see much moral worth in it according to Michel [2012]). We have reached a juncture where even well known pro-business commentators openly concede, "the legitimacy of business has fallen to levels not seen in recent history" (Porter and Kramer, 2011, p. 4). In a sense, everybody now soberly knows that 2+2=4, but that is no longer the point. Amidst this widespread disenchantment that includes managers, CEOs and workers alike, we still continue to work longer and harder than ever. Along with the 'free market' and other neo-liberal memes, 'working' is one of the chief metaphors we live by: in the forlorn words of an employee interviewed by Michel (2012, p. 344), "my work is my life". This was not conveyed in a tone of joyous celebration common during the halcyon days of corporate culturalism (Deal and Key, 1998). It was more a sad indictment about what life has become in an overworked society.

Why do we continue to work so arduously in a context where corporate legitimacy has reached an all time low? I suggest that the reason lies in novel modes of organizational regulation that have augmented the scope and nature of managerial power. This can be seen as both a departure from some key tenets of corporate culturalism, as depicted by Willmott, and an extension of the continuing effort to manage the subjective energies of the workforce. Accordingly, new understandings of workplace resistance have also emerged.

From Conformity to Diversity

It is the suffocating uniformity of corporate cultures that keenly concerns Willmott. As he correctly states, "the space within organizations for expressing and developing awareness of, and allegiance to, alternative norms or values is reduced and, ideally, eliminated" (p. 532). But not long after the appearance of Willmott's article, both popular and academic management commentators had serious reservations about the productiveness of cultural conformity (Semler, 1993; Deal and Kennedy, 1999). Even the original proponents of 'strong cultures' – including Tom Peters (1994) – were changing their tune, arguing that slavish adherence to a monolithic set of values might actually smother the creative, innovative and

entrepreneurial capabilities of employees. For example, cultural standardization can result in sheepish complacency, something that swiftly changing markets and business environments will surely punish (Foster and Kaplan, 2001; Kunda and Ailon-Souday, 2005).

Recent research in Critical Management Studies has also registered this shift in corporate discourse. The closed society in Willmott's piece functioned to depersonalize the worker since any facet of themselves not pertaining to firm's wellbeing was symbolically castigated as hazardous. In this highly conformist climate, "cultural diversity is dissolved in the acid bath of the core corporate values" (pp. 534). Now the opposite seems to be the case. With others, I have proposed that a new kind of 'neo-normative control' has emerged in large enterprises where employees are encouraged to exude authenticity, 'just be themselves' and display their personal idiosyncrasies (see Fleming, 2009; Fleming and Sturdy, 2010). Instrumental control is achieved through *diversity*. The celebration of difference manufactures the appearance of autonomy and self-expression, but is used by 'liberation management' to render workers more responsive to social settings that increasingly define post-industrial work (Gregg, 2011).

This can be observed in the author's study of a call-centre that encouraged workers to just be themselves (Fleming, 2009). The objective of this management approach was to a). motivate employees (since they no longer felt obliged to hide their true individuality) and b). access the tacit social skills of the workforce (e.g.. improvising around the call-center script to deliver a more authentic customer experience). Relaxed attitudes towards lifestyle difference, sexual orientation, and consumer tastes made workers feel freer. But this also allowed the organization to harvest important subjective attributes. In this context, fake allegiance to a set of nonsense values would be counter-productive. And this alters the nature of managerial power. Personal authenticity is no longer a retreat from the influence of subjective domination as in the golden days of corporate culturalism ('I don't really believe in this, I still know who I really am') but becomes the very medium through which it is secured.

This has a number of important implications when considering Willmott's study. For him, diverse standpoints are a vital democratic antidote to the totalitarian conformity of culture management. The terrain is different today. Workplace democracy is increasingly shutdown precisely by using the language of diversity. Indeed, all manner of assorted views are welcome in the office since what Courpasson (2006) calls 'soft constraint' employs the idiom of liberalism ('be yourself, say what you like, but submit to the demands of economic necessity'). Expressive *non-conformity* is a key mainstay of corporate domination today, to the point where even anti-authoritarianism ideals are paid lip service, even by funky CEOs (Brooks, 2000; Ross, 2004; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). This is one reason why the practical efficacy of micro-emancipation is risky in the 'just be yourself' enterprise. Many of the minor transgressions once considered dangerous by management are now openly celebrated by the millionaire CEO who proudly wears his Che Guevara T-shirt and declares 'capitalism sucks' (Cremin, 2011).

From Labour to 'Life Itself'

This change in management ideology is further evidenced in the way it increasingly focuses on moments of *non-work* as a source of value and inspiration. Contemporary corporate discourse displays characteristics of *bio-power* or 'biocracy'

(Fleming, 2012) whereby 'life itself' (which used to be reserved till the formal workaday was over) is enrolled as a productive force. Critics of corporate culturalism correctly draw parallels with the mind-control tactics usually found in cults (O'Reilly and Chapman, 1996). Such domains are total, monolithic and distrusting of any foreign agents that might contaminate the official story. As Kunda (1992) and Casey (1996) observe, the diluting influence of non-corporate life (e.g., family, hobbies, leisure, etc.) must be minimized since it can upset the tightly policed normative narrative. One worker interviewed by Kunda (1992) made reference to some personal problems: 'in the office you keep that kind of shit to yourself'. Pluralistic life-projects pursued beyond work might reduce the desirability of complete allegiance to the firm. This is why "far from enabling the active process of comprehending the possibility and necessity of choosing between competing values and their associated life-projects, identification with a singe set of values is demanded" (p. 529).

The post-industrial workplace complicates this picture. It has significantly displaced the old boundaries that once delineated work from non-work. If employees in the 1980s and 1990s believed their "life projects" were unwelcome in the organizational sphere, then today they are enthusiastically encouraged and turned to productive ends. This is because many useful qualities desired by the contemporary firm lie beyond its official remit and modern management methods are increasingly designed to tap them (Fleming, 2012). What Kuhn (2006) calls the rise of the 'life style' organization seeks to capture essential creative and co-operative energies, and index them to economic rationality. For example, employees of large music stores are free to wear their own attire. They have a much better fashion-sense than anything prescribed by a dull middle manager (also see Land and Taylor, 2010). Similarly, training in the knowledge industries is almost non-existent since companies know full well that its workforce train themselves, on their own time and expense (Cederstrom and Fleming, 2012). The closed social system defined by corporate culturalism that Willmott outlined has been partially replaced by the 'Google-Model' of production (Hanlon, 2012) whereby the extra (and some times *anti*) economic qualities of employees' lives are harvested for economic ends. Grassman's (2012) study of a knowledge intensive enterprise in London is illuminating. When asked about the culture of the organization an employee observed, "you are encouraged to be how you want … there is no common denominator other than there is no norm, it is almost not like going to work because you do not no when it begins or ends" (Grassman, 2012, p. 159).

The last part of this quote points to another interesting dynamic. If non-work signifiers are promoted in formal organizational settings, then the converse occurs too. Work (or the mentality of working) starts to permeate evermore areas of life outside of formal paid employment. Organizations today have a heavy reliance on the attributes of 'life' developed by its workers *outside* the dictates of formal rationality (Fleming, 2009). Some examples will illustrate. Ross' (2004) study at Razorfish found that non-work signifiers were continuously evoked as the firm sought to import "lifestyle components back into the workplace" (Ross, 2004, p. 139). More dynamic team performances are likely if cast in the parlance of artisanal amateurism or a labour of love. But the process flowed the other way. The company realized "ideas and creativity were just as likely to surface at home or in other locations, and so employees were encouraged to work elsewhere … the goal was to extract every waking instant of an employee's day" (Ross, 2004, p. 52). To capture this kind of labour power, employees were advised to discard the old distinction between work

and non-work, free-time and work-time. The outcome, of course, was not more freedom, but the opposite. All time was now work time.

Michel (2012) notes a similar trend in the banks she studied. Unlike the logic of corporate culturalism documented by Willmott, which forbade non-work contaminants to officially enter the workplace, she found managers doing the exact opposite. The corporate rationale for dismantling the work/non-work boundary, however, was not only to tap those creative and innovative moments that might transpire away from the office. Old fashion labour intensification was also central, as she explains: "the bank erased distinctions between work and leisure by providing administrative support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, encouraging leisure at work, and providing free amenities, including childcare, valets, car service and meals" (Michel, 2012, p. 336). Using the idiom of freedom, flexibility and increased benefits, every waking hour was lived through the echo-chamber of the bank.

But even sleep can now be a time of working. This is vividly documented in an autobiographical study by Lucas (2010). The computer programmer described how his life was so integrated with his job that sleeping became a moment of labour, dreaming up solutions to problematic code conundrums in the middle of the night. He explains, "dreaming about your work is one thing, but dreaming inside the logic of your work is another … in the kind of dream I have been having the very movement of my mind is transformed: it has become that of my job. This is unnerving" (Lucas, 2010, p. 125). Much of this, as Gregg (2011) observes in yet another study, results in the valorization of unpaid or *free labour* as employees organize schedules, develop solutions, and prepare for work outside of official hours. Other research has observed a similar dynamic as companies enlist consumers in the innovation/production process [Arvidsson, 2006] and enclose creativity in the cultural commons [Perelman, 2002]. This trend represents a significant departure from the closed worlds of 'strong cultures', since evermore facets of non-work are now integral to many business models.

From Recognition to Post-recognition Politics

This shifting corporate discourse also has implications for employee contestation and resistance. Recall that Willmott's central criticism concerns the totalitarian manner in which corporate culturalism precludes alternative value-standpoints. Consequently, value diversity might be considered emancipatory given the "affinity between the practical realization of autonomy and the development of democratic organizations of social institutions, in which the virtues of competing values are freely debated" (p. 534). A rather Habermasian solution pertaining to deliberative dialogue is offered as a radical remedy to the totalitarian spirit of corporate culturalism. A truly democratic reconstitution of corporate life would place it in the context of a plural social universe, as one sphere among many others, and thus open up its meaning/organization to multiple points of view. And following Habermas (1987), such democratic consensus requires open debate and discussion, as well as the positive recognition of those who are speaking, no matter their rank (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007). Whether this enabling critical dialogue entails minor modifications in power relations (via micro-emancipation [Alvesson and Willmott, 1992a]) or more significant interventions, open and free communicative exchange is a crucial prerequisite (Meyerson, 2001).

In the context of a closed, tightly controlled social institution, one that aims to remain 'pure' and 'untainted' by outside life projects, this 'speaking the truth to power' (Foucault, 2001) certainly holds much democratic promise. But today there seems to be a major world-weariness concerning the idea of speaking to power, asking to be recognized by it and voicing our demands. Why so? No doubt, as Cederstrom and Fleming (2012) suggest in relation to new attitudes regarding employment, it reflects a pervasive disillusionment with the cultural status of working itself. Compared to yesteryear, in which "the worker" was iconic among our edifying social ideals, recent times have seen a major decline in its legitimacy. The contemporary employee now rarely desires more, less, fairer or better work, but simply some kind of silent and unceremonial escape or *exit* from the scene of paid employment (Papadopoulos et al. 2008; Fleming, 2012b).

Such disaffection may be partially responsible for the turn away from what I term *recognition politics* in organizations. But it is also indicative of a new kind of resistance among the emergent workforce. We might term this *post-recognition politics*, because it does not implore to be seen, heard and counted in corporate-sponsored debates. As Harney (2011) suggests, it is instead defined by the 'struggle to be left alone' or *exodus* (Virno, 2004). The reasons why are twofold. First is the worry that dialogue with power not only fails to curb corporate control (not even millions of citizens taking to the streets of the large metropolises of the West has appeared to do that) but might actually inadvertently justify its continued hegemony. Political liberalism has always relied upon the ruse of 'inclusion' and 'consultation' to short-circuit more imaginative political alternatives (Fleming, 2012). Think of the bizarre self-referentiality in the reasoning of former USA president George W. Bush when he declared that he was technically vindicated by the millions of protesters opposing his policies since it showed his faithfulness to free-speech. As The Invisible Committee (2009) point out, an emergent workers' movement is increasingly aware of this pitfall, resisting the invitation to enter dialogue with corporate officialdom since it may simply reinforce the terms of an unwinnable game: suddenly we are using its language, its expectations and its political imaginary.

The metaphor of *exit* should not be equated with quietism or a retreat into private solitude, which raises the second rationale driving post-recognition politics: if the bio-political corporation is conspicuously over-reliant on human qualities lying beyond its instrumental remit (as the many examples illustrate above) then why not realize this social autonomy towards more progressive, democratic ends? In this sense, the self-determination that Willmott champions in his paper is still tremendously relevant. But he assumes it can happen within the confines of the modern firm, through heated dialogue and pluralist debate. Workers are very pessimistic about this possibility today (Gillick, 2009). Resistance inspired by post-recognition politics seeks self-determination *outside* the corporate project by repossessing the social autonomy that many jobs enclose for capitalistic ends. Gorz (2005) calls it a democratic reclamation of work, whereby "social relations, co-operative bonds and the meaning of each life will be mainly produced by activities that do not valorize capital. Working time will cease to be the dominant social time" (Gorz, 2005, p. 73).

This is the logic behind a whole host of new social movements including independent-media groups (Shukiatis, 2009), precarious worker syndicates (Rogoff, 2009) and co-operative employment communities in the large cities of the West (see Pasquinelli [2008] for an excellent overview). Moreover, we need only look to the multitude of workers who have intentionally departed their jobs to lead less exploited

lives. Jones (2012) calls this trend 'opting out'. Most notable here are the so-called 'downshift movers' (see Nelson, Paek and Rademacher, 2007) and the 'slow movement' (van Bommel and Spicer, 2011). Innumerable websites are dedicated to assisting employees to leave their jobs, including leavingacademia.com among others. Some modes of 'opting out' might be spectacular (such as the much publicized resignation of Goldman Sachs senior executive Gregg Smith in March 2012) or much more mundane. We might think about the innumerable non-workers that have decided never to enter the corporation in the first-place (see Costas and Fleming, 2010). Whether this is a desirable or even tenable way to counteract the ubiquitous nature of the contemporary corporation remains to be seen.

To conclude, these three emergent trends in the nature of power and resistance at work marks a departure from the tenets of corporate culturalism analyzed by Willmott (see Table One).

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I am certainly not arguing that corporate culturalism is no longer a dominant force in managerial practice and ideology. However, shifts in the nature of employment, the kinds of regulation favored by large enterprises and changing tactics of resistance invite new conceptualizations that build upon Willmott's observations. In particular the current managerial focus on 'life itself' and the resistance it inspires may ultimately reshape the nature of organizations more generally. Here, future research on corporate hegemony needs to expand its focus beyond the focal organization if we are to understand how 'a job' is no longer something we *do* among other things, but is also something we *are*. And this may considerably transform the perennial political struggle around the meaning and morality of employment (and its management) in the future.

CONCLUSION

Willmott's classic *JMS* paper remains one of the most important critiques of the abiding managerial desire to impose totalitarian-like discourses upon the workforce. His application of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* vividly demonstrates the striking similarities corporate culturalism has with indefensible ideologies like Stalinism and fascism. Willmott convincingly reveals how the promise of autonomy and emotional freedom used to justify this management technique harbors more pernicious objectives. Like the brainwashed inhabitants of Orwell's fictional dystopia, members of strong cultures are forced to align their personalities with an unquestioned authority. No alternative value-standpoints are permitted. All debate is illegal. Big Brother is watching. It is this fearsome anti-democratic theme that Willmott so brilliantly captures. Indeed, upon rereading the paper, one might even suggest there is something anti-democratic about the corporate form more generally. And this has raised important questions for how researchers ought to best represent, engage and interact with workers, managers and corporations. For this reason, Willmott's piece remains foundational to the Critical Management Studies

project and ought to be read as a defining testament to its scholarly objectives and concerns.

If Willmott's paper paved the way for critically dissecting the mind-control tendencies of corporate culturalism, in its own way it also reposed the problem of resistance. While it has the reputation for downplaying dissent, I have reread Willmott's paper as we might *Nineteen Eighty-Four* itself, positioning the defiant Winston at the invisible centre of the text, that intractable and unwavering rational subject who lurks between the lines and clearly sees the monstrosity of pure power. Following Wilmott's piece, a vibrant stream of research flourished investigating the way subjective forms of power might be resisted. Even amidst the claustrophobic atmosphere of 'strong cultures' workers could still utter to themselves: 2+2=4. We just needed to be more attuned to its everyday and inconspicuous manifestations. The concept of micro-emancipation helped immensely here.

The recent decline of scholarly interest in micro-emancipation, however, perhaps reflects the changing nature of corporate power generally. In light of the social-political events of the last 20 years, there is a danger that these once cutting-edge concerns with 'normative control' and 'micro-resistance' might seem trivial. We have since witnessed the travesty of post-Enron capitalism, criminal oil wars in the Middle East, Wikileaks revelations of predatory profiteering, bank bailouts confirming how democratic governments are but instruments of the elite (at the expense of 'the 99%', to quote the Occupy Movement slogan) and so much more. After all that, the idea employees might seriously believe in the corporation – let alone emotionally bond with it – seems inconceivable. In these so-called 'end times' (Žižek, 2010) governed by a self-destructive capitalist realism, it is difficult to imagine that corporate culturalism might have once mattered. Today, there is an uneasy feeling that no one really cares whether we identify with the firm or not. Least of all the firm itself. Ideology is out of fashion. Power no longer feels the need to disguise itself. And as a result, perhaps more pressing questions are coming to the fore, along with even more urgent democratic solutions to the problem of work.

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Table One.

Emergent Trends After Corporate Culturalism

Key Feature	Corporate Culturalism	Emergent Trend
Political ideology.	Totalitarianism. (Willmott, 1993)	Liberalism and/or Neo-liberalism. (Courpasson, 2006)
Dominant managerial practice.	Culture management. (Peters and Waterman, 1982).	Liberation management (instrumentalizing tacit and pre-existing employee qualities). (Semler, 1993; Kunda and Ailon-Souday, 2005).
Objective of managerial power	*Moulding* workplace selves (e.g., commitment to the productive goals of the firm). (O'Reilly and Chapman, 1996; Ray, 1986).	*Enclosing* the extra-economic life skills and social intelligence of workers for capitalistic ends. (Land and Tyler, 2010).
Articulation of managerial power	Techniques facilitating collective 'designer selves' via strong cultures. (Casey, 1995).	Biopower or 'life itself' in and beyond the firm. (Kuhn, 2006; Gregg, 2011).
Central injunction to employees.	Commit and identify with the firm like everybody else (Barley and Kunda, 1992).	No prescriptions: 'Just be yourself!' (Fleming and Sturdy, 2011; Grassman, 2012).
Defining employee experience.	Conformity and inauthenticity. (Gabriel, 1999).	Manufactured 'difference' and self-exploitation. (Ross, 2004).
Managerial stance to life outside the organization	Denial: Non-work signifiers viewed as dangerous contaminant to organizational norms. (Baker, 1993; Kunda, 1992).	Promotion: Extra-corporate sociality a key resource to be tapped. (Lucas, 2010; Michel, 2012).
Central mode of resistance	Politics of recognition: pluralism and dialogue. (Meyerson, 2001).	Post-recognition politics: non-dialogical. (Fleming, 2012).
Key manifestation of resistance	Micro-emancipation towards reform and democratization of work. (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992b; Scherer and Palazzo, 2007).	Exit work and self-valorization. (The Invisible Committee, 2009; Shukiatis, 2009).