

# The Day of the Rally: An Ethnographic Study of ‘Ceremony as Resistance’ and ‘Resistance as Ceremony’

## Abstract

The literature on organizational culture suggests that ceremonies or rituals reinforce control. By contrast, this article contributes to the literature on resistance, culture and ceremony by arguing that ceremony can also be understood as a form of resistance. It does so through drawing on ethnographic research first to explore how a ceremonial one-day rally during an academic dispute was *productive* for frontline *employee* resistance (ceremony as resistance). Second, it considers how such resistance can also be *productive* in generating consent for it is infused with and reproduces established norms, subjectivities and power relations (resistance as ceremony). Finally, it is asserted that resistance can be *productive* in fostering a subjectivity characterised by stability and instability and so practices such as a rally are necessary to try to stabilise both the organization and subjectivity of resistance. The article therefore illustrates the ambiguity of productive resistance which has been neglected to-date. These insights and arguments indicate that *all* forms of workplace resistance are deaf for they are imbued with the context and norms through which they arise. Nevertheless, resistance remains dangerous for those in positions of authority because it means that power is never totalising and so outcomes continue to be uncertain.

**Key words:** Ceremony, Control, Consent, Culture, Ethnography, Power, Resistance, Ritual, Subjectivity.

## Introduction

Organizational ceremonies can include a ‘Great Race’ (Dandridge,1986), an awards “Rally” (Peters and Waterman,1982) or a retirement event (McCarl,1984; Anteby,2006). As ‘presentation rituals’, including ‘face-to-face gatherings, speeches, presentations, meetings, lectures, parties, training workshops’ (Kunda,1992: 19), they can be understood to provide ‘a mechanism of normative control’ (op cit: 93) offering ‘managers a mode of exercising (or, at least, seeking to exercise) power’ (Van Maanen and Kunda,1989:49). Ceremonies have also been referred to ‘as a tool of management’ (Dandridge,1986:166) that help to maintain order (see Alvesson and Karreman,2007:718; Pfeffer,1981:9; Trice et al,1969:42; Rosen,1985:41; Rosen,1988:469). By contrast, this article focuses on a ceremonial one-day rally during an academic dispute and, through ethnographic research it is argued that ceremonies can also be understood as a means of resistance.

Dandridge (1986) defined ceremony as '*ritualized* events that are pre-planned to occur in a designated time and place, and are accepted and desired by some participant group' (op cit:163; emphasis added). This definition can be applied to the ceremony in the following case study. It is important to point out, however, that whilst ceremonies 'may bind persons to the collectivity' (Garfinkel, 1956:421), this does not mean that the collective has to be a managerial one. As Dandridge's (1986) definition indicates, the terms ritual and ceremony are often used in an interchangeable way in the literature (e.g. Geertz,1973:399-400; Goffman,1983:9-10; Hillyard,2010:433; Moore and Myerhoff,1977:7), which is confusing and so a clearer explanation of ceremony is required.

Ceremony has been associated with the secular whereas ritual is linked with the 'occult or mystical' (Gluckman and Gluckman,1977:233) and so, according to this distinction, the rally explored in this article can be understood as a ceremony. Moreover, a ceremony can be distinguished as an event that is infrequent but socially significant (i.e. graduation, inaugurations), which requires considerable organization and collective involvement. As the 'larger units' (op cit:231), ceremonies may include or can be understood to be constituted through, smaller rituals (e.g. speeches, dress codes, parades, gifts).

According to Goffman (1983), ceremony includes 'at one end, coronations, at the other, the two-couple dine out' (op cit:9) or one-to-one service encounters (op cit:15). The problem with this definition is that ceremony can mean almost anything and this also applies to Geertz's (1973) term 'ceremonialization', which refers to the way in which Balinese 'interpersonal relations are controlled by a developed system of

conventions and proprieties' (op cit: 399). This is not how ceremony is used here as following Moore and Myerhoff (1977) it is the collective dimension of ceremony that is emphasised. Ceremony is therefore understood as 'a dramatic occasion, a complex type of symbolic behaviour that usually has a storable purpose, but one that invariably alludes to more than it says, and has many meanings at once' (op cit:5).

Theoretically, this article is informed by labour process and post-structural theorising that considers issues of power, resistance and subjectivity in the workplace (e.g. Burawoy,1979; Collinson,1988, 1994; Ezzamel et al,2001; Jermier et al,1994; Knights and McCabe,2003). Nevertheless, as the discussion has already indicated, insights from the literature on culture, anthropology and symbolic interactionism are also relevant when analysing ceremony and so such work will also be drawn upon.

The article contributes to an understanding of resistance firstly through making a theoretical and empirical connection between resistance and ceremony. It does so through exploring a ceremonial one-day rally during a dispute. This 'ceremony as resistance' was productive for employees because it helped to galvanise collective employee opposition whilst articulating and constituting defiant subjectivities. Although disruptive, the rally was bound up with 'consent' (Burawoy,1979; McCabe,2011,2014) and so, in this sense, it is also 'resistance as ceremony' or 'decaf' resistance (Contu,2008). This is because it is infused with and so is not separate from (e.g. Scott,1985) established norms, power relations and subjectivities.

The second contribution is to argue, contra Bloom (2013), that resistance is not necessarily 'safe' in terms of producing a stable identity because, contra Contu

(2008), even decaf resistance is not without ‘risk’ (op cit: 367). Indeed, the ceremony discussed here, needs to be understood as an endeavour to ameliorate the risk, insecurity and instability of resistance.

The final contribution is to argue that because resistance is bound up with consent it can be seen as ‘dangerous’ (Foucault,1983:343) for it can bind us to the status quo. Nevertheless, this does not mean that it is futile because resistance also remains dangerous for those in positions of authority because it exposes the fragility of dominant power relations and indicates that outcomes remain indeterminate.

The article is organised as follows; the next section explores the literature on resistance and relates it to the organizational culture literature especially that which focuses on ceremony. The research context and methods are then introduced before turning to the empirical research. Finally, the article draws out its main insights in a discussion and conclusion.

### **Resistance in the Workplace**

In recent decades, post-structural commentators (Ezzamel et al,2001; Jermier et al,1994; Knights and McCabe,2003) have focused on ‘resistance at the level of subjectivity’ (Merilainen et al,2004:558). This has drawn our attention to the importance of ‘resistance through distance’ and ‘persistence’ (Collinson,1994); cynicism (Fleming and Spicer,2003); dis-identification (Costas and Fleming,2009); humour (Collinson,1988) and memory (McCabe,2004,2010) as forms of resistance.

Traditional labour process theorists have also focused on less overt and more individual acts of resistance such as misbehaviour (Ackroyd and Thompson,1999).

In this context, some authors have expressed concern that ‘there is a risk of reducing resistance to the most banal and innocuous everyday actions’ (Fleming and Spicer,2008: 303). Similarly, Contu (2008) has depicted certain forms of resistance such as cynicism, irony and humour as ‘decaf’ because they only serve to ‘support the fantasy of ourselves as liberal, free, and self-regulating human beings’ (Contu,2008: 370). This is contrasted with ‘Real’ resistance, which is said to involve ‘risking all’ and going ‘against all your interests’ (Contu,2008: 376). I support Contu’s (2008) argument regarding decaf resistance but believe that it could be extended to *all* forms of workplace resistance because despite some significant sacrifices (see Allen,2009; McBride et al,2013), very few contemporary workplace struggles can be said to live up to the ideal of ‘real’ resistance, at least in the West.

All resistance arises through a cultural context that includes power relations, norms, subjectivities, discourses, identities, inequalities, rituals and ceremonies; it takes up and reflects this context. Resistance is therefore potentially dangerous because it serves, in part, to reproduce the status quo. The alternative, however, would be to resist for the purpose of chaos, for that is what it would mean to ‘destroy the machine of power’ (Contu,2008: 374), which would also be dangerous. Most resistance is decaf then even though not all resistance is the same but this does not mean that we cannot radically change ‘the machine of power’ but we cannot destroy it without destroying ourselves. In this sense, there are no ‘Real acts’ of resistance but there are some that are more dangerous than others depending on the context through which

they arise. As Foucault's (1977) insights reveal, we are forged through power relations and our labour's fuel the machine but we can also change it to better serve the majority and, it is in this sense, that resistance remains dangerous to those in positions of authority.

To illustrate the problematic distinction between real versus decaf resistance, Hodson (1995) argued that there are four principle agendas of resistance: deflecting abuse, regulating the work, attaining autonomy and expanding work control (op cit:82). In each instance, resistance is embedded within and reproduces existing workplace norms. This can also be said of pilfering/fiddles (Mars,1982), homers (Anteby,2006,2008) or output restriction (see Ackroyd and Thompson,1999). Hence Roy (1969) defines 'making out' as 'resistance to and subversion of formally instituted managerial controls on production' (ibid:359) but its aim is to increase employees' earnings and/or to ameliorate the stress associated with work demands. Similarly, Prasad and Prasad's (2000) study of 'routine' resistance identified how workers find ways to ensure that their concerns are taken into account by managers. All of these accounts can be understood as decaf resistance or 'resistance as ceremony' because they preserve rather than challenge the status quo.

In contrast to such arguments, Scott's (1985) analysis of resistance among Malaysian agricultural workers sought to reveal that there 'is a place where the play of power does not penetrate' (Marshall,1990:564). He argues that there is a 'small social sphere where the powerless may speak freely' (Scott,1985:330). Yet, if we accept Foucault's (1982) insight that power imbues and constitutes our subjectivity then this means that

resistance cannot occupy 'a position of exteriority to power' (Foucault,1979:96) and so there cannot be an 'outside the context of power relations' (Scott,1985:321).

Although collective strike action ostensibly carries with it greater dangers than say cynicism and so, in this sense, it is more 'real' than 'decaf', it is still bound up with extant norms. Hence strikes threaten work norms but the objective is usually to achieve a pay award or avoid job losses. Although this aims to maintain/improve our standard of living such resistance seeks to restore a modified version of normal workplace relations. This is also evident during action short of a strike, when the routines and norms of work are largely ongoing. In these circumstances, the planning and organizing of resistance becomes part of the routine of everyday life. It aims to disrupt and improve everyday life but it is also 'resistance as ceremony' because the aim is to restore normality and so it could be seen as dangerous for those seeking more radical change.

This is not to dismiss the dangers of resistance either for those participating in it or who are challenged by resistance. Indeed, it is problematic to conclude that even decaf resistance 'inherently' guarantees, 'rather than' disturbs or disrupts our 'way of life' (Contu,2008:370) because we do not know what impact resistance will have either on ourselves, employers or the state. As Edwards et al (1995) put it, 'in certain cases the 'mental strike' or indifference of one individual...could be more damaging to management than a strike by an entire workforce' (op cit:291). We cannot conclude therefore that certain forms of resistance are 'without the risk of really changing our ways of life or the subjects who live it' (Contu,2008:367) because although 'people know what they do...what they don't know is what they do does' (Foucault,1982:

187). In contrast to Contu's (2008:374) position then *all* resistance needs to be understood as dangerous because it 'cannot be predicted, and controlled' (ibid).

Moreover, as Dick (2013:666) has stated:

if we, as researchers decide what is and is not to be considered politically effective, we undermine, discount and underestimate the power of those everyday, subversive actions that emerge when women and men engage in mundane struggles

The dangers of resistance are apparent if one accepts the argument that 'there are no relations of power without resistances' (Foucault, 1980: 142) for this 'relational' concept of power carries with it great optimism. Hence to argue that 'Where there is power there is resistance' (Foucault,1979: 95) means that it is always necessary to explore how different 'struggles' (Foucault,1982:212) play out and this is why resistance remains both productive and dangerous<sup>i</sup>. As Knights and Vurdubakis (1994) put it, resistance serves 'the role of continuously provoking extensions, revisions and refinements of those same practices which it confronts' (op cit:180), which renders outcomes uncertain.

Courpasson et al (2012) have recently explored how an 'enclave' of branch managers and, in another case R&D engineers, resisted other managers, through what they refer to as 'productive resistance'. The resistance they discuss worked through being constructive or working with corporate aims. Similarly, Thomas et al (2011) highlight how middle managers engaged in 'facilitative' resistance whereby a culture change programme was resisted but also facilitated through contesting the meaning of the customer. These studies differ from the following case study because (1) it focuses on employees not managers, (2) everyday normality had partly been disrupted due to a dispute involving trade unions and (3) the resistance was *ostensibly* more oppositional



than facilitative or productive. Nevertheless, it will be argued that productive or facilitative resistance is more ambiguous than Courpasson et al's (2012) and Thomas et al's (2011) accounts suggest.

Bloom (2013) has also pursued the argument that resistance is productive and makes two arguments. First, that resistance 'offers individuals the opportunity to secure themselves as a 'subject', to develop themselves as a stabilized self' (op cit: 228). It is certainly the case that resistance can provide some 'individuals with a cohesive identity, securing their 'safety' as a subject' (op cit:228) but, a resistant subjectivity, like all subjectivity, is precarious and so embracing a resistant self may feel far from stable or safe. The act of resistance, especially open, defiant, individual or collective resistance can provoke anxiety and potentially de-stabilize some individuals and communities. As one reaches for the precarious stability of a resistant self, the already 'illusive' (Clarke and Knights,2015:1865) stability of established identities (nurse, lecturer, parent, breadwinner, home owner) is threatened and this can foster anxiety. This reflects that the quest for a secure identity is 'self-defeating' because identity is open, fluid and multiple (Willmott,1990). Endeavours such as a rally therefore seek to stabilize resistance organizationally in terms of the collective but also in ways that relate to subjectivity for they aim to sooth the anxieties (i.e. economic, existential) of those resisting. The subjectivity of resisting will therefore include shifting dynamics around a sense of stability *and* instability.

The second argument that Bloom (2013) offers is that instead of being 'chiefly a force for destabilizing social relations', 'power and resistance necessarily constitute a stable relation' (ibid). He states that this does not mean 'that there is no possibility for

change' (ibid) nevertheless his arguments elevate stability over instability. Bloom (2013) refers to the 'revolutionary potential' of 'safe resistance' (op cit:234) and this reflects his belief that 'secure identifications' (ibid) can be achieved through resistance but this tends to contradict his stabilizing argument. By contrast, it will be argued here that power and resistance have the potential to both stabilize *and* destabilize social relations whilst rendering identity secure *and* insecure. Together, this produces social relations that are unpredictable and resistance that is both deaf and dangerous.

### *Ceremony as Resistance and Resistance as Ceremony*

The empirical focus of this article is on a rally that is understood as a ceremony of resistance because it marked an important juncture in a dispute at a UK University. The literature on resistance has largely neglected ceremony and the organizational culture literature that has attended to ceremony has largely neglected resistance. The literature on informal workgroup ceremonies considers how they are bound up with and reproduce everyday corporate life. This is evident in the ritual abuse and degradation of new recruits (Boland and Hoffman,1983:193). Collinson (1988), for example, found that apprentices were 'recognised as mature men' once they 'graduated through degradation ceremonies' (op cit: 189). Similarly, Vaught and Smith (1980:174) reported how miners' ceremonially disciplined colleagues, which was seen as 'a powerfully integrating force for the group' (op cit:180).

The degree of collective organization is limited in these informal ceremonies and also in accounts of 'retirement ceremonies' (Anteby,2006:27) that arise during 'routine'

(op cit:25) workplace relations. These relatively unstructured, informal and simple ceremonies can be contrasted with the more formal and elaborate managerial ceremonies described by Rosen (1985,1988) but they are all grounded in extant norms that reproduce everyday organizational life.

Not every account of ceremony refers to informal workgroups or managerial ceremonies. The Durham Miners' Gala began in 1872 and it has been described as a 'dramatic occupational ceremony' (Beynon and Austrin,1989:73) that includes speeches, processions and 'the display of banners' (op cit:68). The purpose of these Galas is to strengthen collective bonds and others have focused on how communities can 'reinvigorate themselves' (Mellor and Stephenson,2005:343) through them. This literature is obviously different from the present study that considers ceremony in the context of a workplace dispute. Nevertheless, the key insight that ceremony can be a means to foster collectivism is entirely relevant to the current study.

Although Roy (1980) did not use the term ceremony, his analysis of how managers opposed unions in the USA, provides some pertinent insights. He highlighted that both sides 'organize their own bonds of affiliation and try to disorganize or block the development of affiliations with the opposition' (op cit:396). Hence unions may hold 'mass meetings' (op cit:401) as they attempt to organize workers, which can be understood as a ceremonial means to counter the 'fear stuff' and 'processes of intimidation' (op cit:387) workers face when organizing. Roy (1980) highlighted that managers may also use ceremonies to effectively de-stabilize unions through promises of 'sweet stuff' (i.e. promotion). We can observe then that ceremony has long been a

part of workplace struggles but it has received limited attention in the recent resistance literature.

### **The Case Study in Context**

Neo-liberalism is increasingly dominating education in countries such as the UK (Parker,2014), Canada (Hyslop-Margison and Leonard,2012) and Australia (Anderson,2008; Ryan,2012). In the UK, market-based competition between universities has intensified due to reduced central government funding, which has increased the importance of income generated through student fees. League tables have proliferated that define both academics and the institutions for which they work. According to Ryan (2012) ‘It is in the changing rules and the measurement regimes that we are most zombified, infected by measurement madness, the audit culture, surveillance’ (op cit:5). This is exemplified by the UK’s research assessment exercise (RAE) renamed the research excellence framework (REF) in 2009, which measures academic publications. Together, these dynamics have fuelled a competitive, performance driven culture, where academics become ‘tradable commodities’ (Parker,2014:290). Promotion and employability is entwined with such measures adding to the commodification and control of academics (Willmott, 1995, 2011).

It has been argued that ‘rather than resisting an ever-proliferating array of governmental technologies of power, academics chase the illusive sense of a secure self through ‘careering’; a frantic and frenetic individualistic strategy designed to moderate the pressures of excessive managerial competence demands’ (Clarke and Knights,2015:1865). Other scholars (Anderson,2008; Parker,2014; Willmott,1995)

have also pointed toward ‘the failure of academics to resist’ the new managerialism and have highlighted resistance in some cases being ‘limited to’ individualistic strategies of ‘exit’ (Parker,2014:282) or alternatively ‘zombification as a form of passive resistance and survival’ (Ryan,2012:3). This article aims to provide insights into academics resisting in more collective ways even though the march of performance-driven, neo-liberal managerialism, remains undiminished.

MedUniversity (pseudonym) is based in the UK and the majority of its trade union members are represented by the University and College Union (UCU), which is the UK’s largest union for academics and academic-related staff in higher and further education representing around 60,000 members. I began to consider researching events at MedUniversity when a programme of organizational restructuring and compulsory redundancies was announced. The redundancies were legitimised on the basis that existing ‘products’ or courses were insufficiently desirable in the market place (see Hyslop-Marginson and Leonard,2012:4). Ethical approval for the research was not sought because it was unclear how events would unfold in terms of whether there would be anything to research or whether the author would remain in employment. Had research permission been sought the dispute could have been over and/or the author no longer employed by the time that it was granted. It would therefore have been ‘impossible to use other methods’ (British Sociological Association,2002:6) to research the events, which highlights that ethics can be ‘abstracted from the actual doing’ (Calvey,2008:905) of research. Moreover, it seems unethical that those in authority should be able to veto research that potentially exposes their practices to scrutiny (see Spicker,2011:124).

Having said this, this article does not deal with particularly sensitive issues or matters that are specific to any single university and, as it is anonymous, it meets the most important ethical criteria of the BSA (2002), which is that it poses no risk of harm to any individual. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that following such ethical guides is potentially unethical because ‘ethics occurs only at a point where there is no external guide or set of rules to resolve problems of undecidability’ for ‘there is no moral decision involved when doing what we are told or simply obeying rules’(Clarke and Knights,2015:1882).

The decision to research the dispute was discussed with several colleagues whose jobs were also threatened and many of them also researched the ongoing events. According to Spicker (2011:119), covert research is ‘where the researcher does not reveal that research is taking place’ and yet this research was discussed with many colleagues and was common knowledge to others facing redundancy. It therefore fits with Calvey’s (2008:909) view that the line between overt and covert research is often blurred and Spicker’s (2011:119) assertion ‘that disclosure is not a dichotomous concept, something that is done or not done, but a spectrum of activity’.

As jobs were threatened it seemed ethical and important to research the dispute not least because according to Ashcraft (2008) there is ‘a tendency in critical organization scholarship ... to frame relations of power and resistance as phenomena occurring in workplaces “out there”, rather than also right here, in the academic institutions in which we labour and live’ (op cit:380). This article, following the lead of others (e.g. Parker,2014), therefore aims to address this neglect.

The connection with ceremony partly emerged due to the amount of ‘planning’ that went into organizing a rally to coincide with the ratification of senior management plans, which struck me as significant. Moreover, the day of the rally generated additional insights linked to its colours (banners), public gathering, festival mood and ‘speeches’ (Myerhoff,1977:202), which brought to mind accounts of managerial ceremonies (Rosen,1985,1988). An additional source of inspiration was that the rally reminded me of ‘Walking Days’, which are annual events in many towns and villages in the Northwest of England, where I grew up. At such events, school children, adults, churches of different denominations, brass and pipe bands, assemble at specific times and walk in a procession along the road (closed for the duration) with colourful banners using established routes lined by spectators.

### **An Ethnographic Research Approach and Methods**

The research approach was ‘ethnographic’ (Burawoy,1979; Roy,1958) where the emphasis is on understanding rather than measuring or ‘hypothesis-testing’ (Hillyard,2010:430). Ethnography is a ‘way of seeing’ (Wolcott,1999) that necessitates sustained immersion in a particular community. It entails ‘in-depth and up-close’ (Ybema and Kamsteeg,2009:103) research and the translation of that experience so as to make it meaningful to the reader (Cunliffe,2010).

The empirical material is drawn from strategy statements, the minutes of meetings, informal conversations, email correspondence, union newsletters and a diarised account of the dispute. The diarised account can be compared to ‘field notes’ (Van Maanen, 1988) for it reflected an attempt to record immediate observations and

reflections on significant events and everyday conversations, jokes, issues, experiences, emotions or passing exchanges. Data collection involved participant observation during management-staff meetings, local union meetings and union action committees (AC's), which were responsible for organizing the industrial action. It was possible to 'collect data openly' using 'pen and notepad, recording conversations by writing quickly' (Rosen, 1986:67).

Twenty-two AC's were observed over a 6 month period each of which lasted approximately one hour. Each AC was attended by between 6-8 members of the union and members were expected to report back to their respective groups and so almost everyone took notes. During the dispute it was also possible to observe four management-staff meetings, 6 local union meetings, 2 protest rallies, a one-day strike, a leafleting campaign of open days and a demonstration outside a talk given by the Chancellor of the University.

The data analysis occurred in emergent stages and the first stage ran concurrently with the data collection. As data was recorded, notes were made and through this themes began to emerge including humour, materiality and ceremony. These themes reflected the data but also issues that I thought to be distinctive in relation to the extant literature on resistance. They provided sparks whereby one begins to translate 'experience...into the intellectual sphere...[and]...gives it form' (Mills,1959:199). This first step in the analysis helped to reduce the quantity of data and provided a focus for thinking about its meaning.

The second stage of the analysis involved extracting all references to particular



themes. It involved a ‘fine-grained, line by line analysis’ (Emerson et al,1995:160) of them using union compiled newsletters, diary extracts, the minutes of AC meetings and notes that were written during AC meetings, speeches and management-staff meetings. The final stage of the analysis involved an iterative process, which involved shuttling ‘back and forth between existing materials and my own research’ (Mills,1959:202). In terms of the ceremony theme, this led to a decision to analyse the data in relation to the notion of (1) productive resistance; (2) whether resistance generates a stable subjectivity and (3) the role that ceremony plays in relation to (1) and (2). It also resulted in a decision to order the material, as elsewhere (Rosen,1985,1988; Parker,2014), in a chronological way. This is because I believe that this is the most illuminating way to represent both the rally and the ceremonial nature of the resistance. It is also essential to ceremony which is ‘by definition an organized event’ that has ‘a beginning and an end’ (Myerhoff and Moore,1977:7).

This chronological account cannot be seen as mere *description* because our representations are ‘intrinsically incomplete’ (Geertz,1973:29) and are imbued with our theoretical understanding. As researchers, we are ‘thoroughly implicated in the production of research’ (Rasche and Chia,2009:725) and so this necessitates reflexivity whereby we include ourselves ‘in the subject matter’ we are ‘trying to understand’ (Hardy et al,2001:532). To this end, it is important to state that I had never been involved in the organization of resistance before the dispute and the detailed planning and conduct of the rally (commonplace for activists) struck me as significant. I am from the Northwest of England and so ‘Walking Days’ are events that I have grown up with, which may help to explain why I saw the rally as a ceremony. Moreover, I was familiar with Rosen’s (1985,1988) work on

organizational ceremonies, which immediately came to mind during the rally. Together this experience and knowledge led me to link resistance with ceremony but I accept that others may not have seen the rally in this way.

### **The Genesis of the Dispute**

The Vice Chancellor (VC) of MedUniversity commissioned external consultants' to assess the performance of a School in its Social Science faculty. This led to restructuring proposals and plans to make 50% of staff redundant on a compulsory basis - based on management's assessment of employees' skills. The School had experienced increasing student numbers over many years and yet the consultants' report linked a relatively recent fall in student applications to courses that were deemed not to be 'attractive to current market demand' (Consultant's report), which echoes Parker's (2014) findings.

The process of commissioning consultants 'to identify and analyse client problems and recommend solutions' (Sturdy,2011:524) can be understood as a managerial ceremony designed to confer legitimacy upon the intended designs of management. The staff at MedUniversity were excluded from the process until after the report was written and decisions regarding redundancies had been taken. The 'strategy' was to be ceremonially endorsed through a presentation by the VC to the staff within the School but, at the start of this meeting, the staff staged a 'walk out' and subsequent 'consultation' meetings, were boycotted.

In the wake of the redundancy announcement, the Head of School (HoS) with support from senior staff produced an 'alternative' report, which set out a different strategic vision. This report identified flaws in the Consultants' report, which had conceded that it was not possible to 'project student recruitment' onto the new "products" and it also failed to provide a 'financial plan'. The 'alternative' report provided these figures/calculations and sought to be 'productive' (Courpasson et al, 2012) by demonstrating that management's objectives could be achieved through staff turnover and voluntary rather than compulsory redundancies. The predicted deficit for the next year would therefore be turned into a surplus in future years. Nevertheless, the discourse of the 'alternative' report reveals how the marketization of academia can be advanced through resistance hence the 'alternative' report did not question the language of surplus, products or financial plans.

It has been argued that an organized campaign, that articulates 'a new agenda' is a condition of successful 'productive' resistance (Courpasson et al,2012:806) and yet management refused to engage with the 'alternative' report and so the dispute escalated. This highlights that 'productive' resistance may be thwarted due to disagreement over what is productive and for whom it is productive. As soon as the planned redundancies were announced, the staff whose jobs were threatened and who were union members, began to meet. At the first staff meeting that involved the union, local UCU representatives suggested that an Action Committee (AC) should be established to organize the resistance with 'volunteer leaders/representatives' from all the groups whose jobs were at risk. This AC began to 'socialise' (Trice et al,1969) inexperienced resisters into the arts of resistance.

The local UCU representative stated that the AC should ‘meet regularly’ for it would be ‘important to communicate information through the union’. It was anticipated that the AC would be ‘an open group’ whose members should be contactable when staff ‘are worried’ about something and so it can be seen as an attempt to counter the ‘fear stuff’ (Roy,1980). This was necessary because the dispute provoked anxiety for those whose jobs were threatened, for example, a colleague and union member, came to my office and told me of the ‘profound’ impact that the redundancy threat was having on him and how the ‘uncertainty’ had caused him to reflect upon his life and future (Diary extract).

The setting up of the AC was justified on the basis of ‘experiences from past campaigns’. In practice, the AC became quite closed because most staff left the organising of the resistance to the AC. It proved vital, however, as a vehicle and forum for organising the resistance; for monitoring and ensuring that action took place; for communicating and sharing information regarding the progress of the dispute and, more generally, for ‘maintaining’ (Trice et al,1969) the resistance. A considerable advantage was that some individuals involved in the AC had experience of organizing resistance. This was drawn upon to help coordinate/produce the resistance, which socialised (Trice et al,1969) others in terms of how to resist. These leaders appeared to present a ‘stable resistance subject’ (Bloom, 2013: 228) but they were, at times, clearly and understandably anxious. Participation in the AC can be seen as a means to generate resistance that would be ‘productive’ for employees but it was *simultaneously* oppositional because it sought to challenge a management decision.

## **Organizing the Rally**

The Consultants' Report that management based its redundancy programme on was to be ratified at a meeting of Council – the University's highest governing body. A local union representative, during an AC meeting, stated in a dramatic way that this meeting of Council will 'seal our fate', which suggests an insecure rather than stable subject. The AC minutes reported that a separate committee had been set up – "The April Committee" - to organise a demonstration rally to coincide with the meeting of Council. This would help to 'maintain' (Trice et al,1969) the resistance by expressing collective opposition to management plans. These minutes state that 'flyers and email letters would be available immediately' and that the student union 'ballroom was booked' to host a post-rally union meeting. A subsequent AC meeting referred to setting up a 'stapling committee' so that placards could be made for the rally.

The rally required considerable planning and, it could be argued, that the distraction of this planning helped to generate a temporary sense of security for those resisting. The rally was an outcome and condition of the resistance but also of consent (Burawoy,1979) because the concern was to restore the status quo and, in the first instance, to avoid compulsory redundancies. The AC minutes recorded the following point under the heading 'rally':

Several items need to be checked, including disabled access to the ballroom, the PA system, the route for the march, and the briefing of stewards. It was agreed that AC members will be asked to act as stewards.

Placards need stapling to sticks: X to buy sticks and acquire a stapler.

A local union newsletter was published which included the following statement, which projects a sense of stability to the wider union membership and to management but, it can also be understood as an endeavour to ameliorate insecurity, through fostering solidarity:

The union has called a national rally day to be held on the X of April, the day of the Council meeting. UCU branches will be sending delegations by the coach load from all over the country to show their support and to show their own determination not to tolerate similar treatment from their own employers

The rally can be understood as the culmination of action to ‘maintain’ (Trice et al,1969) the resistance over the previous four months, which had included a boycott of student open days and leafleting campaigns outside them; a boycott of management-staff consultation meetings; a protest outside a talk given by the Chancellor of the University; a one-day strike and a rally following the end of the period of consultation. Field notes record the impact of a conversation with a union member whilst leafleting an open day. It indicates how those who embrace a resistant subjectivity can foster a sense of security in others:

T’s optimism and assertiveness is contagious and he left me feeling much more positive about the situation

The resistance occurred whilst consent in the form of lecturing, administration and research largely continued and yet it also disrupted everyday life and challenged the

hierarchy. The AC was an important medium through which the ‘anxiety’ (Trice et al,1969) of its members could be temporarily abated as fellow AC members discussed the dispute, each others experiences, participated in organizing events and communicated issues to other union members. It promoted stability in the face of tremendous uncertainty that continually chiselled away at one’s sense of security. This insecurity is evident in the words of a local union leader who spoke at a university-wide union meeting:

It’s been a dreadful few months. It’s been a help with colleagues that have supported us that helped us to cope when one moment we’ve been up and the next down

### **The Day of the Rally**

I arrived at 7.30am. The first thing that hit me was the posters that had been put up in the windows of all union members that read ‘SAVE MEDUNIVERSITY SAVE JOBS’. Members of the AC had been busy putting them up in each room and I recalled an AC member saying that he wanted those posters to be visible: ‘I want them [supporters] to be able to see us when they come down the hill’ to MedUniversity. My office was dimly lit due to the posters blocking out the light (fieldnotes).

This section is drawn from fieldnotes written on the evening of the day of the rally. In these fieldnotes, it is possible to observe those resisting ‘doing’ (Moore and Myerhoff,1977:7) resistance. Hence they utilised and subverted everyday facilities

[windows, offices] and transformed them, using posters that they had made into symbols of resistance thereby reminding (Trice et al,1969) others of the resistance taking place. The act of creating and putting up posters is resistance but it is also about identity as it makes the resistant self visible to oneself and others:

....to help arrange the room for the speeches after the rally, three of us went to the student union to set out the chairs and tables. There was a slightly surreal joviality about breaking sweat stacking these chairs....We prepared for a maximum of 100. It felt good to be doing something as tangible as organizing chairs because I recall feeling slightly apprehensive about how the event would unfold (fieldnotes).

In this extract, the student union, chairs, tables which are part of the formal facilities of the University were temporarily subverted and transformed, for the duration of the rally into something other than a place for students to host entertainment. Set apart from its 'mundane uses' (Moore and Myerhoff,1977:7), the student union became a place where those who resist assemble to make and hear speeches that sought to galvanise the resistance. Although a 'safe – ontologically secure – resistance identity' (Bloom, 2013: 228) might temporarily emerge for some from such practices, the self is not an end outcome. The self is a process and the rally sought to counter the type of apprehensiveness expressed in the above extract. The formality of this ceremony is evident in the degree of organization it involved. It broke with normal everyday work relations but drew on the norms associated with ceremonies. It challenged the formal organizational hierarchy ('ceremony as resistance') without, however, seeking to eradicate it ('resistance as ceremony').



Collectivism can help to ameliorate the anxiety of resisting and this was fostered through the rally as the following fieldnotes indicate, which refer to assembling outside the building where Council would preside:

As I approached the gathering through I felt the warmth that comes from recognising former colleagues/friends who had come to support us. I joined them and began to chat and enjoyed the sense of camaraderie, friendship and respect that I felt for them....I saw colleagues from other universities that I had not seen in a number of years. We shook hands and I was introduced to colleagues that I had never met before and yet, on this occasion, I felt a sense of affiliation with them.

Other fieldnotes describe the visual impact of the rally (see Beynon and Austrin, 1989) and elucidate its ceremonial quality:

I was immediately struck by the sight of the colourful banners. There was the blue MedUniversity banner and another that was red with a green trim, like those one sees on public Walking Days or associates with brass bands, miners and trade unionism more generally. The banners seemed to transform our local dispute into something bigger, rendering it real in an altogether more concrete and important way. It was now formal, organised and collective.

I was handed a badge and a placard by AC members. Between 100 and 200 people were assembled and there was something of a carnival atmosphere....As members of the University's Council arrived some were booed others were

given information leaflets. As these Council members went upstairs some paused to look through upper story windows at the crowd assembled below. Different people came back and to, to look down at us. They seemed intrigued or apprehensive about this mass of people. Whistles had been ordered, placards and badges given out and, at the allotted time when the Council would begin its deliberations, a cacophony of shouts, jeers and whistles began – not spontaneously – to break out.

In the above extracts, the everyday routines of work are clearly disrupted. Normal behaviour was replaced by shouting, jeering and whistling, which was acceptable in this context and, as ceremonies are ‘usually for the benefit of an audience’ (Trice and Beyer,1984:655), management can be understood as its audience.

Although trivial in themselves through stacking chairs, shouting and whistling one is producing and displaying a resistant self that can help to temporarily stave off anxiety. The ceremony was not separate from established norms for there was no violence or destruction. No attempt was made to invade or disrupt the Council meeting and chants subsided to allow the meeting to proceed. The resistance was therefore bound up with and reproduced ‘orderly interaction’ which is a product of ‘normative consensus’ (Goffman,1983:5). Indeed, it ‘maintained a traditional hierarchy’ in relation to the employees’ ‘place’ (outside Council) and management’s ‘place’ (inside) (op cit:6). The meeting of Council can be understood as a managerial ceremony to ratify and legitimise the decisions of MedUniversity’s senior management. Both the Council meeting and the rally had set times, places, agendas, dress codes and established norms:

A microphone had been procured as planned and chants began to be heard. There was an element of embarrassed but jubilant subversion as everyone joined in....this included the children of members of staff who milled around. After a few minutes of chants, whistles, shouts that were deafening we began to assemble so as to march around the campus. It was a planned parade aimed to achieve maximum visibility. A focal point and ‘something to do’ with ourselves to fill out the day as an AC member had said. In practice, it also served to avoid fracturing the collective by not allowing it to slip away. I approached some of the AC members to see if there was anything I could do. I was given an armband as a steward on the march but also pole position on the procession as we began to file out....along with other AC members and the banners that were also assembled at the front (fieldnotes).

The colourful banners, UCU badges, march or ‘parade’ (Gluckman and Gluckman,1977:233) and chanting are redolent of secular and religious ceremonies. Moreover, ‘there was order also’ (Beynon and Austrin,1989:80) in that the resistance adhered to the rule of law and moral codes regarding dress, behaviour and profanity. Our willingness to ‘cooperate’ was ‘hidden by the manifest ill will’ displayed ‘in regard to a few norms while sustaining all the rest’ (Goffman,1983:6).

### **The Speeches**

In Rosen’s (1985) account of an advertising agency’s ceremonial “Annual Breakfast”, he recounts how each departmental head gave a speech and how this contributed to

the 'recreation of the power order' (op cit:32). Speeches can be equated with 'rites of incorporation' (Trice and Beyer,1984:658) which initiate one into a community. The speeches made during the rally were therefore both similar to but different from Rosen's (1985) study for they were a means to forge a community and to articulate collective opposition to management. They helped to produce a temporary 'community' (see Beynon and Austrin,1989; Mellor and Stephenson,2005; Roy,1980) and this section is based on fieldnotes that were written during the speeches.

Tables and chairs were placed on the stage of the student union's ballroom so that those giving speeches could sit facing the audience, which reflects a 'traditional hierarchy' (Goffman,1983:6). Speeches were made by a number of regional trade union leaders all of whom encouraged solidarity. One stated that this is 'not just a local dispute' and he conveyed 'greetings from the whole movement' ending on a rallying cry that 'This is a fight we can win, must win'. As part of the ceremony, these speeches can be understood as an attempt to alleviate the individualizing anxiety of resisting and imply 'that if danger threatens, safe solutions are at hand, that political unity is immediate and real because it is celebrated' (Moore and Myerhoff,1977:24).

A representative from UNISON spoke next and said that he was here to 'protect union members', which reflected concerns that 'the next people in the line of fire is UNISON members'. These speeches often elevated the dispute equating it with opposition to managerism (Parker,2014) and Neo-liberalism (Hyslop-Margison and Leonard,2012; Ryan,2012) not just redundancies. They also elevated the union and, as part of the wider ceremony, reminded (Trice et al,1969) those resisting why it was necessary to resist.

The speeches were peppered with jokes or witticisms hence a representative of the UCU began by saying - 'I feel I must stand up to do a speech', which he proceeded to do and this provoked laughter from the audience. Through laughter and applause the audience participated in the occasion and were drawn into the ceremony for 'all must collude so as not to spoil the show, or damage the illusion' (Myerhoff,1977:222) that through a display of collective defiance, reality can be redefined according to the desires of those resisting. The UCU speaker was offered a microphone but declined saying 'No 'cause I won't be able to wave my hands about', which again stimulated laughter. It can be argued that this light-hearted banter serves a similar purpose to other joking relationships in organizational ceremonies, where the humour helps to 'ameliorate social strain' (Rosen,1988:472), 'anxiety' (Trice et al,1969) or the 'fear stuff' (Roy,1980) for those whose jobs were at risk along with the social discomfort of making speeches. The UCU speaker also elevated and collectivised the dispute by saying 'This is much more than some local difficulty' for 'it's about what the elite thinks higher education is all about'.

Each speech was followed by applause and akin to some 'graduation' (Myerhoff,1977:208) ceremonies, letters/emails of support were read out by an AC member who acted as "master-of-ceremony" (op cit: 201). One from an Australian trade unionist, offered support 'for those whose interests are wider than the narrow ends of business'. The ceremony therefore evoked a greater purpose than the immediate threat to jobs and conveyed a sense of collective opposition to changes occurring in academia within and beyond the UK, which again can be seen as a means to reduce 'anxiety' (Trice et al,1969).

A local UCU representative thanked ‘people travelling from as far away as Brighton who had to get up in the middle of the night’ to support and resist with their fellow UCU members. Through his comments, ‘local affairs’ were ‘considerably aggrandized’ (Myerhoff,1977:201) hence he remarked that ‘job threats are increasing’ across the sector but, at MedUniversity, they are ‘particularly obscene’. It was argued that ‘UCU cannot be subject to decisions made behind closed doors’ because ‘academic freedom must be defended at all costs’. These remarks appeared to be aimed at management and yet, the ceremony was ‘unhampered’ due to *their* absence (Myerhoff,1977:223) and, indeed, strengthened by it because its purpose was to unite and ‘maintain’ (Trice et al,1969) the resistance. The speaker continued that ‘a resounding message’ had been sent to Council through the rally. Making speeches which are overtly anti-managerial can be understood as micro-acts of resistance that together with other acts (stacking chairs, marching, making placards) are ‘*productive*’ of the wider ceremony of resistance. They define the speakers as resistant and are not trivial because to render oneself visible in this way could threaten one’s career.

Additional messages of support were then read out by the master-of-ceremony who remarked that ‘Face book groups’ had sent their support. Those participating were encouraged to send messages of support to these groups because although we ‘might be old fashioned’, we ‘can still get people to do Face book even if we can’t’. This was met with laughter and was a reference to management’s proposals to cut certain courses because they were considered ‘old fashioned’. As in organizational ceremonies, issues that are of considerable concern, were therefore open to ‘public joke-making’ (Rosen,1988:471). The difference was that this is not a corporate “we”

mocking the hierarchy but a “us”, employees, mocking management (see Collinson,1988).

The final speech was delivered by a distinguished professorial member of staff whose job was also imperiled by the dispute. He began with some comments about the ‘campaign and why we need to win today’. It was said that we ‘need to save universities for democratic thinking and for freedom rather than dictatorial orders from the top’, which received rapturous applause. He remarked: ‘seeing the extent of the support reminded me of the counter cultural movement of the 1960s’ and those who attended were thanked for their support as it’s ‘really heart warming’. The speaker then referred to images that had stuck with him during the dispute including an AC member refusing to move on the picket line during a one day strike and a car, which refused to stop, nearly hitting him. He recollected the headlines of a local newspaper saying that ‘pickets caused traffic chaos’.

The speaker then asked why is this struggle important? Why do you need to be vigilant? What are the values we need to support? It was said that a University ‘is the last place the heavy whips should exist’ and that ‘knowledge production cannot exist with fear’ and so ‘The notion of the big stick has to be resisted’. These comments articulated opposition to the ‘fear stuff’ (Roy,1980) including the threat of redundancy but also tied it to the broader threat of neoliberalism. Hence the consultant’s report was said to have been ‘full of skill and the market, so you should immediately smell rats, ideology.’ In opposition to this, it was stated that ‘It’s not about the market, what’s out there but what’s in here, it’s about bringing in fear’. The proposals were criticised for being introduced without staff consultation and also management’s

reliance on consultants or ‘an outside hatchet-man’ who ‘believes in the market as if it is something you can pick up and shine’. At this point, it is interesting to note that ceremonies ‘can make it appear that there is no conflict, only harmony’ (Moore and Myerhoff,1977:24) but not everyone who resisted may have opposed neoliberalism.

The speech concluded with the statement that ‘We are the university’ and that it ‘is safe in our hands, not in the hands of outside consultants, who advocate the market’ and this was met with a standing ovation. This final speech collectivised in a way that went beyond the immediate issues facing MedUniversity and questioned the marketization of academia. It sought ‘to bolster and define’ the ‘self worth’ and ‘collective belonging’ (Myerhoff,1977:218) of those resisting in the face of management’s threat to their economic livelihood, careers and self. Although it reproduced established positions and identities (management/consultants versus workers; oppressors versus resisters; neo-liberalists versus statistis; individualists versus collectivists/trade unionists) doing so was nonetheless necessary to challenge those relations.

The speeches ended with the master-of-ceremony commenting that at this very moment the University Council is meeting to decide ‘our future’ and so the ‘fear stuff’ (Roy,1980) or ‘anxiety’ (Trice et al,1969) was used against management to ‘maintain’ (ibid) the momentum of the resistance. Finally, she lightened the mood by saying ‘you can keep the whistles’ which was met with laughter. This was followed by a request to restack the chairs. In this request, we can observe that ‘individuals who systematically violate the norms of the interaction order may nonetheless be



dependent on them most of the time, including some of the time during which they are actively engaged in violations' (Goffman,1983:5).

## **Discussion**

This article has sought to advance our understanding of resistance firstly through exploring resistance in the guise of a ceremonial one-day rally. Trice et al (1969) articulated that organizations 'use' ceremonies (e.g. interviews) for 'the maintenance or achievement of organizational stability' (op cit:48) and Alvesson and Karreman (2007) provide similar insights in relation to HRM. By contrast, the rally sought, at least partly, to *disrupt* the organization whilst seeking to maintain or *produce* organizationally stable collective resistance and a resistant subjectivity (ceremony as resistance). In doing so, however, the resistance drew on established norms and ultimately (re)*produced* the extant order (resistance as ceremony).

The rally relied on established ceremonial mores as discussed by Trice et al (1969) hence it aimed to 'socialize' or 'produce a set of values, norms, attitudes, and expectations in individuals which will be supportive of the overall' (op cit:42) resistance. Second, it performed 'stabilizing functions' (ibid) in terms of maintaining the momentum of resistance, providing direction, whilst expressing and consolidating opposition. Third, it helped to 'facilitate' a 'reduction of anxieties and ambiguities often experienced by members' (ibid) during resistance. Finally, it had a 'symbolic value' (op cit:46) because it served to 'remind' (op cit:49) those resisting why they were doing so.

Rosen's (1985) account of a ceremonial annual business breakfast articulated its managerial purpose in that it transformed 'contractual relationships' into 'relations of communion and amity' (op cit:33). It reinforced a 'group identity' for 'those inside the ballroom' where the breakfast and speeches took place for they were defined as employees of the organization, whereas 'those outside are not' (ibid). There are some interesting parallels here in the sense that 'ceremony as resistance' also works through fostering unity. There are also important differences because the appropriation of the student union ballroom and the speeches sought, at least in part, to challenge rather than reaffirm managerial power. Indeed, assembling outside the University's highest governing body – Council – posed a visual, vocal, emotional and, perhaps, physical threat to the hierarchy although it was entirely peaceful and had no intention of overthrowing the hierarchy.

On the day of the rally, the student ballroom was hierarchically organized to mark out those leading the resistance with chairs positioned towards the front and its walls created a demarcation between those resisting and those who were not. The purpose of this ceremony, unlike the Christmas party Rosen (1988:469) subsequently described, was to challenge rather than bolster the corporate 'us'. Attire also played a part by reflecting and reinforcing divisions between protestors who were dressed casually, in warm coats and hats suitable for a march outside, whereas Council members, who performed their own ceremony, wore business garb. The placards, banners, UCU badges, marching, singing and speeches all sought to 'create a communion among disparate groups' (op cit:34) of resisters but reinforced and expressed divisions between those seeking to impose redundancies and those resisting.

The rally used the facilities of the University to resist (i.e. computers, offices, emails, buildings, windows, telephones, ballroom). Its organization drew on bureaucratic and managerial knowledge (i.e. the alternative strategy) to coordinate people and display opposition to management. The resistance therefore both utilised and reproduced conditions that facilitate ongoing organizational life (i.e. booking rooms, behaving in an orderly way) whilst also seeking to disrupt and challenge it (i.e. blowing whistles, chanting, shouting, marching, singing, questioning and mocking management decision making). It is this ambiguity around the productive (Coupasson et al,2012) or facilitative (Thomas et al,2011) nature of resistance, which has been neglected to-date.

The resistance was imbued with the status quo and reproduced power relations and extant inequalities (i.e. gendered and hierarchical pay differentials) whilst also challenging management prerogative. It has been argued that ‘Ceremony is a declaration against indeterminacy’ (Moore and Myerhoff,1977:16). The ceremony in this case challenged the indeterminacy of employees facing redundancy whilst seeking to restore the determinacy or normality of everyday life. It sought to change management’s strategy whilst leaving the academics the same thereby perpetuating ‘old traditions’ (op cit:7) and, to this extent, it both succeeded and failed for there was both change and continuity. Hence, following the rally, management dropped the threat of compulsory redundancies; staff resigned during and after the dispute; others opted for voluntary redundancy. This denotes significant change and yet nothing fundamentally changed – teaching, administration and research continued. In this sense, it was both ‘ceremony as resistance’ and ‘resistance as ceremony’.

Overall, these insights illuminate that there is not an ‘outside the context of power relations’ (Scott,1990:321), a place where resistance shines untarnished for it picks up and is imbued with broader cultural norms that imbue everyday life of which resistance is a part. Nevertheless, this does not make it ‘decaf’ resistance (Contu,2008) whereby it entails few risks indeed jobs/incomes/careers were threatened and the experience was stressful. It was therefore dangerous for those participating in the resistance and, as with all forms of resistance, it was also dangerous for those in positions of authority because it illuminated that not everyone will bend to their will. The possibility of this echoes in all forms of resistance and it means that uncertainty continues because domination is never complete and conditions can be otherwise but not without struggle.

The article has also contributed to an understanding of what Courpasson et al (2012) describe as ‘productive resistance’ and Thomas et al (2011) depict as ‘facilitative’ resistance. It offers a different empirical insight because it explores how employee rather than management resistance can be productive. It also provides different theoretical insights because Courpasson et al (2012) sought to illustrate how resistance can be seen as productive in contrast to earlier approaches that assume ‘a fixed opposition between irreconcilable adversaries’ (op cit:901). The findings of this case point towards a more ambiguous and fluid understanding of resistance suggesting that the distinction between oppositional versus productive resistance is blurred.

If we first consider the resistance from a managerial perspective we can see that it was 'productive' *and* 'oppositional'. Hence initially, through producing an 'alternative' report to that proffered by management, the resistance sought to be productive. It sought to engage with and deliver management's aims but without the compulsory redundancies that provoked the dispute. Through producing the 'alternative report' those resisting can be said to have been at least partly 'enacting the very identities that the' University was 'trying to shape' (Anteby,2008:202). Initially, management would not compromise over compulsory redundancies and so saw this productive resistance as dangerous (a threat to their authority) and oppositional. Of course, presenting an alternative strategy did not mean that opposition to management's plans entirely went away and so the resistance can be understood to be simultaneously productive *and* oppositional.

The initial unwillingness of management to compromise over compulsory redundancies refuted the productive potential of the resistance. Curiously, if management had been willing to see the resistance as productive and had accepted the alternative strategy by compromising on the demand for compulsory redundancies, they may have avoided the destructive consequences of a protracted dispute along with the loss of valued employees. Once it became evident that management was unwilling to compromise over compulsory redundancies, the resistance took on a more obviously oppositional hue. Nevertheless, even this was productive for management because as Ford et al (2008) have argued resistance can bring to light issues of concern for staff and it requires managers to explain their position more clearly. The rally and the withdrawal of the threat of compulsory redundancies in its aftermath, also served to bring the parties together, at least partly, which

management's earlier autocratic approach had thwarted. In this sense, even the resistance that was more obviously oppositional can be seen as simultaneously productive from a managerial perspective. One can also add that 'ceremony as resistance' is productive for management because it reaffirms employees as employees thereby helping to produce individuals who ultimately accept their place within the existing order of things (Jacques,1996).

We can also look at productive resistance more from an employee perspective. Through 'ceremony as resistance', management were held to account and, in this sense, the resistance was productive for the staff. It allowed the staff to collectively state their position and conveyed the anxieties that management's decision making had created. The resistance exposed some of the vulnerabilities of management in that they were unclear about how to proceed and about what they wanted to achieve apart from redundancies. This can be seen as productive for employees and dangerous for management because it reveals that management is far from omniscient/omnipotent and so it has the potential to bolster the resolve of those resisting.

Through the act of resisting one is produced as a resistant subject and a rally is part of an endeavour to consolidate a resistant self. Participation in ACs and hearing speeches, for example, can inspire, embolden and encourage one to become a resistant subject but anxiety/instability remain. Ceremonies can help to forge collectivism and a resistant subjectivity as they allow for learning and displays of a resistant self that can be infectious as individuals feed upon each other's assumed defiance or courage. The planning they entail provides a collective focus and a purpose that can help to ward off the 'fear stuff' (Roy,1980) whilst not removing it. All of which is productive

for those resisting and dangerous for management as it helps to combat the individualizing economic and existential anxiety and instability that resisting can entail. Resistance through the union organization and rally can be seen as attempts to marshal a defence against the waves of power that threaten to sweep opposition away.

If we adopt a more critical or radical perspective, the rally can be seen as dangerous as it confirmed the identity of employees as employees (Jacques,1996) thereby limiting the aims of the resistance. The ceremony served to ‘dramatize, a fictive version’ (Myerhoff,1977:214) of those resisting as resistant. It is fictive because through such resistance one becomes embroiled in arguments about how the status quo should be managed. It is in this sense that much of what we understand as resistance can be understood as *decaf* (Contu,2008). The resistance confirmed or graduated partially resistant subjects who questioned some issues whilst accepting others, some aspects of the self were elevated [defiance] through resistance whilst others were overlooked or silenced [compliance and consent].

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, this article has made a number of contributions to the resistance literature. First, its focus on ‘ceremony as resistance’ has illustrated a neglected dimension of resistance. It has argued that ceremonies are not always a means of management control because employees can use them to mobilise resistance. Second, it has indicated that resistance can be ‘productive’ in non-managerial ways and has highlighted that the line between productive and oppositional resistance is ambiguous. It has elucidated how resistance can be productive in terms of both stabilizing *and*

destabilizing social relations whilst (re)producing identities that are both secure *and* insecure. Third, it has argued that resistance is not outside of power relations but is imbued with extant norms and so it is also ‘resistance as ceremony’. This is not meant, however, to question the necessity of, or the advances won through resistance or to demean the effort and courage involved in organizing and participating in resistance. And yet, *all* forms of contemporary workplace resistance are deaf in the sense that they are imbued with the context through which they arise but likewise *all* forms of resistance are dangerous because they reveal that power is not totalizing and so conditions can be otherwise.

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<sup>i</sup> Although they draw on different theoretical sources, Fleming and Spicer's (2008) use of the term 'struggle' to grasp the 'complex and contradictory dynamics' (op cit: 305) of power and resistance and their assertion that 'power is never without resistance' (op cit: 305-6) is highly evocative of Foucault.